

Rock Stars



To Erik, Jean Christophe,
Siglinde, and Alexandra,
and all the rock 'n' rollers
of the 1980's.

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INTRODUCTION

The Rock Cosmos

Back in 1956 when rock 'n' roll was in its early days, a group called Danny and The Juniors proclaimed that rock 'n' roll was here to stay. "It will never die," they insisted, and so far they've been proven right. In fact, rock 'n' roll is more popular now than it has ever been.

Where a few years ago it was rare for a million people to buy a particular long-playing record, today a rock album may sell eight or ten million copies across the U.S. And the same rock stars you listen to over your local radio station have fans the world over.

At first glance, the rock stars in this book couldn't seem more different from one another: *KISS*, four masquerade characters in black and white makeup who play louder than a jet plane on takeoff.

Billy Joel, a piano man who remembers the pain of adolescence.

Fleetwood Mac, two women and three men who dress like your older sisters and brothers and create smooth rocking harmonies.

Both *Stevie Wonder* and *KC & the Sunshine Band* play infectious Afro-American rhythms. Stevie is a blind black poet, while KC is the peaches-and-cream boy-next-door.

Sa Na Na star on TV as goofy greasers who sing hits from the Fifties and Sixties.

The *Patti Smith Group*, part of rock's "New Wave."

Despite their surface differences, these stars all play something called rock. What is rock 'n' roll?

Rock 'n' roll is many things to many people. It's being young forever and feeling happy and feeling sad and feeling angry and feeling lonely. It's about love. It's about things around us and things we can barely imagine. Rock 'n' roll is the twang of electricity and dancing. It's humming in the shower. It's shouting a refrain at the top of your lungs. It's ghetto streets and fun, fun, fun .till your daddy takes the T-Bird away.

How did rock 'n' roll begin? The words "rock 'n' roll" existed in popular songs as early as the nineteenth century, but the electric guitar, the soul of rock, didn't make its appearance until the 1930's. In big jazz bands amplification was necessary to keep the guitar from being drowned out by other instruments.

Then sometime after World War II an electrified blues beat became the favorite style of

black musicians in cities like New Orleans and Chicago and New York. From these places came the first rock stars: Fats Domino and Chuck Berry, and groups like Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers, and many, many more,

The first rock 'n' roll tune to make it to the #1 spot on the charts was "Rock Around the Clock," by a white group, Bill Haley and the Comets. Just a few months later a nineteen-year-old truck driver wandered into a studio in Memphis to record a birthday song for his mother. The truck driver, a fellow named Elvis Presley, was asked back to tape some other tunes. Soon he was on his way to becoming the first rock superstar.

Ten years later and from 3,000 miles across the sea, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones spearheaded the "British Invasion," an outpouring of rock enthusiasm which charged up a new generation of American listeners and musicians. Soon the U.S. again had its own constellation of rockers sending sparks into the night. Today's stars belong to what people think of as the third generation of rock 'n' roll-the wave of the Seventies, which has built on the strengths of earlier performers to create its own irresistible sounds.

The Seventies' version of rock is more musically sophisticated and is recorded more clearly than ever before. It is more listenable, if the popularity of today's records is any indication. This popularity is a mixed blessing, since what used to be a loose, informal music scene is now big business. Whereas Elvis Presley could

record two songs for a four dollar studio charge, now the average rock album costs somewhere around \$80,000 to record.

It's easy to forget that rock 'n' roll is a business when you're caught up in enjoying the sound. But the rock stars in this book can't and don't forget. They know that for you to be able to listen to their latest songs, a whole army of people must be mobilized to help in recording, manufacturing, and distributing their records. Hundreds of radio stations around the nation must be alerted to these new tunes. Journalists must be informed so the word can go out. There are travel plans and personal appearances and concerts which must be coordinated.

At some point in their careers, all of the rock stars in this book learned for themselves that business decisions were every bit as important to their success as the quality of their music.

After playing one too many empty clubs, *KISS* realized that they would be better off staging their own concerts.

Billy Joel's career as a recording artist floundered until he asked his wife to be his manager. *Fleetwood Mac* suffered through a former manager's scheme to steal the group's name and give it to another band. Today they manage their own business affairs.

Stevie Wonder paved the way to superstardom by asking his record company for a new recording contract when he turned 21.

KC and partner Rick Finch of the *Sunshine Band* got their education in the music business by working their way up. from stock boys in a record warehouse.

Sha Na Na toured the auditoriums of America for nine years and were seen by fewer people than tune in for just one of their weekly TV shows.

The Patti Smith Group put out their own record before being signed to a recording contract. If there is anything these stars have in common, it's their perseverance in a highly competitive field. For them, rock 'n' roll is work. Sure, it's nice work if you can get it, but it's also hard work. For many stars, their work becomes their lives, and there's time for little else. And that's not always the best way to live.

Over the last seven years, I have interviewed and written about many of the top rock 'n' roll stars. Some were friendly and some were sullen. Some were smart and some weren't. Some were bores and some were incredibly interesting. Just like any group of people you might run into. But all spoke one language- music. I would like to thank those music industry people whose efforts made this book possible: Sharon Weisz, Roberta Skopp, Carol Ross, Hope Antman, Jeff Schock, Barbara Pepe, Robert Merlis, Charlie Fain, Jeffi, Janet Osoroff, and Beth Wernick.

I would also like to thank the rock stars who gave of their valuable time to talk to me and you.

New York, June 1979

Steve Ditlea

KISS

Rock 'n' Roll All Nite

Gene Simmons of KISS is towering over me in giant shoes which make him seem about 10 feet tall. Gene is none other than the tongue-wagging figure in vampire makeup who plays bass and breathes fire twenty feet into the air and spits up torrents of stage blood, all in the course of a KISS concert. Like the other members of the group, Gene has never been photographed without his famous black and white stage makeup, so his face is unknown to millions of the band's fans, the loyal KISS Army.

Out of his disguise, Gene Simmons is staring at me, trying to look menacing, but this Gene's face is round, his eyes dark and friendly; his eyebrows lend him an air of good-natured authority. He'd make a perfect sixth-grade school teacher (which is what Gene Simmons did before the birth of KISS), but for the pink pants and giant shoes with dollar signs he's wearing.

"I guess this proves you can graduate from college and still be a rock 'n' roll star," he says, waving his hand across the broad expanse of his dressing room, backstage at New York's Madison Square Garden. We sit down on one side of the room and are surrounded by flowers, trunks, costumes, amps, equipment cases, and almost floor-to-

ceiling KISS mirrors bearing the science-fiction likenesses of the group with maidens at their feet.

It's 5:30 on a wet winter's evening, and already members of the KISS Army are gathered outside waiting for the thrill of the legendary KISS touring rock 'n' roll spectacular. In another four hours Gene and his cohorts will blast 17,000 people with raw musical energy and dazzle them with real fireworks. For the moment a very un-vampirish 27-year-old is doing some reminiscing.

"When I was a kid," Gene recalls, "I always identified with the monsters I saw in the movies and on TV. When King Kong died or Frankenstein was killed, I felt sorry for them. They were misunderstood. You know, Frankenstein was really the victim of racial prejudice. He was persecuted because he was different-looking." As for King Kong, Gene says he moved into his penthouse apartment off Central Park "so I can see Kong when he climbs the Empire State Building."

Monster movies made such an impression on young Gene that by the time he was in high

school he was busy writing and publishing his own mimeographed magazine about monsters and comic-book heroes. Little did he suspect that some day there would be a Marvel Comic about him and KISS-the first rock 'n' roll band ever to star in a comic book!

"Of course, each of us is a product of what we grew up with," Gene continues. "I guess my vampire character on stage is mainly the monster on Bald Mountain I saw in Walt Disney's *Fantasia*. All the hand movements are like Bela Lugosi's in *Dracula*."

His hands turn claw like as he demonstrates. "My costume could be something out of Dr. Strange comics. Now, I didn't start to list all those things when I came up with my stage identity. They were just there in the back of my mind."

Though monsters and comic-book superstars were his first love, Gene Simmons' greatest loyalty was reserved for rock 'n' roll. "I always admired anything that stretched your imagination. Seeing the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show on TV was like that. It was so modern and science-fictiony. Instead of coming out with violins and horns, it was just four guys with drums and electric guitars. To me it was man harnessing machines. I'm fascinated by the idea of man harnessing power to make himself bigger."

While in high school, Gene decided against starting another comic *fanzine*, preferring to sing in a rock band with his friends. "The music started to jell for me after the Beatles. I saw rock opening itself up to more theater and spectacle



KISS

on stage. I was impressed by people who made me wonder about what they were like off stage. Did they eat? Superstars are not supposed to be real."

Gene began as a vocalist with little interest in playing an instrument. "Later I became fascinated by amplifiers and guitars. They were another source of power. The louder you played, the more powerful you were in front of an audience. The first thing I picked up was an electric

guitar, but it wasn't powerful enough. It didn't sound menacing enough: Then I got my hands on a Japanese bass. I started playing in sixty-seven and I started writing in sixty-nine. I've got to admit that I didn't practice hard. Practice really didn't help in developing dexterity. *Dexterity*-there's a big word."

All through our conversation, Gene points out the big words he uses, as if to keep proving that rock stars needn't talk in one-syllable grunts. At the same time he's a very physical person; he keeps reaching out his arm-bearing an antique ivory and silver bracelet-to emphasize a point, to make contact, to show that for all his talk of monsters and power, he's still your basic warm, sensitive, rock 'n' roll star.

Gene is almost too modest in claiming that his success came with little effort. "I like to say that I never paid any dues: except the musicians' union dues." Yet he played in assorted bands for six lean years before KISS. "The best way to learn anything is to not be afraid of making mistakes. If you don't fall down a few times, you won't learn how to walk."

In 1973 Gene's latest group was breaking apart. "We were called Rainbow because we were supposed to be as diverse as the rainbow. But the band was too ill-defined. There were too many influences. We had one short guy, one tall guy, a skinny guy, a fat guy. When the group split up, that left Paul Stanley and me. We decided we wanted to be tall, powerful, rock 'n' roll stars!"

Clearly, Gene and Paul have gotten their wish.

Paul Stanley is the KISS rhythm guitarist whose onstage personality 'is the lover, a black star painted over his right eye, his lips red-covered and pouting. His costume includes silver shoes with rippled soles seven inches thick, which he is constantly lifting off the ground in concert, flinging himself into the stratosphere and never missing a note. Talk about tall! Talk about powerful!

Back to the KISS history lesson: "Paul and I would listen to Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin," recalls Gene. "We'd say, 'They're not so hot, we can do better than that.' " Since the market for two-man rock bands was limited, Gene and Paul started looking for other musicians. "We answered this ad in Rolling Stone: 'Drummer with 11 years experience, willing to do anything to be a star.' This guy had the right attitude for us. It turned out to be Peter Criss.

"I called Peter," Gene remembers. "He was having a party at his house. Everybody started laughing when I told Peter we wanted to form a band because we were going to be superstars. Peter was repeating everything to his friends. Then I asked him what must have sounded like the weirdest questions: 'Are you fat?' Peter answered: 'No!' 'Are you short?' He said: 'No!'

"Then I asked him: 'If you have a beard, would you mind shaving it off?' I never did ask him how well he could play.

"You see, we wanted to have a particular image," Gene explains. "A week later we went to the Kings' Lounge in Brooklyn to see Peter perform. He was with a tired band, but he looked

like a star. This guy was .so gung-ho, we knew we had to have him in our band."

To KISS fans, Peter Criss is instantly recognizable: he's the cat-man, with black hooded eyes, silver nose, and greasepaint whiskers. He's sometimes aloof, other times on the prowl, always intriguing. As the group's drummer, his onstage antics are relatively tame, yet the ability to levitate his full drum set sixteen feet in the air is nothing to hiss at. A few hours before meeting Gene at Madison Square Garden, I'd answered the telephone in my apartment:

"Hi, this is Peter Criss. I just got a wake-up message for me to call. You're talking to one sleepy rock 'n' roller."

Peter's voice sounded a bit hoarse, but any trace of fatigue left after I asked about his early days as a musician.

"Gee," said Peter, "I'm glad you want to know about this. I almost never get a chance to talk about it. I started playing at the age of nine. That's when my parents gave me my first set of drums. When I got older, I bought myself a professional set. I worked on afternoons and weekends delivering meat for a butcher-shop so I could save the two hundred and twenty-five dollars I needed for my big drum set.

"I got my first job as a musician when I was sixteen," he recalled. "I used to hear this rock band rehearsing down the block and I wished that I could join them. They were all older kids. Then their drummer quit and I started working with them. Our first gig was at a bar mitzvah. We got five dollars a man and we didn't even get dinner."

Though all the members of KISS grew up in boroughs of New York City, Peter's childhood was by far the roughest. "I grew up in poverty. My family lived on Marcy Avenue in Brooklyn. All the kids in the neighborhood were in street gangs. You had to join if you were going to survive. Half the guys I grew up with are dead. Half of them went to Vietnam and some didn't come back. I stayed with music. When other kids played stickball, I was busy practicing the drums instead. I'd skip lunches so I could go home and practice. I must have played 'drums six hours a day.

"When I was young, all I ever listened to was the radio. Rock wasn't that popular then. I loved listening to the big bands; jazz drummers like Gene Krupa knocked me out. Later I got to work with him at the Metropole Cafe. I also played with Joey Dee and the Starlighters at the Peppermint Lounge. I played in lots of bands in tons of different clubs. We did early Beatles and Rolling Stones songs. You had to be a walking jukebox. The owner would always say: 'If you can play what's on de jukebox, you're hired.' I played club dates for ten years before KISS happened."

In that time Peter's social-life improved considerably. "I was a rocker, you know. I wore silk pants and an earring. I was pretty popular as soon as I started playing in clubs. It was a lot different from when I stayed home practicing all the time. Still, I always wanted to be a superstar, and the guys in the bands I played with were satisfied with their thirty dollars a night. I knew I'd make it some day though I never thought I'd



Kiss and Friends

make it this *big*. I mean, I thought I'd have a gold album and live comfortably. I never thought I'd have all this."

All this for Peter Criss includes his recent purchase of a four-and-one-half acre estate, which he described as "a miniature castle in Connecticut. It's got about fourteen rooms. I guess you'd call it Normandy Tudor style. It's a dream come true for me. I have an English sheep dog, cats, and a duck pond. I'm living like I've always wanted to. My lifelong dream was to plant my own garden. When my mother came here and saw the garden,

it was a lot for her to handle--the idea that you can actually have all your dreams come true!

"Maybe now that all their kids are grown up, my parents will let me buy them a house in the country. They always worked so hard. And they never told me to stop my drumming. They always encouraged me. They'd say: 'If you really try hard you'll make it.' It took me years to find other musicians with the same aspirations as me."

Peter recalled Gene Simmons' phone call a little differently than Gene's version: "His first question was, 'Do you have longhair?' Then he asked me, 'Are you skinny? Are you good-looking?' I said, 'Of course.' By the end I was telling him I'd even wear a dress, if I had to. Fortunately, glitter rock was already on its way out. When I met Paul and Gene, I knew these were the guys I'd been waiting for."

Unlike Gene, Peter felt that KISS paid its dues. "We worked for six months, seven days a week, eight hours a day, rehearsing in this loft on East Twenty-Third Street, even on days when there was no heat; but we didn't mind. We all believed we were going to be the hottest rock 'n' roll band in the U.S."

When I talk to Gene Simmons, he agrees with Peter Criss in one important respect: "The other people we'd played with just didn't have the right attitude. They'd say to themselves that they'd never be great and, naturally, they never

got any better. If you have no preconceptions about your limitations, the sky's the limit you'll succeed."

Gene also remembers the band's loft days: "Ten East Twenty-Third. We played for three months as a trio. Then we put an ad in the *Village Voice* for a lead guitarist to embellish our sound. *Embellish* - there's another big word. The ad we wrote said: 'Superstar act looking for lead guitarist. No time-wasters, please.' Ace Frehley was the twenty-fifth guitarist to walk in for an audition. I noticed him right away, he was wearing one orange sneaker and one red sneaker.

"Ace was definitely spacey, like he just arrived from another planet. While we were auditioning someone else, he plugged in his guitar and started playing. I asked him to stop and he did for a while, until he picked up another guitar and started playing that. Finally, when we were ready for him, I said he'd better be real good. Peter, Paul, and I went into one of our toughest songs and on the break we told him to play. As soon as the first notes sunk in, we all turned to each other and nodded. This was our new lead guitarist!"

With the band's lineup completed, all it lacked was a name. According to Gene Simmons, "We were riding along the Long Island Expressway throwing around names. Paul had once been in a band called Lips. He said: 'Let's call ourselves KISS.' It was perfect."

As for the group's public identities, Peter Criss recalled: "All of us were interested in art

and visuals. We'd always thought of combining art and theatrics and rock 'n' roll. We wanted to be different on stage. We wanted to put on a show that was exciting, that would give kids their money's worth. I remember sitting in my room one day, wondering where I could come up with a new face for myself. I was staring at my cat. It was *so* obvious: I'm independent like a cat, I thought. I started to sketch a cat's features; that was right for me. I never expected when I'd make it, it would be with someone else's face."

Meanwhile, back at the loft, KISS was putting together its hard-edged, hard-rock sound. Their tunes are relentless, driving, and raucous. The words are usually about love, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The KISS attitude toward girls, good times, and the "American Way" is neatly summed up in their song, "Rock and Roll All Nite," with its now famous refrain:

I want to rock and roll *all nite*
*And party e-ve-ry day!**

Gene Simmons resumes the KISS saga: "By May, nineteen-seventy-three, we got a bigger loft on Bleecker Street. Each of us was working to pay for the place. Paul made sandwiches and drove a cab. Ace worked in a store. Peter made money as a drummer. I had one job where I was working for a government-research program, trying to find out why anti-poverty money wasn't reaching people, I was able to catch some

*by Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons. © 1975 KISS/Cafe Americana.

administrators who were pocketing money:. My next job was 'Man Friday' for the editor of Vogue magazine. I could type sixty words a minute. I was a pretty good secretary, but people knew I was really a rock 'n' roller."

Always methodical, Gene has kept a diary of all of KISS's performances. The first entry is for January 30, 1973, at a club called Coventry in the borough of Queens. For the group's first set only two people showed up: Gene's girlfriend and her brother's girlfriend. After that they played a club called the Daisy on Long Island and realized even New York's hottest rock 'n' roll band would have a hard time making it by playing area clubs. So the band members pooled their resources and decided to stage their own concert.

Says Gene: "On July thirteenth, we rented out the Diplomat Hotel's Crystal Room. It cost us a thousand dollars. We had tickets printed and made our own posters. We designed the posters so they would fit right on lampposts; we put a lot of them up ourselves. Paul hand-lettered the KISS name with the double lightning-bolt s's and we've used those same letters ever since. We made out all right on that show. About seven hundred kids showed up at three dollars a head."

Soon after their first concert, KISS was approached by a TV producer named Bill Aucoin, who wanted to be their manager. Within two weeks he had the group signed to the newly hatched Casablanca record label and was grooming them to be Casablanca's first superstar

act. Success came quickly for KISS, but not all that quickly. First there were more rehearsals: Presto the Magician teaching Gene fire breathing, three studio-recorded albums which were moderate sellers, and, of course, the concert tours.

All through 1974 and 1975 Kiss toured endlessly, playing concert halls and auditoriums across the U.S. In big cities and out-of-the-way places, their live shows built up an enthusiastic following, such as the self-proclaimed KISS Army, which began in Terre Haute, Indiana. As the KISS concerts developed into their now-classic fire and levitation format, it began to cost a lot to haul around three truckloads of stage equipment. Money was running out. One coast-to-coast tour was paid for by charging everything to manager Aucoin's credit card.

"We did shows under all sorts of conditions," Gene recalls. "We played when Ace nearly got his thumb blown off. We played with guys with a hundred and two degree fever. We played when my hair and scalp were burned from my fire-breathing. It's a very dangerous stunt, even though I've done it hundreds of times. One night Paul was hit in the face by a flying bottle and he just kept playing. He didn't even flinch!" Finally, in September, 1975, the KISS *Alive!* album, recorded in concert, was released. In a few months it sold over a million copies and KISS was a rock 'n' roll force to be reckoned with.

Gene adds, "The years with KISS have proven to me that man can control machines, instead of

the other way around. We even played through a blackout. It was at the Agora in Cleveland, Ohio, February twenty-fifth, nineteen seventy-five. What do you do when all the lights go out and there's no power for your amps? You light candles and get twelve thousand people to clap in time."

Because their real faces never get shown pictured on the covers of magazines or on television or even when Gene is out on a date with Cher, the members of KISS have largely been spared from fans intruding on their private lives. Then again, Gene recently had to move after coming home from a tour and finding several autograph hunters camping out by the entrance to his apartment building.

"I don't know how they do it," he says. "Somehow kids manage to figure out who I am and where I live. People ask me whether I'm ever afraid of the fans. I know they don't mean to hurt us. They just want to touch us. They want to be part of our world. When they come to our concerts, they get to forget grades and homework, and they get to be part of our fantasy."

By sheer willpower and dedication the members of KISS have become the superstars they'd always wanted to be. And they did it in their own way. What other group could inspire the entire town of Pontiac, Michigan, to declare a holiday in their honor and have 10,000 people dress up in KISS makeup for the band's arrival? The KISS spectacle has also conquered foreign shores. In Japan the group has sold out concert halls faster than any pop stars in history, in-

cluding the Beatles. And Ace Frehley keeps telling reporters that he'd like to set foot on another planet someday.

FLEETWOOD MAC

Thinking About Tomorrow

What's it like to be a member of a group for 10 long years and then strike it rich with one of the most popular albums in the history of rock and roll?

Mick Fleetwood is on the telephone and I ask him if he or any of the current members of Fleetwood Mac ever thought of quitting during their struggling days.

"No, never. Never, never, never," says the unmistakably British voice calling from Los Angeles.

Didn't he think of quitting when four or five years before Fleetwood Mac's manager stole their name and put a counterfeit version of the group on the road?

"Not even through the hardest times," Mick replies.

And if there hadn't been any *Rumors* album, and Fleetwood Mac hadn't sold 8,000,000 copies of that record, would he be just as dedicated?

"I definitely would be. I enjoy playing the drums, you know. I'd still be doing it, I'm sure of that."

Of course there are benefits from playing with a record-breaking rock band: "A couple of months ago, I moved into a nice big house in Bel-Air, here in Los Angeles, with my wife and two daughters. John McVie, our bass player, lives in Maui, in Hawaii. Probably more than anyone else in the band, he's living very much where he wants to be. The other members of the band have nice-well, huge-houses."

The only member of the group with less elaborate accommodations is Stevie Nicks, one of two talented and attractive women writers and vocalists in Fleetwood Mac. "Stevie has a smaller place up in the Hollywood Hills. She lives with a couple of friends, who rent the downstairs. All of us have a small number of family and friends we see regularly. I think by a certain age you end up with a tight circle of friends, the sort of people that if you don't see them for two years, you can walk into the room and it's as if they'd never been away. I don't think that sort of person grows on trees. It becomes increasingly important in our situation to cherish our friends."

Success has allowed the five members of the band to indulge in their favorite hobbies. Most have sound studios in their homes. Mick Fleetwood hopes to soundproof his new garage and

play in there. Yet his first choice in adult pastimes is his collection of cars. "I've got three cars I brought over from England that I've had for years: an old MG sportscar, an old Jensen, which is also an English car, and an Italian Ferrari. I recently bought a turbine Porsche, which is a very fast car. I love fast cars. When I was stone broke in England, instead of eating I'd be putting petrol in this old Jaguar sports car I had. I've always had a weak spot for cars."

As for the other members of Fleetwood Mac, guitarist Lindsey Buckingham has an expensive BMW, and Christine McVie, the keyboardist, has a Jaguar and a Rolls Royce. "John's got a jeep, which he's had for years. Stevie has a Volkswagon, a little beetle bug."

The last time I saw Mick Fleetwood and the group, they were backstage at a huge outdoor concert in Texas. Three camper trucks had been parked together like a U-shaped barricade. Behind a split-rail fence, Fleetwood Mac and assorted children, kin, friends, and hired hands were encamped. Just outside the fence, fans stood and stared at them as if they were pride of caged lions at the zoo.

Once it got dark and the group had its turn on stage, Fleetwood Mac turned into musical enchanters. Their love songs spun textures of warm summer days and haunting full-moon nights. Their heartbeat was the same two man rhythm section that has been the spark for Fleetwood Mac over so many years: Mick Fleetwood, the 6' 6" tall drummer flaying away, dressed in a dark vested outfit, and John McVie,

plucking methodically at his electric bass and sporting a T-shirt decorated with a penguin (the band's mascot).

There was Christine, earthy in her European peasant blouse and simple skirt, and Stevie Nicks, ready to be swept up by the sky, like the witch Rhiannon she sings about, dressed in billowing black gown and scarves. And, of course, Lindsey, curly haired and bearded, wearing velvet pants and a flowing white shirt, coaxing the tenderest notes from his guitar. Together their music and lyrics wove a spell so smooth as silk for 40,000 people who never sat down from the moment the band walked on stage. After the final encore, the applause seemed to go on forever.

I asked Mick whether the group's success has made it impossible to go out without being mobbed by fans.

"We've never stopped going out. And I dread the moment when we'd have to stop. The times that things get weird; I don't mind. It's a very small price to pay when people are just being enthusiastic, wanting to say hello and all. We're probably lucky because people genuinely want to come up and quietly say 'I enjoy your music,' or something like that. And off they go. Sometimes you get the impression that someone is very much in awe of meeting you. I like to make that person realize that it's just circumstance that I'm on records and in record shops. There's not really any difference between us."

Dressed casually, almost shy in person, the two women and three men in Fleetwood Mac

could be anybody's choice for big sisters and brothers. "That's the way a lot of people relate to us," says Mick. "It puts us in a position of feeling very responsible. The whole band is trying to keep things as human as possible and not get weird delusions of who we are. We want our music to stay connected. We want to stay humble."

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Are there a lot of pressures on the group to try to top the achievements of their last album?

"Of course there are," admits Mick. "We're working on rehearsals for our next album now. But we're just excited about making another album. We try to do what we feel we can do best. That makes us happy. The last time out we devoted eight months to recording an album. We're hoping this time it won't take more than five or six months to finish a record. Right now, we're listening to the songs that we've written since the last album."

Are there any songs which were recorded but didn't make it onto the best-selling *Rumours* album?

"Yes. Yes. But something has to go, you know? You hope you choose the right ones. There are quite a few good ones, actually. We just don't want to look back now."

Keeping an eye on tomorrow is a theme which runs through Fleetwood Mac's songs and through the band's own story. With their goal of playing good music together always foremost in their minds, Fleetwood Mac has survived personal and group crises to become one of the best-loved rock groups ever. Fleetwood Mac's

history is one of hard work and determination. It also features exotic locales and an international cast of characters. In fact, it reads like a blue jeans-to-riches rock 'n' roll movie.

We'll start in England, with young Mick Fleetwood, born in the seaside town of Cornwall. The son of a Royal Air Force officer, Mick spent several years in Cairo, Egypt, and in Norway by the time he was in his teens.

"I decided I wanted to be a professional musician when I was thirteen years old," Mick recalls. "And I was a professional musician by the time I was fourteen and a half."

What prompted his decision?

"I just wanted to play the drums. And not be at boarding school. It was as simple as that. I'd always wanted to play the drums. Heaven knows why. My dad bought me a drum kit. He gave me all the encouragement anyone could ask for. A lot of people thought he was crazy. He gave me the opportunity to do something I really wanted to. My parents have always said: 'If you feel you must do it, for goodness sake, do it.' My sister's an actress. My other sister, until she started having a big family, was a sculptress. There are times when I think parents regret being negative about one of their children wanting to do something on their own. I think it's important to just say, 'Well, if it doesn't work out, you know, bad luck, then try something else, but don't be afraid to go for it.'"

You wouldn't mind your daughters, Lucy and Amy, becoming musicians?

"Oh, no. Of course not."

Mick recalls the first professional job he ever had, playing at a youth club in London: "I can remember I was playing because I was lucky enough to have a professional drum kit, which would look good on stage. A fellow named Peter Bardens, who was living next door, heard me practicing. That's when he saw the drum kit. He got me that first job."

Was Mick nervous?



Fleetwood Mac

"Oh, yes. I still get nervous before going on stage, every time out. But it's a healthy sort of feeling. It's an eager nervousness; you know that as long as you go out and have a good time, things are going to go right."

Mick chose to pursue his drumming career at a moment when many English youngsters were being swept up by the sound of American blues and rock 'n' roll.

"I used to play along to records from the States. Old Elvis Presley records, that sort of thing. It helped to be in a musical scene that was quite active. The people you played with had a personal empathy with you. In the earliest times, when you're not really formed as a musician, it's important to have a rapport with other musicians and really, really get to know them. You know, often groups say: 'We started playing in the garage; we played there for three years together.' I think situations like that can stand you in good stead should things go well."

The bands which grew up in British rock during the early Sixties produced many of today's top stars. "There's a school of people who came out of those days and still seem to be around. Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Jeff Beck, just a whole load of them. I don't really know Rod anymore. I've lost contact with him. A lot of us just drifted apart over the years."

Is it anything more than coincidence that so many became rock stars?

"I think a lot has to do with the fact that all of us were slogging away for years. We had plenty of healthy groundwork. Then the luck and hard

work started hitting and everyone was able to do well. Hopefully each of us appreciates how lucky we are to be doing what we want to. A lot of people aren't as lucky as we."

When you started out, were you looking for stardom, or was simply playing music what interested you?

"Oh, no, just playing music. You walk around wanting to be a star and you'll probably be doing that when you're ninety years old. When we formed Fleetwood Mac, we realized that rock was an avenue that was very simple in form. It enabled you in a very uncomplicated way to express yourself. I think this attitude toward music still holds today. The simple way, the effective way of making music- we're always trying for that. It's often a lot harder to do just that: to make something come off in a very simple fashion, but just right, rather than overdoing it and trying to be too clever."

Even before Fleetwood Mac, Mick Fleetwood was much in demand as a drummer because he understood the role of his instrument in rock 'n' roll. "I'm lucky that I've never been out of work, so far. Whatever band I was in, I would just complement what the other musicians were playing. That's the golden rule: A drummer's job is to make sure there are strict controls on the music, but that they don't get in the way of the song."

While playing in a band which had once included Eric Clapton, Mick met a bass player named John McVie. "A next-door neighbor of John's had given him his first bass and sort of

taught him how to play. I don't think John's parents were too encouraging at first, to tell you the truth."

When Mick and John left their old band, they got together with a guitarist named Peter Green. Their new group, originally called Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, played interpretations of Afro-American electrified blues. Add the inspiration of guitarists Jeremy Spencer and Danny Kirwan, and at one time Fleetwood Mac became the only band in the land with three lead guitar players. By 1968, the group had a British #1 hit with an original instrumental, and had recorded the tune "Black Magic Woman," which Santana later turned into a big U.S. hit.

It seemed like Fleetwood Mac was on its way to international acclaim when guitarist Peter Green decided to retire from the business of making music. A few years later, Jeremy Spencer dropped out to join a religious sect. To offset the losses in the band's personnel, John McVie's wife, Christine, was asked to join as a keyboard player and vocalist.

"Christine had been playing in many of the same clubs and ballrooms where we performed. Her parents were receptive to the idea of her following a musical career. Her father was a classical musician. He played viola with the Birmingham Symphony Orchestra for years and years. Christine had classical training on the piano; that must have been an advantage for her."

Before joining Fleetwood Mac, Christine had sung as Christine Perfect with a British blues

band, Chicken Shack. About the time John McVie and Christine met, she was voted the best female vocalist of the year by a top English rock newspaper. Christine decided to leave Chicken Shack and rock 'n' roll behind and devote her time to being Mrs. McVie. After a few years of the housewife's life, she was ready for Fleetwood Mac's call to the open road.

For the first, but not the last time in the band's history, an American guitarist was recruited into Fleetwood Mac. Robert Welch's entry into the group coincided with a shift in style toward more melodic and harmony-filled songs. Two albums, *Future Games* and *Bare Trees*, added to the growing number of fans. To build its following, Fleetwood Mac played countless concerts in city after city on both sides of the Atlantic.

It was at this point that I first met the band. On an October afternoon in 1971, three members of the group were sitting in a modest New York hotel room watching the baseball World Series on TV: "We call that 'rounders' in England, only girls play it," Mick Fleetwood remarked. I remember guitarist Danny Kirwan saying about Fleetwood Mac: "Today we're one thing. Tomorrow we're something else. We're always changing." Within a few months Kirwan would be the next to leave the group.

I admit I was especially susceptible to liking the band since this was my first interview with a rock group. Still, I was totally won over with the good humor displayed by members of the band. The last thing Mick Fleetwood told me before

leaving for a publicity photo session in Central Park was, "What an odd business this is. Even though we've never met before and will probably never meet again, here I'm supposed to tell you all the most intimate things about myself so people can read about it. If I asked you all these questions, you'd think I was an awful snoop. This is quite a strange business."

The music business would soon deal Fleetwood Mac its biggest setback. After a particularly exhausting tour, the band was shocked to find that a business manager had gotten Fleetwood Mac impersonators together and sent them out on the road. To add injury to insult, the manager claimed that the group's name belonged to him.

Did Mick Fleetwood get discouraged?

"No. We decided it was time to take management into our own hands and base the band in Los Angeles. For those of us who came here from England, I can say that we've never regretted the move. Not for one moment."

Two more musicians would come and go and then it was Bob Welch's turn. The parting was friendly; later Mick Fleetwood would help Welch produce his million-selling song, "Sentimental Lady." Now Mick, John, and Christine were free to find the musicians who would take them to the next stage of the band's development.

While looking for a recording studio in Los Angeles, Mick Fleetwood got a chance to hear a tape by a California duo who had caught his ear.

Guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, it turned out, had grown up in Palo Alto, about 30 miles from San Francisco. He started playing guitar at the age of seven. After a long spell of playing folk music, he joined a rock band which included vivacious Stevie Nicks. The two became romantically involved and launched their own bumpy career as Buckingham/Nicks.

When Bob Welch left Fleetwood Mac it was time to invite the members of Buckingham/Nicks to be part of the big Mac attack. Mick Fleetwood telephoned Lindsey and Stevie to ask them aboard. In a matter of weeks the latest version of the group was in the studio to record an album which would introduce the new lineup to the world- and to each other. The album was simply titled *Fleetwood Mac*. It made stars out of the mighty Macs by selling over five million copies.

"We rehearsed that first one for about nine or ten days. It wasn't only to rehearse the material; it was literally because we'd never played together before. Then we went right ahead and made the album. It turned out pretty well for a band which had never spent time together."

The group's next effort, the supersmash *Rumours* album, was another story entirely.

"The *Rumours* album took a really long time," Mick wearily remembers. "We did some touring in between and things dragged on." Among the soap-opera happenings which slowed the making of the album were John and Christine's decision to live apart, and Lindsey and Stevie's falling out of love. As gossip of their personal



Stevie Nicks

problems made the rounds it became natural for the album to be titled *Rumours*. When it became the #1 album in copies sold until that time, there was no doubt that the group had triumphed over all its troubles.

The superstar edition of Fleetwood Mac has developed into a musical unit so well coordinated that its members seem to be reading each other's minds. "We enjoy being close," says Mick. "Just last night we were rehearsing at the

house and out of nowhere John started playing an amazing bass line. It was really great, you know. We were only jamming, but it was very tight. Things like that are very, very enjoyable for us."

Do the members of the band enjoy their time on the road?

"Yes, I think so. Touring is rather weird. You may be on the road for six weeks and everyone is complaining, 'Grumble, grumble, I want to go home' or something like that. Once you get off the road for three weeks everyone starts mumbling, 'Wouldn't it be nice to do a few gigs.' On the road, as hideous as it can be sometimes, there are many fond memories. 'Oh, do you remember when we were in...?' often comes up in our conversations. I've been on the road for fifteen years, so I've been more on the road than at home."

In addition to his time with the band, Mick has responsibility for managing Fleetwood Mac, weighing important career moves for the band.

How much time does managing take up?

"All the spare time I have."

Days, nights, weekends?

"I'm afraid so. That's why only a few groups manage themselves. I actually get paid for it. We all get equal shares in the band's income, but I don't write any songs, so this sort of evens things up. John doesn't write either and he used to be more involved in management. Then he sort of backed off. I think maybe John's happier just fishing. Everyone has his own little niche. I enjoy doing this."

How do you maintain your perspective?

"Years and years of practice. I feel a very broad understanding of what we should and shouldn't do. We don't care to do things which might make us a quick buck but may be very tasteless. We don't want Stevie Nicks dolls hanging in store windows. The image of the band shouldn't end up distracting us from what it's for and that's to make music. We're in the position of being five musicians who luckily enjoy playing together. That is the all-important thing. Without that, everything else is completely meaningless."

Does Fleetwood Mac make its decisions by democratic vote?

"Oh, yes, unless it's something that only one person would know about. There are certain things I alone follow, and if I say, 'I think we ought to do this,' everyone knows me well enough to trust my judgment. Things certainly haven't gone down the drain, so it's a very good situation for us. Very unusual, but it seems to work."

The result of controlling their own: business affairs is artistic freedom for the members of Fleetwood Mac.

"I think you can only create something that's genuine from yourself to yourself, initially. If you're working with five people, then to yourself means to that entity. Trying to encompass what the world would like to hear would be a big mistake. There are bands which have been manufactured, and they've been very conscious of the fact that they are going to put on a big show."

"The bombs go off and they're going out with blood coming out their mouths. Now, they may very well be happy, which is fine, but if we had done that, and had become very successful, I know, knowing the people in this band, we would not be satisfied with ourselves. We might have lots of money and everything else, but we would feel that we had sold ourselves short. Our guideline is to make sure we're all happy with what we're doing."

After years on the bumpy road to fame and fortune, it sounds like the members of Fleetwood Mac are pleased with their accomplishments. I ask Mick if he or anyone else in the band has any long-range goals now.

Says Mick Fleetwood: "We just hope to make a lot more music together" -a hope he shares with millions of rock fans, around the world.

BILLY JOEL

The Piano Man

The lights dim and a hush settles over Nassau Coliseum, a block-long sports auditorium located on Long Island, just outside New York City. The area around the Coliseum is suburban. This audience, mostly teenagers with some parents and other adults scattered throughout, has come to hear a rather unusual rock star.

He doesn't play guitar. He doesn't wear odd costumes. He doesn't dance around the stage or juggle a microphone. He's not all that young, nor is he especially handsome. He's only a rock 'n' roll piano man, whose songs about growing up and the drama of everyday life hit home every time.

A spotlight slashes through the darkness and lands on Billy Joel. From across the wide expanse of the auditorium he appears wide-eyed

and bushy-haired, wearing a sports jacket and a tie and blue jeans. He sits at his concert grand piano, as if he just invited 17,000 close friends into his living room.

There's a frenzy of applause, but it's more like a friendly handshake than a cheer. Billy Joel's fleet fingers glide down the keyboard. His right hand plays something classical. His left hand plays the rocking sound of boogie woogie. His band rollicks along while scattered claps keep time, echoing through the auditorium. The "piano man" is at the top of his form.

He seems totally at ease as he plays and sings. Between tunes he tells stories that are every bit as funny as comedian George Carlin's. He also does wonderful imitations, sounding exactly like Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Bob Dylan, Elton John, Mick Jagger, and Bruce Springsteen. His own songs combine all kinds of musical styles, confidently adapted to Billy Joel's distinctive rock sound.

"When I'm on stage," he confesses some time later, "when I'm performing and I'm supposed to be this huge rock star, if I ever stopped and analyzed what was going on... These people paid money to see me? They're all applauding me? Come on now. I'd lose it all. I'd fall to pieces up there."

For all the cockiness he displays to the world, Billy Joel can't take his rock 'n' roll stardom to heart. "I have a lot more respect for my plumber than for most rock 'n' roll stars. Anyone can be a rock 'n' roll star. If you have a freak hit record, you can be a star. If you dress a certain way and wear crazy makeup, you can be a star.

"But what does that mean? There's no substance to just that. Technically, a star is just a large ball of gas. That's all it is. I don't trust stardom. There's this myth of the rock star as this great being, some kind of superman. But if my toilet is out of order, my being a rock star isn't going to fix it. I'd need a plumber. What am I going to do, walk into my bathroom and by singing, fix the pipes?"

Off stage Joel is a study in modesty. He still has the spunky "knock this chip off my shoulder" attitude that captivates concert audiences, but he is also the first to poke fun at himself and his fellow rock artists.

"*Artist* is one of the most abused words in the English language," he says with a frown. "As soon as you sign a contract with a record company, the first sentence in the contract is 'Billy Joel is hereafter referred to as The Artist.' That's a joke. All you have to do is sign your name to a piece of paper and you're automatically an artist. The only time you can say you're an artist is when you're sixty-five or seventy years old and you're still doing it. If you've been a five-year rock star and you burn out and retire and disappear, that's not an artist. An artist is anybody who is excellent at his or her craft. You devote a lifetime to it. That's what an artist is."

In case he ever takes his own artistry too seriously, Billy Joel has the four musicians in his band to keep him from getting a swelled head. "I'm really lucky that way," he admits. "We're all pretty good friends and we keep each other down to earth. If any of us starts to pull a star act, well, if I do it, the drummer might jump all

over me, saying, 'Come on, stop acting like an idiot.' It is hard sometimes to keep yourself down to earth. But your friends know you for the jerk you were and always will be."

Though the songs that first brought him to national attention were called "The Piano Man" and "The Entertainer," Billy Joel has no desire to write any more songs about his experiences as a rock star. "I spend eight or nine months a year on the road traveling from concert to concert. Most people don't do that. I'm more interested in what most people do normally. Things that are considered commonplace or mundane, I find that romantic. A lot of people don't, I know. But everyone, no matter how dull they think their life is, has some fascinating element about them. Everybody's got a great story. Everybody's got a great song in them."

In person or on record, Billy Joel is never at a loss for words: "Love, hate, frustration, work, everyday give and take, that's what I like to write about. I feel it. I just put myself in that position. I'm not a prophet or a poet. I just write words and music. Whatever you get out of it is fine. I'm not offended when people misinterpret my lyrics. The only thing that bothers me is when people think everything I write is autobiographical. I'd say ten percent of what I write is autobiographical, so mostly I'm talking about other people. Common humanity is fascinating. Human beings are just amazing."

It's his ability to tell others' stories in song that makes Billy Joel among the most popular singer-composers of today. "I've gotten tele-

phone calls from friends in the middle of the night," he remembers. "They ask, 'Was that song about me?' Most of my songs are about composites of people. When I write a love song like 'Just The Way You Are' to my wife, it's also a love song for all women."

Billy Joel was born in New York City, in the borough of the Bronx; then his family moved to Levittown, a Long Island housing development



Billy Joel

of nearly identical one-family homes. "It can be hard growing up in the suburbs," he says now. "You think you're a nothing. You think you're a zero. Nobody really cares about you."

Young Billy Joel was different from the other children growing up in Levittown. For one thing, when he was seven his parents were divorced and his mother went to work to support Billy and his older sister on a secretary's salary. Billy soon became different in other ways. "I didn't have a TV set when I grew up," he recalls. "We had a TV but we didn't have the money to get it fixed. So what did I do? I started to read. I read everything. I used to read history books like they were novels. I was going to be a history teacher."

But Billy's real destiny was with the piano. He had started banging away at it when he was just two years old. At age four he was taken to Miss Francis down the block for piano lessons. "I took piano lessons like other kids went to Little League. It was something to do. I'm glad I did it, though I didn't always want to. By the time I was ten or eleven I hated practicing. I hated having to sit down and read the notes. I got lazy.

"When I had to practice," he continues, "and my mother was in the other room, if I had a Beethoven piece, instead of reading the notes I'd make it up. My mother knew Beethoven's style, so I had to come up with something in the style of Beethoven. I had to do a convincing job because my mother had good ears. She'd say: 'You're learning that one pretty quick.' The next

day I'd forget what I'd made up and play something else. She'd ask: 'What's that?' and I'd say to her: 'Oh, that's the second movement.' "

His piano lessons made for other difficulties: "I got into a lot of fights because the kids would say: 'Here comes the little piano boy.' I got beaten up a lot. That's when I started to take an interest in boxing. I went and learned how to box and I came back and beat up everybody who had ever beaten me. It sounds stupid now, but it seemed great then."

To prove he was tough, the "little piano boy" joined a gang. "We thought we were cool. We had motorcycles. We all wore purple shirts like Bernardo, the hero in the movie *West Side Story*. We wore matador boots. We called them Astra boots because they had a little rocket sewn on them. You have to remember this was in the Sixties, not the Fifties. Our older brothers were hoods: We were 'ditty boppers.' We *talked* about fighting instead of actually fighting."

What carried him through his difficult teens was the new music he began playing. The Beatles reached the shores of America and suddenly rock bands were forming in Levittown. "When I was fourteen," Billy Joel recalls, "there was a band on every block. I joined a group called the Echoes. We played at church dances and at the Teen Canteen at Hicksville High. At fourteen I was making money as a musician. I thought this was what I'd like to be doing for the rest of my life."

After the Echoes, he joined the Lost Souls, then a group called the Hassles, and finally a

heavy-metal rock band called Attila. At this point Billy Joel was getting tired of playing in half-empty halls and all-night taverns. "That's when I decided I didn't want to be a performer anymore. I just wanted to be a song writer. But I had a manager who said that if I wanted people to hear my songs, I'd have to record them myself. If I had a record out, I would have to play concerts so people could get to know me and my songs better. There was no way out of it."

Anxious for a record contract, Billy Joel jumped at the first offer, a mistake many young musicians make. "You can give lots of advice," he now explains, "but if somebody comes along and offers you a lump sum of money when you've been scraping by, it's very hard to turn down. I was twenty-one-old enough to be legal and young enough to be stupid about these things. I didn't know what I was signing. I signed away everything."

For a song writer' the money paid by other performers to use a tune on a record often mounts up to more than what he or she may make by singing it. In his contract to record *Cold Spring Harbor*, his first album, Billy Joel signed away his earnings on all future songs. There were plenty of other mistakes: the final version of the album was recorded at the wrong speed, the record company was having problems, the band Billy put together to tour with was unexciting.

He decided to get away from it all and start out all over again in California, 3,000 miles away. "I left without telling anyone where I was going,"

he recalls. "I went to the West Coast and used a different name, Bill Martin. Martin is actually my middle name. I got a job in Los Angeles working in a piano bar to pay the rent."

His experience as a cocktail-lounge pianist later became the basis for his song "Piano Man." Although he tried not to take the job too seriously, it had a way of intruding on his thoughts. "I wore my shirt opened and played requests and people left me alone," he says. "But weird things would happen. One night this guy came in with a gun. He was yelling about Communists or something. This bar was decorated in red, with red lights and red upholstery, so he starts yelling: 'This place is red! Communism is red! You're all Communists.' There were all these construction workers at the end of the bar. I thought people were about to get hurt. So I started playing 'God Bless America' and the whole bar started to sing along. Then somebody yelled 'Free drinks for everybody!' I made a lot of tips that night."

Eventually Billy Joel's contractual problems were straightened out and he was ready to record again. His first album for a different record company featured "Piano Man." His next album included "The Entertainer." Many listeners seemed to ignore the wide range of his musical styles, concentrating on these two songs, to Billy Joel's dismay.

He complains, "I'm a little sick of always hearing the *piano man*, the *piano. man*, the *piano man*. I also play harmonica and sing and kid around. Because people called me the piano

man, the piano on my first records was always mixed way up so it was louder than the other instruments. I don't agree that the piano should always be a lead instrument. I like guitar. I've been rocking and rolling with my band for years. I like people to hear that."

Though Los Angeles inspired a number of his songs, after three years in the land of the palm trees Billy Joel was homesick for the East. He moved back to New York and recorded his next album *Turnstiles*, with such tunes as "Say Goodbye To Hollywood" and "New York State of Mind."

"I still like California," he says. "The weather is nice. The native California people are nice. But I didn't go out there. with the intention of staying. I woke up one day and just said: 'I'm going back to New York.'"

Although he was popular with growing numbers of fans, stardom for Billy Joel would wait until he was settled in New York with a down-home solution to his persistent business problems.

"New York is a romantic place to me," Billy Joel explains. "What Disneyland is to people in Los Angeles, New York is to people who grew up in Long Island, like I did. It's fascinating and wonderful and terrifying and scary. It's everything rolled into one. It's the haunted house and the roller coaster and the horror show and great food. I have an apartment in Manhattan, although I've still got a place on Long Island."

His house on Long Island is a fancy mansion,

the kind he dreamed of as a child, but he prefers to live on New York's busy East Side. Being so close to millions of people does have its drawbacks. "In New York City if I get an idea for a song in my apartment at three o'clock in the morning, I can't just start banging on the piano. At three o'clock somebody's going to knock on the door and say: 'Shut up. You make too much noise. You wake my children up.' And I'd say: 'Well, I'm writing this song.' And they'd say, 'I don't care what you do! I've got to get some sleep!' So I got the house so I can write songs in the middle of the night. But I get most of my ideas from being in the city."

Writing songs isn't as easy as Billy would like: "I don't enjoy it. When I have to write I go around and kick things. I don't shave. I get up in the morning, have coffee, and sit down at the piano. You have to have discipline, but I always find the best songs are the ones you write quickly. You're sitting there and it just comes out. I like all kinds of music - jazz, country, rock, you name it. If I write a soft ballad, the next song I'll write will be a hard rock 'n' roll tune. I don't want to keep writing the same thing. I want to interest *myself*."

After years of management problems, Billy Joel's career took a dramatic turn upward when he asked his wife to handle all his business affairs. "One night in September of nineteen seventy-six, my wife Elizabeth and I were sitting around our brownstone. 'Everything is a mess,' I said. 'Why don't you manage me?' I was half-serious, but the next day there was a secretary

there. Phones were installed. She even had an agent come in to start booking me for concerts. Overnight, our home was turned into an office and I couldn't find a place to sit down."

Because his career was run out of his home, the name Home Run Management was chosen. Today Home Run has its own suite of offices a few blocks away from Billy and Elizabeth's apartment.



Billy Joel in concert

With UCLA School of Management graduate Elizabeth to free him of financial concerns, within a year Billy Joel recorded his most popular albums to date: *The Stranger* and *52nd Street*. Songs like "Movin' Out," "Just The Way You Are," and "My Life" filled the radio. His concerts, held in the biggest auditoriums across the country, were instantly sold out. Stardom was his.

"I think I'm lucky," Joel says. "I had a good idea of where my talents were because my parents made me take piano lessons when I was four years old, I had my vision set. I'm going to do this for the rest of my life, whether I have more hit records or not."

Independence and determination, these are the lessons of Billy Joel's *life* as well as his songs. It's the message he shares with all his listeners. As he sums it up: "I think everyone has a special potential. The point is to fulfill it."

STEVIE WONDER

Life In the Key Of Songs

My first glimpse of Stevie Wonder came several years ago at a gala birthday party in his honor. If your name is Stevie Wonder, you have a Wonderful party in a New York hotel ballroom with loads of delicious soul food: ribs and collard greens and corn bread and peach cobbler. You have famous people like painter Andy Warhol and the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger in attendance. And because you're Stevie Wonder and you live by your own clock, you wait until the party's been going for several hours before making an appearance.

I remember Stevie Wonder's grand entrance. As soon as the door opened, a tidal wave of commotion flooded the room. Suddenly everybody was on their feet, craning their necks to spot their host in a crush of bodies. Over at the

far end of the hall was Stevie himself, nattily dressed in a blue suit and turtleneck sweater, his head and shoulders bobbing rhythmically above a sea of teeming humanity.

All around him photographers were pushing and shoving to get a clear view. Publicity seekers fluttered nearby like dragonflies. Earnest rock critics tried to get in a word or two with the reclusive star. Here and there loud-talking record-business types jutted out like reefs in treacherous waters.

Led by his assistant, Ira Tucker, his mother and brother, Calvin, in tow, Stevie Wonder was the calm at the eye of a storm. Smiling broadly, he made his way through the crowd and past me. He was taller and more wiry than I expected. Six feet, two inches tall, he carried himself in an angelic manner. I wondered how he could remain so peaceful amidst all this confusion. Strobe lights flashing. People gawking. Hey, Stevie! Here, Stevie!

Suddenly I was being pulled forward by Stevie's wake. Wedged in on all sides, I let myself be tugged along by the crowd while I shut my eyes. Instantly all the unpleasantness in the room was gone. Instead of prying photographers, all I could sense were the cricket clicks of their camera shutters. The gawkers disappeared. The whisperers and the shouters were still scattered around the ballroom, but what filled the air were the strains of Stevie's song, "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life" playing over the disco sound system. All night, music had been playing and I had hardly noticed. Now

with my eyes closed it enveloped me. In that moment I had a faint idea of what it must be like to be Stevie Wonder: an endless night brightened by his music and the sounds of life around him.

There's been so much written about Stevie Wonder having to overcome the handicap of total blindness. To many he's the Wonder-man who against all odds has become a rock 'n' roll superstar and has won fifteen of the record industry's Grammy Awards-more than any other artist. Or he's the blind singer-poet in a tradition every bit as old as Homer of ancient Greece and as rocking as the ever-popular Ray Charles and Jose Feliciano.

Up close, Stevie Wonder doesn't act like someone who is supposed to be handicapped. "I never knew what it was to see, so it's just like seeing," he explains. "The sensation of seeing is not one that I have and not one that I worry about." Like any sighted person, he goes to the movies and watches television (friends tell him what's happening on the screen), clicks the lights on and off when he goes into the bathroom (a habit he fell into after hearing other people do it), and has even flown a plane.

He never uses a cane or a seeing-eye dog, relying on family and friends to help him get around. In fact, there is little outward evidence of Stevie's inability to see, except in the constant bobbing of his head. "My moving my head around like that is what's called a 'blindism,' " he says. "When you're blind you build up a lot of excess energy other people get rid of through



Stevie Wonder accepting one of his many awards.

their eye movements. You've got to work it off some way. It's an unconscious thing."

Clearly, Stevie Wonder doesn't consider himself handicapped: "We are trying to get people to understand that a handicap is only one when you make it that way." Nor does he think of his lack of sight as blindness: "I cannot understand how people can be so blind to themselves, spiritually blind. How can people be continuously mistreated and still accept it, and how can the mistreaters continuously get away with it?"

Stevie insists that being blind has had its advantages: "I view it as a blessing in that I see people only for the vibe they give off. I don't see color, right? So, if a person is black or white, the only way I know is by voice quality. I don't base my liking people on the color they are."

While on the subject of colors, Stevie describes how he imagines them. "When you say blue, I get a kind of feeling; blue in my mind is a very fresh color. Red is an exciting color. Black has a lot of mystery. When I think of green, I think of a very smooth, flat surface. To me, brown is a little duller than green, isn't it?"

When asked how much his blindness has influenced his music, he replies: "It played a part, in that I have to use my imagination to write about things I've heard people talk about." Is there anything he would like to see-if he had the power to? "The earth," he says, "because it's beautiful; but I've already seen it, because I feel it."

Like the sun, music lights up Stevie Wonder's universe. On a quiet tree-lined New York City street stands his four-story brownstone town house, its top floor devoted to his musical instruments. This is where he spends many hours rehearsing, composing, and just plain noodling around. He also maintains a residence in Los Angeles-an apartment in the Beverly Hills area close to his favorite recording studio.

Stevie, who expressed the joy of becoming a father in his song "Isn't She Lovely," shares family life with his wife, Yolanda, and their two children, Aisha Zakiya (her name means "Life

and Intelligence") and a son, Kieta Sawandi ("Worshiper and Founder"). His family is very closely knit; he is seldom out of touch with his mother, sister, and four brothers. His brother Calvin lives in New York and works with Stevie. The rest of his relatives live in Los Angeles.

Stevie Wonder's story begins in Saginaw, Michigan, on May 13, 1950, with his birth. His real name is Stevland Judkins Morris. A full month premature, the boy was placed in an incubator, and it may be that too much oxygen caused him to lose his sight. Years later, Stevie Wonder reflects: "A girl who was born on the same day as me was also put into the incubator, and she died. I personally think I'm lucky to be alive."

Soon after the boy's birth, his mother moved the family to Detroit. Stevland grew up like his brothers and sisters and neighbors on the poor side of town. He didn't even know that one of his senses was missing until the fateful day when he received "a whippin' for stepping in dog do in my backyard. I knew something was wrong," he recalls. "I never really wondered about my blindness or asked questions about it, because to me being blind was something normal. It used to worry my mother, I know; she used to play for me to have sight someday. Finally, I just told her I was happy being blind and I thought it was a gift from God. I think she felt better after that."

His blindness "never really separated me from other kids." In fact, he admits, "I got into a lot of mischief. I used to get into more trouble

than most sighted kids. I used to hop from the rooftops of the sheds in our backyards - until I got a whippin' from my mother." Despite the memories of whippin's, this was a marvelous time for him, a time he later recalled in his nostalgic tune, "I Wish."

"I can see it crystal clear in front of me. It was a very special part of my life. If I had it to live over again, I wouldn't want it to be any other way. I owe a lot to my friend John Glover, and to his mother, Ruth, who was responsible for my getting a record contract. John and I, we formed a group called 'Stevie and John.' I would play bongos and John played guitar. I'd sing and he'd do some of the harmonies for me. We did a lot of songs that were popular in the Fifties."

Actually, Stevland's musical talents showed themselves at a much earlier age. "I played my uncle's four-hole key-chain harmonica when I was four years old," he recalls. "When I was six, I started playing an upright piano at a neighbor's house." In addition, he loved percussion: "I was always beating on tables with a spoon or beating on those little cardboard drums they used to give kids. I'd beat them to death." He went through several sets of toy drums until the Lions Club gave him a real set at a Christmas party for blind children. At the age of seven, he was given a piano by a neighbor who was moving away. By the time he was eight, he could play the bongos, drums, harmonica, and piano. Soon he was entertaining people on the porches of the houses down the block from where he lived. "We used to get pretty big crowds playing on

those porches. This one time, a lady who was a member of our church-I used to sing solo at the church services at Whitestone Baptist Church-she came along and she told me: 'I'm ashamed of you for playing that worldly music out here.' She went and told the people at the church, and they told me to leave. And that's how I became a sinner." He laughs. "I had visions of becoming a minister," he adds. "I also thought of being a doctor or an electrician."

For all of his talent, the odds appeared to be stacked against a career in music for Stevland Morris. "People at school used to tell me I couldn't make it, that I would end up making potholders instead. After I thought about being a musician, I became determined so I could prove those people wrong."

His big break came when he was 11 years old. One of the singers with the best-selling group The Miracles heard about Stevland's musical gifts. He introduced the youngster to Berry Gordy, Jr., president of a Detroit record company soon to be known as Motown. Gordy signed the boy to a contract and insisted on changing his name to Little Stevie Wonder.

Some people at Motown still recall Stevie in those days as a skinny kid who loved to hang around the recording studio. They remember him as somewhat of a pest, dropping by every afternoon after school and staying until dark, playing all the instruments, and getting in the way of other performers who were being recorded. Then a few years later, when he was 13, and being advertised as the "12-Year-Old

Genius," he recorded a hit single entitled "Fingertips," which featured his enthusiastic harmonica playing before a concert audience. It sold over one and a half million copies.

Becoming a professional musician brought major changes. For one thing, Stevie couldn't go to public school anymore. "I remember when the Board of Education said that I couldn't perform. The Detroit schools couldn't accommodate my wanting to play on the road. I cried and I prayed for a long time. Then the school superintendent got me into the Michigan School for the Blind and I was able to keep on touring." While at the Michigan School he was taught classical piano and got his knuckles rap-ped when he tried playing rock 'n' roll.

With the success of "Fingertips," he started performing so often that his record company arranged for a tutor, who was also legally blind, to travel with Stevie and keep him progressing with his studies in daily classes. Wonder and his tutor, Ted Hull, have remained close friends; recently the singer helped dedicate Hull's center for training the handicapped in Michigan.

Of his time spent traveling from city to city with the Motortown Review, a busload of Motown's top recording stars, Stevie recalls: "When you're traveling on the road, you have to learn to get to know yourself, always know where you are as a person, what your likes are. I had to learn this at a very young age, and fast."

All through his teens, Little Stevie Wonder toured the United States, performed for millions of people, and recorded a succession of top-

selling tunes. Soon the Boy Wonder was a giant of the music scene. At the age of 18, he was six feet tall, yet he was still being treated as a child. Of all the songs he sang which made their way onto the Top 40 popularity charts, only a handful were written by him. He was still considered an able musician and distinctive vocalist who was at his best singing other people's words in finger-popping tempos: But Stevie Wonder had other ideas. He didn't care to be *Little* anymore.

As Stevie was about to turn 21, he decided to call a halt to the whirlwind of recording and performing. Having grown into adulthood, he now wanted to choose his own path. "I then asked the question again, of where am I going, what am I going to do. I had to see and feel what I wanted to do and feel the direction of my destiny. I think when you change gradually you still have a certain thing that you left behind. When you make an abrupt change, you say, 'okay boom, this is what this is going to be' - *click* - and you do that. You can't gradually leave a kind of music. You have to do what you feel musically."

Once he was sure of the sounds he wanted to create, Stevie Wonder set out to gain complete control over his musical career. He dropped the "Little" from his name and negotiated a new contract with Motown which would eventually gain him over \$13 million and allow him to record without interference. This kind of financial and artistic security gave Stevie the latitude to create an inventive album of his own songs, *Music Of My Mind*. He had carved out a spot for



Steve Wonder in concert

himself which other recording stars admired.

At no point did he ever take his success for granted: "I haven't paid dues like, say, the musicians in Duke Ellington's or Count Basie's bands. I've been on the bus and rode for fourteen hours and had to change out back somewhere and had to sing through microphones made of cardboard. But I'm very, very lucky and have to thank everyone my success came early. I thank God and all the people who've made it possible."

In the following years, Stevie recorded two more pioneering albums, *Talking Book* and *Innervisions*, began his streak of Grammy awards, and found his message of universal love, justice, and happiness gaining an ever-widening audience. It was then that disaster struck, and Stevie Wonder came close to dying, only to re-emerge more spiritual, confident, and successful than before.

On August 6, 1973, on a treacherous road outside of Durham, North Carolina, Stevie Wonder was asleep in the front seat of a car taking him to his next concert. Up ahead a truck loaded with logs braked suddenly and the car smashed into it. One of the logs snapped its chains. It came flying through the windshield of the car, crashing right into the rock star's forehead. He was unconscious when they pulled his body from the wreckage and rushed him to a nearby hospital. He remained unconscious, at death's door, for nearly two weeks.

Ira Tucker, his personal assistant, remembers the first sign that Stevie was on the road to recovery. "When I got to the hospital, I couldn't even recognize him. His head was swollen up five times normal size. Nobody could get through to him. I knew he liked to listen to music real loud. I thought if I shouted in his ear it might reach him. The doctor told me to try it, it couldn't hurt. The first time there was no response. The next day I went back and I got right down by his ear and sang 'Higher Ground.' His fingers started moving in time to the song. I said 'Yeaaaah! This dude is going to make it.'"

After he regained consciousness, it took Stevie weeks before he could move again. He seemed to have lost his sense of smell. Everyone's great fear was that he had lost his ability to play music. Ira Tucker describes a tense moment. "We brought one of his instruments to the hospital. I think it was his clarinet. For a while, Stevie just looked at it. You could see he was afraid to touch it, because he didn't know if he could still play. Then when he finally did play it- man, you could see the happiness spreading all over him."

Since his accident, life has become even more precious, a feeling which enriched his next albums, *Fulfillingness First Finale* and *Songs In The Key of Life*, his most popular records to date. Many listeners responded to the devout sentiments he expressed in songs like "Heaven Is 10 Zillion Light Years Away" and "As."

The universally respected singer-songwriter considers himself a religious man: "I was brought up in the Baptist church, but I don't belong to any specific church. I speak to God any time that I want to. I feel that he's in your heart and in your soul when you let him in. I respect all religions. The true religion, in my mind, is that we all are one. No way is just the right way. I think there's only one code we should remember: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"

For him, music is a gift from the bounteous earth: "I feel the cycle of the sun going up and down. I feel the world spinning around. Everything is from the earth or from the atmosphere or

from something. It all comes from what's around you. God only lends you the ability to detect it, to pick it up and use it. People can tell when something expresses the environment and life itself."

Because Stevie's musical inspiration might strike as suddenly as the summer rain, a tape recorder is never far from his fingertips. "Usually what happens is that the melody comes first and then sometime later I'll sit down. and write the lyrics," he explains. "If I have my cassette machine, I'll just put down the melody. If I'm in the studio and I come up with something spontaneous, I'll record the rhythm track, which usually consists of a synthesizer programmed for the bass part, and a piano or clarinet, or whatever other instrument I may be using. Later, I'll add the horns and strings and all. After the song is nearly complete, I'll lay down the final lyrics. It's the last step, but I will have been thinking about lyrics all along. Maybe I'll come up with a punch line and work around that theme."

In addition to the memorable songs he has written and sung, Stevie has earned the esteem of his fellow musicians with his use of totally new sound textures, thanks in large part to his mastery of the synthesizer. This electronic keyboard instrument uses a panel of switches to create virtually any type of sound that can be imagined. "The synthesizer has allowed me to do a lot of things I've wanted to do for a long time. It has added a whole new dimension to music." He explains that the synthesizer is "a

way to directly express what comes from your mind.

"In music the number one thing is emotion," he adds. "I believe everyone should be able to grasp what you're doing. It shouldn't be so complicated that it's beyond everyone's capabilities, nor should it be so simple that you don't use your mind to think about it. Everything that I experience is in the songs that I write. My music is my way of giving backlove."

Stevie Wonder fans can look forward to the day when he decides to issue some of the 200 songs he has recorded but never released to the public. Also, in the offing are plans for a TV special and an autobiography. But Stevie is in no hurry. "My music actually speaks for me as close as anything that I could ever do. If you listen to the songs that I've written, you will hear how I feel. It's the deepest me. As an artist, I hope that the impression I make on people is a positive one. My general feeling about heroes is that if they can inspire people to recognize their own capabilities, they're working as positive models. If I'm a hero to anyone, I hope it's because I'm an encouragement."

KC

The Sound of Sunshine

Harry Wayne Casey, the KC of KC & the Sunshine Band, is grinning broadly. He is in his private domain, his own recording studio, hidden amidst a bunch of warehouses in Hialeah, Florida. Far off the beaten path, it's not the kind of place where you'd expect to find one of the creators of today's disco sound.

Unlike many rock stars, who feel they have to live and record near the major centers of the music industry—New York, Los Angeles, and Nashville—KC has chosen to stay close to home. He records his golden newbies—at the moment he's putting the final touches on his latest album—only a few miles from where he grew up, beneath palm trees and plenty of sun.

The atmosphere is unmistakably tropical, both outside the studio and on the tracks

recorded within. KC's songs are hot: upbeat and up-tempo, they are sparked by the joyous electrified funk which is the trademark of the "Sunshine Sound." This is brassy, dancing, partying, summertime on the beach, good-times-for-everyone music.

KC, it turns out, is every bit as sunny as his lyrics and tunes. He has been called the "Huckleberry Finn of Disco," and it's easy to see why. His handsome boyish face radiates warmth, energy, and good humor. How much of this would evaporate in the clock-conscious high-pressure centers of the recording industry is anybody's guess. But KC doesn't have to worry; he can go into his home-town studio to record when he pleases.

"I go in whenever I get the feeling," says KC. "Morning, night. Some days it could be from ten in the morning to six at night, or from six in the evening to ten or three in the morning."

Except for the musicians he is working with, nobody is allowed inside this studio while KC is creating his million-selling platters. "No one," he insists, "not even family or friends. I don't like to have a lot of people looking over my shoulder while I'm recording. I don't want it running through my mind what they may be thinking. The only thing that is important is the final product and whether people like it or not."

Inside, the Sunshine Sound studios are no different from any other top recording facility. There are several large rooms filled with the clutter of musical instruments, amplifiers, microphone stands, and snaking cables. At the

heart of the complex, separated by large double-pane soundproof windows, is the control room, where several huge control panels are covered with more lights than a Christmas tree. These panels, with all their switches, regulate the sounds picked up by the microphones and feed them into a professional tape recorder.

If you've ever noticed, the tape in a cassette recorder is pretty narrow. Professional machines, however, use tape two inches wide. Along its width there is enough room for 24 different "tracks" of sound, more than enough for each instrument and vocal KC might want to put in a song.

These various tracks can all be recorded at the same time, or just a few tracks can be "cut" and then added to in a process known as overdubbing. "Some people go in and they record everything at once," KC explains. "They cut all the instruments, including horns. Everybody is right there at the same time. We do it a little bit differently. First we go in and cut the basic rhythm track."

The tight galloping rhythms of the Sunshine Band are the result of collaboration between KC on electric piano, bass player and musical partner, Rick Finch, lead guitarist Jerome Smith, and drummer Robert Johnson. "We usually have a whole song ready when we go in there. The only thing we might do in the studio is to maybe arrange it a little bit. The melody is usually in my head and I sing it during the session."

Because what he is going for at first is a crisp, exciting, instrumental foundation, vocals are

not given much importance. In fact, the words KC sings initially might have nothing to do with the song which will eventually be released, KC recalls that his first #1 smash hit, "Get Down Tonight," really started out as something called "What You Want." Somewhere along the line, the right words came to him: "I don't really worry about it when we're doing the rhythm track."

This first step in the recording process doesn't take too long: "We usually get it done. within three or four takes on each song. We'll do maybe two songs a night. Within three hours we can do two songs. That's only the beginning, though.;

Like a pie crust without a filling, the rhythm track for a KC & the Sunshine Band tune may be pretty good, but other ingredients must still be added to the recipe. For more crunch, the Latin percussion of a conga drum is recorded on its own track. To add tartness, three brass players' tracks are layered in. Then extra smoothness is applied by three female background vocalists. Finally, there's the rich topping of KC's exuberant lead vocals, the result of long hours spent at the microphone with no one else around.

Though the group is well known for its happy spontaneity on stage and on its recordings, capturing the full force of the Sunshine Band is a long, painstaking process. "All that work can add up to a period of months," KC points out. "It can be quite strenuous. You end up having to listen to a song a million times. You can listen to a song so much you lose touch with it. That's when you have to break away."

While many rock stars will rely on a producer or a recording engineer to handle the technical aspects of getting their sound on a disk, KC and Rick Finch have the knowledge and experience to do it all themselves: where to place microphones, what to overdub, how to mix the final tracks. They've learned all the technical skills necessary for making their own records.

"We learned to use studio equipment by experimenting, by being around it and by being into it." As a teenager, KC had already started haunting the recording studio closest to his home. "I worked in their record warehouse first. Then eventually I started trying to learn how to run the control board. When I met Rick, he already knew how and I just stopped messing with it. I let him take it over because he was already doing a great job."

Ask KC about his earliest memory of music, and he says: "I first remember music when I was two or three, in church. It was Pentecostal Church and we sang a lot of gospel music. I'm still religious in a lot of ways. I think it all comes from God. I feel that music is a spiritual celebration. It comes out of somewhere or someone and God is. the only being t can relate it to."

At home, Harry Casey's family was deeply religious and very musical. "I remember hanging around the piano, singing gospel songs and a little of everything else. We didn't sing rock 'n' roll necessarily. To certain members of the family it was sinful music."

Before the age of 10, Casey wasn't especially

fond of rock 'n' roll, either. "As a matter of fact, I didn't like Elvis and all that." Yet, in grade school, whenever he was asked to fill out a form with the question, "What do you want to be?" he would always answer, "An entertainer."

"In school, I was involved in every talent show all the way up from first grade. I was always on the stage somehow, somewhere, at church or at school. Wherever there was an opportunity to be up in front of people, I was there."

Then KC-to-be started listening to pop music in the early Sixties. "The Beatles were happening then. The Motown sound was coming out. Music was changing into this new kind of rock 'n' roll. I listened to everything. My favorites were soulfully oriented records where the people really felt what they were singing. They weren't just trained to sing every note perfectly. What was coming through was some God-given talent; it wasn't just something they had learned."

At the age of 14, the piano became a preoccupation. "I started messing around with it. I took piano lessons for about six months, I think. Then the teacher said I didn't have it together. I didn't get discouraged, because I had my own rhythm. It was different from what I was learning. It was built into me and I couldn't control it. It's there naturally."

"I kept practicing the piano for a while," KC continues. "Then it got boring. I wanted a piano that would sing, and mine wasn't singing very well." Despite this setback, young KC remained



KC & the Sunshine Band

infatuated with music. "I used to sell mangos, coconuts, anything so I could go out and buy the latest records."

When a new family moved in across the street, KC took the opportunity to form a rock band with his new friends. "We were called Five Doors Down. There were five of us and we all went down in height. I don't know who came up with the name. The band only stayed together for a year or so. After it broke up, I didn't really try to get into another group."

With his graduation from high school, KC's show-business ambitions were put on the back burner. "My mother wanted me to go out and get a job and make something of myself. My father never did say anything about a career as a performer. It was up to me, whatever I felt like doing.

"I was looking for a job and I figured since I liked records and music, working behind the counter in a record store was the place for me. It would be the only place where I could be happy. I had already worked in a drugstore and knew I wasn't happy moving boxes of tissues around."

Harry Casey was hired as a clerk by the Recordsville store in Hialeah. His job included visiting the wholesale distributors who supplied records to the store. All of KC's favorite records seemed to come from one distributor. When KC saw the recording studios that belonged to this company, he decided this would be his road to stardom.

"I started hanging around the T.K. studios, but nobody took me seriously. The owner wouldn't give me a job. Finally, he got tired of seeing me spend all my spare time there. He asked why I wasn't doing anything, and then he gave me a job boxing records in the warehouse. I knew I would have to prove myself before getting a chance to work in the studio."

While working in the warehouse, KC also found himself writing lyrics. "That wasn't my main thing. It kind of happened unexpectedly. I used to dabble around. If I had a problem with a girl, I would write some lyrics about it. Instead

of going and talking to somebody about it, I would write the problem out of my head." One such effort earned him his first co-writing credit on a T.K. record.

It was also in the warehouse that Harry Casey met another teenage music fan. "Rick Finch came to work there at about the same time as me. He played bass in several bands, and he was really into electronics and that type of thing. They brought Rick out of the warehouse because his skill with electronics was so valuable. But a singer like me, a white singer who wanted to sing soul, didn't stand much of a chance."

KC managed to work his way out of the warehouse. "I was doing things on my own in the studio when nobody else was around. Rick was starting to help people produce their records. Well, one thing led to another, and we decided to do something together. That was in nineteen seventy-three."

On the first of January, 1973, to be exact, Harry Wayne Casey attended a wedding reception which featured a group playing Caribbean music known as junkanoo. "It was all percussion: goat skin drums, cowbells, and whistles. You couldn't help but move to that sound. The feeling got into your whole body. I thought it would be great to bring junkanoo to the public."

Soon after, KC & the Sunshine Junkanoo Band made their debut in the recording studio with a tune called "Blow Your Whistle." Together KC and Finch wrote, arranged, produced, and performed the song, along with some help from other T.K. artists. "It was all just a bunch of

friends of ours. For the second single, 'Sound Your Funky Horn,' we put our band together. That's when it really became KC & the Sunshine Band. We dropped the 'Junkanoo' from our name because we were after a more polished sound."

KC's first efforts drew a modest response. "I was still doing odd jobs around T.K." he remembers. "I went on tour with the band and came back and answered the phones in the studio. The time was January, nineteen seventy-four. I'd-never seen the world in such bad shape. There was an oil shortage on. To get out of my depression I started to write lyrics. In one night, I came up with an entire song 'Rock Your Baby.'"

After recording instrumental tracks of the song with members of the Sunshine Band, KC gave singer George McCrae the opportunity to do the vocal. Within a matter of weeks, "Rock Your Baby" was a #1 hit in 52 countries around the world. "By this time, I was looked upon completely differently at T.K. No more answering phones. The company had almost gone bankrupt. It was almost over with. Then our record came along and saved everything."

Though the "Sunshine Sound" had spread all over the earth, KC & Company were still largely unknown outside of Hialeah. As these things occasionally happen, the group gained more fame in England than back in the U.S. Anxious to please their new fans, KC was getting ready to tour the U.K. when he suffered an attack of appendicitis. Still in pain several weeks later, he



KC and one of the members of the Sunshine Band

braved the rigors of a tour which covered 48 cities in just 24 days. Naturally KC and the group took the old country by storm. England picked up the "bump" disco-dance step by watching the Sunshine Band's raucous onstage choreography.

Meanwhile, America was falling into step with the Hialeah sound. KC's "Get Down Tonight" reached the top of the popularity charts, quickly followed by another #1, "That's, The

Way (I Like It)." Within another year, KC & the Sunshine Band would have another pair of best-selling songs: "Shake, Shake, Shake (Shake Your Booty)" and "I'm Your Boogie Man." At the same time the high-spirited group was making countless television appearances, ranging from The Dolly Parton Show to *The Midnight Special*, from Super Bowl previews to New Year's Eve parties. KC's star quickly rose from coast to coast.

As the group became more visible, people expressed surprise that apple-cheeked KC could sing and play black rhythm and blues with such authority. "I got so tired of hearing about the black and white thing," KC complains. "That's all over with. It has been for over a hundred years."

KC hasn't allowed success to separate him from his family: "I have always been close to them. Since I've had my success, I've also grown older. During this time, I've moved out of my parents' house. That's part of growing up. But I'm still really close to them."

He describes the house he shares with Rick Finch as "a pretty big house. Big enough to get lost in. It has a swimming pool and a lot of trees around. It has a wall surrounding it, so it's pretty private. Sometimes fans show up and ring the doorbell. If I feel I'm presentable I go to the door and answer it. I get more nervous than the fans do, I think, when they come up."

Among the inhabitants in this house are dozens of pets. "Turtles, fish, birds. There's about

thirty or forty birds: parrots, macaws, and they all talk. They're all in one large bedroom." How does anyone ever get any sleep with the birds in a chatty mood? "They're quiet when you're quiet. They only start yelling when they think you're up and around."

As for KC's grown-up toys: "I've got a pinball machine, a pool table, a video tape recorder. I've got all the toys. My sound system at home has speakers about five feet high and there are four of them. I like to listen to music full blast."

Like several other rock stars, he has become a car collector. "I'm not collecting real old ones. For instance, I brought a sixty-seven Corvette and had it redone, back to brand new. I've got a sixty-seven Pontiac Le Mans that I had redone. And I have a Jaguar."

Are there any goals KC has set for the future?

"Just to be the biggest group in the world." And how does he hope to attain that goal? "Well, our music makes people happy and makes them feel good. You know, all the songs have a message in them. I hope the message in each song can help people with that particular problem. I hope our music can take their minds off of all their problems."

Judging from the popularity of his happy tunes, KC and friends are well on their way to his goal. The prospect of the Sunshine Band beaming supreme is not a selfish one for KC. After all, he says, "I just want everybody to enjoy themselves."

What could be sunnier than that?

SHA NA NA

The Peaceful Greasers

Imagine 10 of the ugliest, goofiest refugees from the sappy days of the Fifties. The kinds of toughs who wear clothes the Salvation Army couldn't give away (except for the guys wearing gold threads that make them look like overweight Christmas tree ornaments), and who slick back their hair with enough glop to lubricate every car and bus and taxi in the entire universe.

Did I say *ugly*? These fellows are so far gone, rats come to them for ugly lessons! As for *goofy*? If they acted any smarter they'd have the I.Q. of a lamppost! Hard to imagine? Well, you don't have to tax your brain. You can see them on TV every week on their own variety show. Their name, Sha Na Na. They are the only rock group with their own national television show.

Before I get carried away describing this bizarre conglomeration, I must confess that I know it's all make-believe. You see, I was there when this group got its start as a bunch of college students poking fun at the weirdness that was the Fifties. Little did they realize that their casual joke would last so long.

Now, nine years later, I am visiting with Sha Na Na in Madison, Wisconsin, during a stop on their latest concert tour. I spoke with them before, during, and after their sold-out concert. Their fans no longer confined to college crowds, they draw an audience of kids from 7 to 77.

Away from the spotlight, these rock 'n' rollers seem so sedate that I rode in from the airport in a limousine with one of them and never recognized him. Even Bowzer, the skinny one whose stage outfit of black T-shirt and pegged pants makes him look like a burned string bean, could pass for a trial lawyer in civilian life.

"I was a very academic kid, you know, very good in school," recalls the offstage Bowzer, "and the greasers in my neighborhood in New York used to pick on me. I carried a briefcase. The clasp would always fall open, and my books would always fall out on the ground, and then some guy like Bowzer would come along and kick my books down the sewer."

Is Bowzer getting back at the greasers who once made fun of him? "Sure, I think there is an element of revenge. There are two things going on here. One is a vague element of revenge and the other is communication, because I never could communicate with those people as a kid. I

was terrified of them. And through this character I play I have developed a way to communicate with a lot of people I never could communicate with before. And now I'm their idol; I mean, it's a little peculiar."

Adds Screamin' Scott, Sha Na Na's flamboyant piano player, who has been known to pound the keyboard like he was killing cockroaches: "For the most part, we are not who we portray. We're definitely a respectable middle-class group of people. I went to a suburban high school in Kansas City. I had some cousins who were kind of greasy, but for the most part, greasers were people you would see only from afar. There was a whole scene in the high school, but it happened five or six years before I got there. We're all too young to have been greasers ourselves."

On occasion, the group has had problems because they aren't what they appear to be. Says Santini, the group's gold lame Elvis imitator, "One night in France, we were playing in Paris in this huge auditorium. There was a motorcycle gang in the front row. They jumped up on the stage, yelling, 'You are not what you are supposed to be.' And they pulled knives on us. That was one of the scariest moments in my life. I smiled like 'yeah, hey, a lot of happiness, a lot of love, bonjour, love.' "

Perhaps the closest to having actually lived his Sha Na Na persona is Denny, one of the high-stepping gold-lame dressers, and the group's sole black member. Denny recalls: "The whole Fifties phenomenon is particularly funny

to me because I literally grew up with, it. I remember when Little Anthony and the Imperials had their first big record. They played the Apollo Theater in Harlem, near where I lived, and I went to see them. I literally sang in singing groups on the corner, and when I was a little kid I was in gangs and the whole thing. I find that most of the music that is being recorded as part of the rock 'n' roll revival is black music. Unfortunately, black artists have been pretty much overlooked and written out of the Fifties phenomenon."

For Denny, singing on the corner was more than a pastime. "From the earliest days I wanted to be a professional performer. I got involved in the acting scene in the beginning of the Sixties. Soon I was touring in plays and doing a lot of acting. When other guys were having fun, out playing basketball on Saturdays, I was going downtown to dance lessons on Broadway, taking singing lessons, taking fencing, taking drama lessons in the summer. My summertimes were all booked up. I was literally leaving the house at nine o'clock in the morning and getting home at eleven o'clock at night."

Many of the members of Sha Na Na got interested in music at an early age. Take the band's drummer, Jocko. The hefty pacemaker, whose taste in offstage clothes leans to satin jackets with his name emblazoned on the back, recalls: "When I was five years old, I led the kindergarten band. You know, we banged away on blocks and tambourines. When I was six, I was playing an old snare drum one of my older brothers left up

in our attic. As I grew up, I became interested in sports and painting, but I always loved music."

Another young convert to the charms of melody was curly-headed Johnny, last, but not least, of the gold-lame grease-balls in Sha Na Na. As he tells it: "I discovered I could sing when I was six years old. I sang in church for a couple of years. I got my first gig in a lounge where I was twelve. I played anywhere I could, just to get the experience with a microphone. When I got out of high school, I went to the Boston Conservatory for a semester. Then I got into the musical *Hair* and I left music school."

It's hard to picture any of the Sha Na Na gang in as staid a place as a conservatory, but several of them found their way into the serious study of music. Screamin' Scott, the piano pounder, started playing his instrument at age six. "I took lessons," he explains, "and I went through four or five teachers and either they would quit or something else would happen to one of us. I didn't practice that much; my mother said practice, but I didn't. Finally, as early as sixth grade, I said to my mother, 'Maybe I should go to a jazz teacher, at the Kansas City Conservatory School of Music, who would get me more involved.' I could play by ear, I could play anything I heard, but I wasn't that interested in the technical end of music. I did take jazz lessons then and later in high school. I think it's good, if you have a facility for music, not to get discouraged. Hopefully there will be some enlightening person, somebody who can explain it all to you."

Yes, even Bowzer actually studied music theory for six years at the world-famous Juilliard

School of Music. "I started out as a classical pianist," he says. "There was a piano in the house that no one ever played. I sat down when I was five years old and played 'Oh What A Beautiful Morning' by ear. I don't know why. It had been on the phonograph, and I just sat down and I picked it out. My parents liked to show me off. My father was a dentist and had his office in the house. My father sang to his patients, and never knew the words to anything. His idea of a song was 'Some enchanted evening, ta da data da da.' My mother would open the door to the office so the patients could hear me practice. At that point, I would just play as fast as I could. My specialty was being able to play Chopin's 'Minute Waltz' in fifty-five seconds."

By now you must be wondering how such innocent child prodigies and aspiring show biz folk turned into those creatures that God forgot, the dreaded Sha Na Na. To find out, we must return to New York's Columbia University in the spring of 1969. Columbia, like so many other schools around the country, was in the midst of student upheavals. Students on campus were politically active, though never so much that it got in the way of their having fun.

Enter a graduate student named George Leonard, who had grown up in Brooklyn, a few years too late to be a greaser. He wrote novels about them instead. He ate, drank, and breathed the Fifties while everyone else was busy living the tumult of the Sixties. George had a brother named Rob, who happened to sing with a group of undergraduates known as the Kingsmen. The

Kingsmen were a far cry from Sha Na Na; they wore Columbia baby-blue blazers and sang close harmonies on barbershop quartet tunes and Columbia University fight songs.



Sha Na Na

Recalls Donny, the Sha Na Na vocalist who always wears wrap-around glasses on stage, "Even then, as the Kingsmen, we were into being stars. If nobody paid attention to us on campus, so what? We made a point of singing at

girls' colleges. They really loved us at the girls' schools."

One day George Leonard asked the Kingsmen if they'd like to sing oldies as a lark at one of the regular Tuesday night concerts in the college cafeteria. When they showed up, the response was overwhelming. Members of the athletic fraternity were there, with hair slicked back and T-shirt sleeves rolled up, to joyously sing along with them. Word spread on campus and by closing time the cafeteria was packed with wall-to-wall rockers. I know--I was there.

What to do for an encore? "Boys," said George, "you're going to play the school auditorium.""But you can't draw enough people to fill up those twelve hundred seats," complained one of the Kingsmen.

"Boys," insisted George, "you're going to pack the place. You're going to grease your hair back and do some fancy steps and they're going to go wild." Well, George was right. So what next? "Boys," instructed the frustrated greaser, "you're going to play an outdoor concert on campus for five thousand people and this time some of you are going to wear fancy gold suits."

Santini shrugs at the memory. "It was like 'here's three guys who can move okay, so they'll be the guys in the gold.' Then we wondered where to get a gold-lame suit. We went to a Broadway costume place and it turned out all they had were the costumes made originally for the musical *Bye Bye Birdie*, which was already a parody of that kind of rock 'n' roll star. We rented those costumes, and they were enormously baggy. If you look at pictures of us back

then, it was like we were swimming in them."

It wasn't until the group's third appearance that their name was arrived at. Sha Na Na came from the vocal introduction to "Get A Job," a #1 hit in 1957 by a black Philadelphia group called the Silhouettes:

Yip yip yip yip yip yeah
Sha na na na sha na na na*

"Boys, you're going to be big stars," said George Leonard just before leaving Sha Na Na to their own devices and becoming an English professor at Yale University.

Santini tells of the group's first big break: "We were playing The Scene - this was a very important club in those days-and it was our first gig in New York and we'd gotten booked for two weeks. We had come in off the street and said, 'Hey, we're a group, and here's a couple of pictures,' and they said, 'Wow, this looks really weird. Come down this afternoon and audition.' After we auditioned, they said, 'Fine, we'll let you go on tonight.' We went on and the place went wild. They loved us. But a fight broke out between some visiting mobsters. The owner of the club was punched out and the club closed that night and never reopened. It was a total stroke of luck that Mike Lang came and saw our first set instead of the second set. You know, half an hour later and he would never have gotten to see us." Jocko picks up the story: "Mike Lang was this

guy who came up to the group and said, 'Hey, I'm thinking of getting some bands together on a farm upstate. Do you want to come? I'll pay you three hundred dollars.' This little thing turned out to be the Woodstock Rock Festival. About four hundred thousand people saw Sha Na Na up there. Even though the guy only paid one hundred and fifty dollars and one of his checks bounced, it was by far the group's luckiest break. By getting into the Woodstock movie the group was carried right along."

Not that everything was that easy for Sha Na Na. Santini can remember when the group got paid the princely sum of \$50 a night for its 12 original members. "Woodstock was very early in our career," he explains. "It was only the seventh date we played. It was hard to support a band of twelve people and to buy equipment and to travel around, getting the name known. We made no money. I was working my way through school. I would be a weekend rock star, then go home, write some papers, try to get through school, have a job at night, editing- I was an English major. Editing jobs. Waiter. I was a baby-sitter. I was doing everything. But I really liked Sha Na Na, and I really wanted something to happen with it. It was my dream to do this. To be somebody who came out of a radio, like Elvis Presley and those people I loved when I was growing up."

Studying all week and turning into a rock star on the weekend was a new experience for everyone in Sha Na Na. "It was strange," admits Denny, who came to Columbia from a private

* © Ken Williams Music/Wildcat Music.

boarding school. "Most of my peers in the academic world were preparing themselves for law, business school, banking, very traditional pursuits. I was getting a classical education so I could apply traditional skills to an unconventional career-show business. After Woodstock, we paid our dues by playing a lot of small places on the road and learning what it means to be a professional. Survival on the road is very difficult, and being in a rock group is like being in the diplomatic corp. You're dealing with a number of people with different personalities, different likings."

For Donny, fresh from the rural Midwest, Sha Na Na's success was yet another mind boggler to get adjusted to while in college. "It was like riding a tiger by the tail," he explains, "when I found myself a budding rock star as a junior. I had come out of Idaho, and I could barely read or write compared to some of the guys in school. Just being in New York took a lot of getting used to. And then Sha Na Na happened. It put a lot of pressure on all of us in the group."

The rock 'n' roll life took its toll on Sha Na Na. One by one the part-time greasers quit to pursue other careers. Of the group's original members, only four remain: Donny, Denny, Santini, and Over the years the others in the current lineup joined by getting word of a vacancy in the group and auditioning.

Recalls Johnny: "I did four hundred performances of *Hair* in Boston, and I was about to go on the road with the show. I knew a guy in Sha

Na Na; his mother was a French teacher at our high school. She told him that I was ending the gig with *Hair*. She asked if I would like to audition to take the place of the guy who sang all the tear-jerker songs, like 'Tell Laura I Love Her.' So I auditioned for them and got into the group, and I've been with them for seven years. And that's my life story."

Says Lennie, the Sha's saxophone player, and butt of fat-person jokes, "I'm here because Jocko got a football scholarship to Columbia. We'd played in bands together back in Massachusetts since we were twelve years old. One day he called me to ask if I'd try out for his new group. If I didn't sing lead tenor, I wouldn't be in Sha Na Na today. You see, becoming successful is a question of having the ability and being at the right place at the right time. I've been playing rock 'n' roll for twenty years. A lot of my friends are still playing, but they've never made it."

For bass player Chico, an avid collector of yo-yo's (he claims to have over two hundred of them), Sha Na Na was hardly the strangest band he'd ever auditioned for. "I played an entire ski season at Hunter Mountain," he remembers, "with an act called 'The Wacky Zany Bob Emma Review.' Bob Emma was the part-owner of the club we played in. He was a midget. The other part of the act was a four-hundred-pound lady singer. I was the rock 'n' roll interlude. I played twelve sets a day, from three P.M. to three A.M., seven days a week, forty minutes on and twenty minutes off. Sha Na Na seems pretty normal after that."

As for lead guitarist Dirty Dan, he was working as a radio-station manager when he got the call to become a professional greaser. As he tells it: "Chico and I used to play in a band that was managed by the manager of Lennie's band. Joining Sha Na Na came totally out of the blue. I don't believe you get any job just by auditioning. You usually know someone who gets you in."

Bowzer, a notorious salami actor (he wasn't quite a ham) around the Columbia campus before joining the group, sees things differently: "I'm a great believer that talent will out. You're constantly being pushed by people toward the most cynical position: 'It's all a matter of who you know.' I just can't bring myself to believe it; I think that if you stick with it and you have the talent, you'll succeed."

Denny has similar words for anyone considering a career in entertainment: "It doesn't matter how sophisticated your initial efforts are, what you need is the discipline of working at it, because improvement will come. If you just say, 'I want to do it, I want to do it,' and never get into actually training, studying to do it, practicing to do it, you end up not developing at all. The most important thing is working toward your goal, even when you find that your work and your efforts are completely unrewarded. Perseverance pays off in the end, and everyone gets a shot at success at one point or another. It's just a matter of being able to deal with the shot when it comes."

From all signs, Sha Na Na dealt well with their shot at fame. For eight solid years they worked



Sha Na Na in concert

hard, totally unconventional rock stars, without benefit of a hit song on the radio. For eight years they put on their crazy oldies show in city after city, gaining fans everywhere with their energetic singing, dancing, and clowning around.

As popular as they were; the greasers in Sha Na Na still had one turf they wanted to conquer. "We were right for TV," observes Santini. "We always felt we were responsible for adding more

visuals to rock 'n' roll. We brought more theater into it, more props and sets and concepts. We knew we belonged on television. There was even an idea at one point of doing a Sha Na Na cartoon show on Saturday mornings, because that's how kids see us, as living cartoon characters. Then somebody came along and figured that maybe a Sha Na Na TV show would be a good way to sell soap to housewives between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. I guess they must have been right, because we've been on for three years."

As Bowzer likes to point out, there was a Bowzer four years before TV's *Happy Days* and *Fonzie*, to whom he is often compared. "I created this character from scratch," he insists. "I don't have any idea whether the Fonz ever saw Sha Na Na. You know, the people who wrote *Grease* said that they were literally inspired by Sha Na Na to write the thing. We were there first. *Fonzie* is the same kind of character, although I think he's a lot less greasy, and a little bit more watered down for television than Bowzer. I mean Bowzer's humor is based on this tough skinny guy. When I started this, I was ridiculously skinny. I weighed one hundred and twenty-nine pounds and I was six feet, two inches tall. Bowzer was a guy who was all bark. There's a sense in the audience that you can take this guy with one hand tied behind your back." Now that they have their own TV show, the well-oiled 10 in Sha Na Na are working harder than ever before to please the 18 million people who tune in every week. "I think television is

the most incredibly tiring thing I've ever done," says Johnny. "It's more tiring than playing on the road. It's more tiring than anything. Usually if you're doing a TV show, and you're done at the studio at the end of the day, you don't have to go into another studio to record songs. But that's exactly what we're doing. We tape all our tunes in advance and just act like we're singing when we do the show. We rehearse all day, shoot the show at night, then go into the studio to record. Still, we think it's worth it. After all, we play for more people on one television show than we've played to in all our concerts put together."

Adds Santini: "People don't realize how difficult television is. You're working in a vacuum, with no feedback as to what's good and what isn't. You're standing there and you don't usually have a live audience. Most of our shows tape in the studio with just sound people and technical people. When I'm looking into this camera lens, for me it's important to have somebody in mind I can play to, someone who is really watching there on the other side of that camera. I think of a twelve-year-old tuning in out there in television land."

For the rough-tough cream puffs in Sha Na Na, making people smile is still the biggest thrill of all. Says Bowzer: "One of the most popular things on the show, because it comes on every week at the end, is where I go 'duh duh duh duh duh duh' in 'Goodnight, Sweetheart' and I do this muscle flexing, in and out. About two weeks ago the greatest thing happened before one of our concerts. It was about five degrees

out, and the hotel was right near the auditorium, and I was walking to it. I was walking behind a little kid and his parents. I was all dressed up just as myself, with a stocking hat and a pom-pom. I had my glasses on, and I didn't look like Bowzer. All of a sudden this little boy started going, 'duh, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh' in his little high-pitched squeaky voice and flexing his muscle in and out. I started 'duh duh-ing' myself. I scared the kid and he jumped, and he turned around, and he couldn't quite figure it out; then he realized it was me. What an amazing feeling that was!"

All right, Bowzer, any last words of wisdom for Sha Na Na's fans? "Sure," he grins. "Grease for Peace!"

AFTERWORD

Punk, Funk, And Future Stars

You may have heard about something called punk rock. TV and the newspapers have had a field day describing teenagers on both sides of the Atlantic who wear tattered clothes and safety pins and play intense - sometimes unlistenable - rock 'n' roll. They are only a small part of the punk story. To find out the real meaning of punk, I talked to Lenny Kaye, lead guitarist for the Patti Smith Group, the band that scored a top 10 hit with "Because The Night," and opened the way for other successful "New Wave" groups, such as Blondie and Talking Heads.

Lenny's modest apartment on Manhattan's West Side is filled with rock 'n' roll posters and neat rows of records. He has a collection of several thousand albums and singles, famous and obscure, in just about every rocking style ever

recorded. For years before becoming a professional performer, he worked in an "oldies" record shop and wrote for the rock magazines. Lenny was one of the first people to ever use the words punk rock.

"Punk rock" he explains, "refers to a style of music which right now includes very fast beats, chords with very little melodic enhancement, and simple, sometimes deceptively simple, lyrics. But as an attitude, punk has existed in



The Patti Smith Group

rock 'n' roll from the very moment that rock 'n' roll was born. It's the attitude that anyone can do it, that you don't have to study for years in a conservatory to be a rock 'n' roller. The media would have us believe/that punk is all safety pins and stuff. Just wanting to be on a rock 'n' roll stage- that, to me, is the punk attitude."

When I ask Lenny whether punk rockers have to be angry, he answers: "In the Sixties the groups weren't angry, they were all-embracing and loving, but they still were punks because when they got on that stage, they were going to do anything to make you remember them. Rock 'n' roll has always built itself on being something exciting. 'Whether you're angry this year or you're in love with everything, the desire to rock 'n' roll is what makes you get on stage.

"Punk rock is a term somebody came up with because these kids don't get intimidated. They stand up to the greatest of odds; what greater odds are there than being a kid in a small town with a guitar trying to be number one on the hit parade? People are going to put you down because you don't have a lot of skills. You don't have a professional stage presentation. You don't have money to burn on theatrical effects. All you have is your desire and if people put you down for that, they're extremely blind. I never look at whether a new group can play, or whether they're playing in tune, or whether they even have anything to say. I look at how much they want to be up there."

For tomorrow's rock stars, the alternative to punk is *funk*, the lava-hot syncopation: of Afro-

American rhythms that drives the dance beat in disco music. Funk is more complicated to play than punk, and for that reason is much harder for somebody to learn overnight, but with the right desire, funk, too, can lead to the top of the pops.

Whether punk or funk, the important thing for tomorrow's star is musical growth. Says Lenny Kaye: "For me, rock 'n' roll was really dead in nineteen seventy-three and nineteen seventy-four, the same way it was dead in nineteen sixty-two just before the Beatles. There were lots of great records around, lots of things happening, but the line of movement had stopped. The formula was crawling to its death and when that happens a new underground comes along, a new wave. You can call it 'punk,' you can call it anything you want, because that's just a definition. Music has to move; it has to grow. I like musicians who try to do something different; whether it succeeds or not, I respect that outlook."

Sometimes doing what comes differently also means casting your fate to the rock 'n' roll winds. Recalls Lenny: "When I started out with Patti Smith, we had no goals, we had no direction, we had no hopes or anything. This was just something we wanted to do. When we started, Patti would read poetry and I would play guitar behind her. It just grew step by step. First we added a piano player-we played as a trio for a while, in cabarets and jazz clubs. Then we started getting more into rock 'n' roll-we hired another guitar player. We reached another limit.

After that we hired a drummer. The Patti Smith Group grew because we let ourselves grow."

This one-step-at-a-time approach led to the Patti Smith Group deciding to record a single called "Hey Joe" on their own MER label. Originally priced at \$1 in 1974, "Hey Joe" is one of today's most sought-after oldies; copies have sold for \$100 apiece. "We just said, 'Well, let's make a record-why not? We'll put out a little collector's item.' We could sell it at the local



The Ramones, another "New Wave" group

stores or sell it by mail or use it as a demonstration for record companies. We could have a little artifact to please ourselves in twenty years or something. It was just a way of preserving what we were doing."

Many punk rockers have started out by issuing their own homemade records. Says Lenny, "Even if you don't have a million copies of your record around the country, it's still a growth step. Your record can become popular in your local area. If it becomes popular enough in your local area, you can expand nationally. You can't keep a secret in rock 'n' roll. If you're good, people are going to know about it."

And so people have learned. The group has four albums out now and is still going strong.

On their fourth album, *Waves*, the group plays a relentless version of the Sixties hit, "So You Want To Be A Rock 'N' Roll Star." As originally sung by a group called the Byrds, it was a wry look at the price of fame. As sung by Patti Smith, it's an anthem to rock music's powers. Adding her own chanted words, she says: "Hey you! Come here! Get up! This is the era where everybody creates!"

They're the sound of *today* — the superstars of *now*. They've sold millions of records and made it to the top of the lists!

Meet Billy Joel, the "piano man." Sha Na Na, the lovable "greasers"! Fleetwood Mac, the "family" band! KISS, the rock band that resembles comic-book heroes! Stevie Wonder, the music wonder-boy now grown up! KC & the Sunshine Band, funky, fun, and full of good-times disco!

