

Holy Anonymity, Batman!

A NEW JERSEY TRUCKING firm that "wishes to remain anonymous," according to its agent, Los Angeles businessman Henry Kurtz, paid a reported \$77,000 for the legendary Batmobile. The vehicle, created for the *Batman* TV series of the Sixties by famed Southern California car customizer George Barris, was the top attraction at a Celebrity Car Auction held recently in Universal City. Barris was immortalized by writer Thomas Wolfe in *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine Flake Streamline Baby* a few eras ago.

Duets

JESSICA LANGE (who graced *Ampersand's* March '83 cover) and her new amour, playwright/actor Sam Shepard, will costar in *Country*, which is, according to Ms. Lange's publicist, "a dramatic story about struggle and survival of a present-day farm family." It's filming in Iowa. Down in Tennessee, Sissy Spacek and Mel Gibson (the Jan/Feb '83 cover subject) are making *The River*, which is also about the struggle of modern-day farmers.

LILY TOMLIN AND STEVE MARTIN are *not* making a movie about farmers; their first co-starring venture is called *All of Me*, and it's an "alter ego comedy of errors," whatever that means.

NOT COSTARRING WITH anyone at the moment is Michael Paré, who starred in *Eddie and the Cruisers* and the just-completed *Streets of Fire* for *The Warriors* director Walter Hill. On the strength of these two projects, one of which is still in pieces, Paré's agent is now asking \$1 million for his client's services. "And we still don't know if he can act," exclaimed one Hollywood wag. "He didn't have a whole lot to do in *Eddie and the Cruisers* except look sullen."

Hey, What Are Friends For?

BY NOW YOU'RE PROBABLY clutching, or hearing, or reading the cover of, the new Paul Simon album; you may be wondering why it isn't a Simon & Garfunkel album, since they toured together this past summer. It started out as a dual effort, but Simon removed his partner from all the tracks of *Hearts and Bones* because, as Simon told the *L.A. Times*, "I don't write for Artie's voice... it's my piece of work." This will come as no surprise to *San Francisco Chronicle* writer Joel Silver, who reported that during their concert there Simon, at one point, put his arm around Garfunkel—and Garfunkel "visibly cringed."

Flashdance

GET A GRIP ON YOUR leg warmers, here comes *Flashdance II* (sometime in '84) and several imitators as well, bet your bottom Danskin. *Beat Street* will be one entry into this Retards in Leotards genre, and there are sure to be more. Meanwhile, *Flashdance* is headed for TV Series-dom (still in the planning stages). Jennifer Beals will not appear in the sequel or the TV show—but she has her own line of clothing (distributed by Puritan) to keep her warm. All except one shoulder.

Why Go Hollywood When You Can Go Global Village?

PETER HYAMS, who directed *Outland*, is readying *2010: Odyssey II*. It's the follow-up to 1968's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which was the reigning techno-amazo science fiction movie until *Close Encounters* and *Star Wars* came along. Production of the new film is set for this February. Meanwhile, Hyams needs to consult frequently with the author who generated these stories. But Arthur C. Clarke, one of the deans of sci-fi writing, prefers not to leave the comforts of his home in

Sri Lanka for the MGM lot in Cuver City, so they talk on computers. Hyams punches in his queries at the end of the work day, transmits them to a jungle halfway around the world, and has his answers from Clarke when he arrives on the following morning.

Don't Count Your Buckaroos Until the Plot Is Hatched

THERE'S AN OLD cliché in Hollywood that the true art form here is the deal. Case in point: *Buckaroo Banzai* is an action-packed black comedy being shot by Sherwood Productions to be distributed by Fox. It has several important supporting roles. A major part of the negotiations with each actor was agreement on what they would make when they played *Buckaroo Banzai II* and *Buckaroo Banzai III*. At least one well-known actor opted out of the production over inability to resolve his pay percentage points in any future *B.B.* production and so on. Yet, at this point, no one knows whether *Buckaroo Banzai* itself will be good enough, or popular enough, to warrant a sequel. Oh, well—show business without greed is like drug abuse without speed.

Personals

MARY BETH HURT, once married to William Hurt and briefly allied with actor John Heard, recently married writer/director Paul Schrader. They expect their firstborn this December. Meanwhile, Nancy Allen and director Brian DePalma have divorced; we hope this means she won't be playing any more booted hookers.

Speaking of William Hurt, he's just been cast in *Kiss of the Spider*, the slightly retitled version of *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, by exiled Argentinian Manuel Puig. Hurt plays a political prisoner who shares a cell with a homosexual, played by Raoul Julia.

Road Fever

NOT TOO MANY ROCK groups are venturing out on the road this fall, still smarting from low attendance at gigs this past summer. The mighty few are not afraid, however: the Pretenders will hit the road before you read this, with new members Rob McIntosh on guitar and Malcolm Foster on bass.

'Tis rumored that a combination Rod Stewart/Elton John tour might materialize. Don't hold your breath.

Byron Laursen & Judith Stms



This Amperworm emerging from its Amper-apple was designed by Jeannine Roussel of East Hartford, CT; she is a design student at the University of Connecticut, and earns \$30 for her work. Other talented denizens of collegiate life may also earn this vast sum; just send us your original *Ampersand of the Month* on sturdy white paper, drawn with black ink (no ballpoint, please). Put your name and address on the artwork, and send it off to *Ampersand of the Month*, 1680 North Vine, Suite 900, Hollywood, CA 90028.



ED COLVER

R.E.M.

Mumbles Its Way Up the Charts

BY ANTHONY DECURTIS

Lyricist, lead singer and keeper of the key to the vaunted R.E.M. enigma, 23-year-old Michael Stipe sips mint tea in an Athens, Georgia cafe and struggles for the truth.

"It's hard to describe how I feel about our music, in that I think that if I think about it too much, it's probably going to screw it up," Stipe confesses. His 3-day beard, tawny disheveled curls, and obsessive monotone style him more as an outcast from a Beckett novel than front man for one of the nation's hottest rock combos. "To think about that too much might be a way of... stifling it."

Fit sentiments for a man whose current single suggests that to "Talk About the Passion" is to kill it. But the critics have shown no such restraint.

One reason is that R.E.M.—whose name is an abbreviation for "rapid eye movement," the deepest dream state—embodies as fresh and positive a sound as has emerged since the late Seventies' new-wave glory days. Over the top of bassist Mike Mills' and drummer Bill Berry's skittering, eccentric bottom, guitarslinger Pete Buck filigrees irresistibly catchy chord leads comprised of equal parts folk-rock gentleness, Sixties-pop brightness and post-punk fervor. Buck's ringing melodies burst into surging choruses that infuse songs like "Radio Free Europe," "Shaking Through," and "Pilgrimage" with anthemic uplift.

Just as Stipe's lyrics—the few that can be made out—rely more on imagistic suggestiveness than literal sense, his vocal style emphasizes rhythm, phrasing, and timbre over formal enunciation. This unwillingness to foreground words forces all the elements of R.E.M.'s sound—the instruments as well as the voice—to mean, and sidesteps the intellect with a direct, unmediated appeal to the emotions. You are much more likely to remember what you *felt* listening for the first time to an R.E.M. song than anything else about it. But after a few more hearings you want to sing along, and then frustration and wonder set in. At this point you enter the R.E.M. mystery.

This mystery derives in part from Stipe's own character. Though warm and gracious, he is guarded. He does not like to let too much in from the outside. He speaks of writing by "my own rules," of wearing layers of clothes on stage to "protect" himself, of the need to avoid "forced changes" in R.E.M., changes that do not originate within the closed circle of the band.

"The songs are very personal, and I think

Songwriter/singer Michael Stipe (left, typically eluding the limelight), Mike Mills, Bill Berry and Pete Buck (right).

that 'enigmaticism' is a buffering zone or a wall set up because there is that vulnerability that you wouldn't have if you were writing clichéd pop lyrics," Stipe explains. "That 'mystery' that a lot of people have seen is probably a way of protecting that very personal side. Nobody wants to splay themselves open in public. Those that have, have not lasted long."

Stipe's careful, searching speech finds its balance in guitarist Buck's shoot-from-the-hip delivery. Seated on a bed in his miniscule room amid what looks to be the aftermath of a record store explosion, Buck plays pragmatic rocker to Stipe's ethereal poet. "People spend a lot of time wondering, writing, trying to find what we do, trying to understand it," he states. "To me, I don't think it's that mysterious. I don't think the lyrics are that hard to understand either."

As R.E.M. has progressed, Buck has had to face the inconsistencies a quick lip engenders. The man who dismissed videos as "commercials" now has a video in medium rotation on MTV. And the man whose band nixed opening dates for the Go-Gos and B-52's because they would entail the loss of audience intimacy now looks forward to a run of seven stadium dates with the Police.

"We've turned down so many things that everyone has freaked out," Buck asserts, mildly defensive about the suggestion of contradiction. "That's one of the things that people always write about, but it's true. And there's a whole lot more that people don't know about. We were just offered the whole Hall and Oates tour. And I would've liked to have done it. I like Hall and Oates, but it would have been so unhip to do it that it would've been cool. *You mean they turned down U2 and they did Hall and Oates?? What's the matter with those guys?* But this is as good a chance as any to give it a shot. Let's get our feet wet, let's see what it's like to play these monstrous places." (I ran into Buck after R.E.M. had done the Police shows, including New York's Shea Stadium. "It was boring," he sniffed. "We'll never do it again.")

But Buck and R.E.M. are learning that success brings pleasant contradictions as well as troubling ones. Since the extraordinary reception and healthy sales their 1981 independent single ("Radio Free Europe"/"Sitting Still"), their 1982 *Chronic Town* EP, and *Murmur* (their debut LP, released earlier this year) have enjoyed, even the doubters have begun to come around.

"When I went to college my dad dropped me off, and the last thing he said was, 'Listen Peter, we always told you you could do anything you want to, but for God's sake, don't try to be an actor or musician or something like that, it'll just break your heart,'" recalls Buck, who spent several quarters picking out Monkees' songs in his room at Emory University. But times change: "As a matter of fact I was talking to my dad just a while ago, and he said, 'Christ, Peter, if I'd known this is what you wanted to do, I'd've told you, hell, don't go to college, just do it! Isn't that weird?'"

A M P E R S A N D