

SUMMER '81

THE  
**ROOT BEER RAG**

TOUR NEWS



# BILLY JOEL

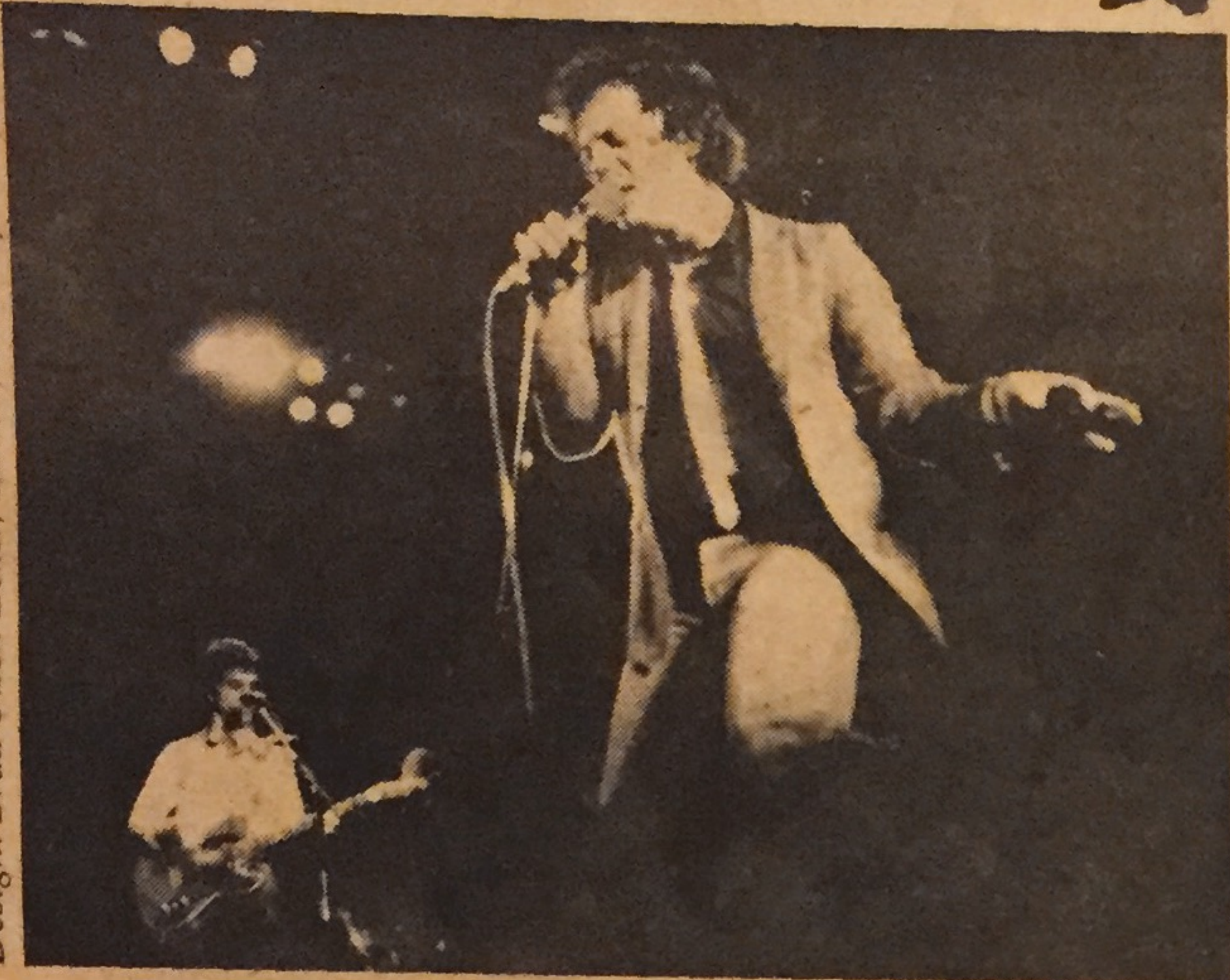


If you have a question  
for Billy, send it to:

## RAG BAG

RAG BAG  
% Root Beer Rags, Ltd.  
375 No. Broadway  
Jericho, New York 11753

Design: Brad Olsen-Ecker, Editorial: Merry Aronson



## Crossword Puzzle

Answers in the next issue

### ACROSS

- 1 Song title, or description of BJ
- 6 Jim, the sound engineer
- 8 Glass \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 First guitarist
- 12 Initials of 20-down
- 13 Clive who signed BJ for Columbia
- 15 Make music
- 16 The problem with Cold Spring Harbor
- 18 High Command: abbr.
- 20 Rhythm
- 21 BJ's biggest seller to date
- 24 Great bass man
- 25 BJ's middle name
- 27 Initials of 6-Across
- 28 Not many
- 30 Yoko
- 32 Richie
- 33 Cassette
- 34 Drummer Small of Attila
- 35 Lead-in to a song, for short
- 36 City where the Executive Lounge is: abbr.
- 37 Place to record
- 40 You Were The \_\_\_\_\_ (C'Etait Toi)
- 41 BJ's pet
- 43 Lyrics before chorus
- 44 First album for the whole band ('76)
- 45 Richie plays it

- Q. Which Mozart piece first interested you in music?  
—Lorrie Moore, Chicago, IL
- A. I think it was the Mozart Sonata in C—the famous one used by some group in the tune *Somewhere My Love Waits For Me*. I had to play it during a recital and I thought it was a good melody.
- Q. Will you let the Who's concert tragedy discourage you from performing in Cincinnati again? I hope not.  
—Amy Light, Cincinnati, OH
- A. No, because we don't set up the arrangements the way that particular situation was set up. We have no reason to be discouraged from playing there again.
- Q. Of all the albums you've made, which one sold the most copies?  
—John P. Mauro, Bronx, NY
- A. To my knowledge, *THE STRANGER* sold the most copies of any album that I've made.
- Q. Do you box? I always wondered because of the gloves on the cover of *THE STRANGER*.  
—Karen Molino, NYC
- A. Used to box between the ages of 16 and 18. I was a bantam weight with the *Police Boys Club*. I was pretty good—out of 26 bouts I won 23. I also got my nose broken, and it's not very good for playing the piano, so I stopped boxing. But once in a while I do work out the way I used to when I boxed.
- Q. What kind of motorcycle do you ride? I loved the picture of you on it.  
—J. Neil Sossamon, Locust, NC
- A. The motorcycle in the picture is a Harley-Davidson Sportster. However, now I ride a Yamaha Varago 750-V Twin which just came out this year.
- Q. Do you have any brothers or sisters?  
—Krista King, Burlington, WA
- A. Yes, I have a sister, Judy, who is a year-and-a-half older and lives on Long Island. And I have a half brother from my father's second marriage, and he's eight or nine and lives in London.
- Q. What are your favorite TV shows?  
—Kai, Oakland, CA
- A. I like watching the news, old movies, documentaries, and I like football, baseball, and boxing.
- Q. What is your favorite song to perform?  
—Lisa Knight, Leamington, CANADA
- A. It varies... every night I like a different song more depending on the audience and the mood I'm in. I don't have one song that's constantly a favorite—maybe I've *Loved These Days* and I like *Sleeping With The Television On*.
- Q. What do you like best about your success?  
—Lora Lawrence, Harrisburg, PA
- A. That depends on what you mean by success. My definition of success is being able to support myself as a musician, which I've been able to do since I was 19. So that's what I like best, being able to make a living as a musician.



Awards '81

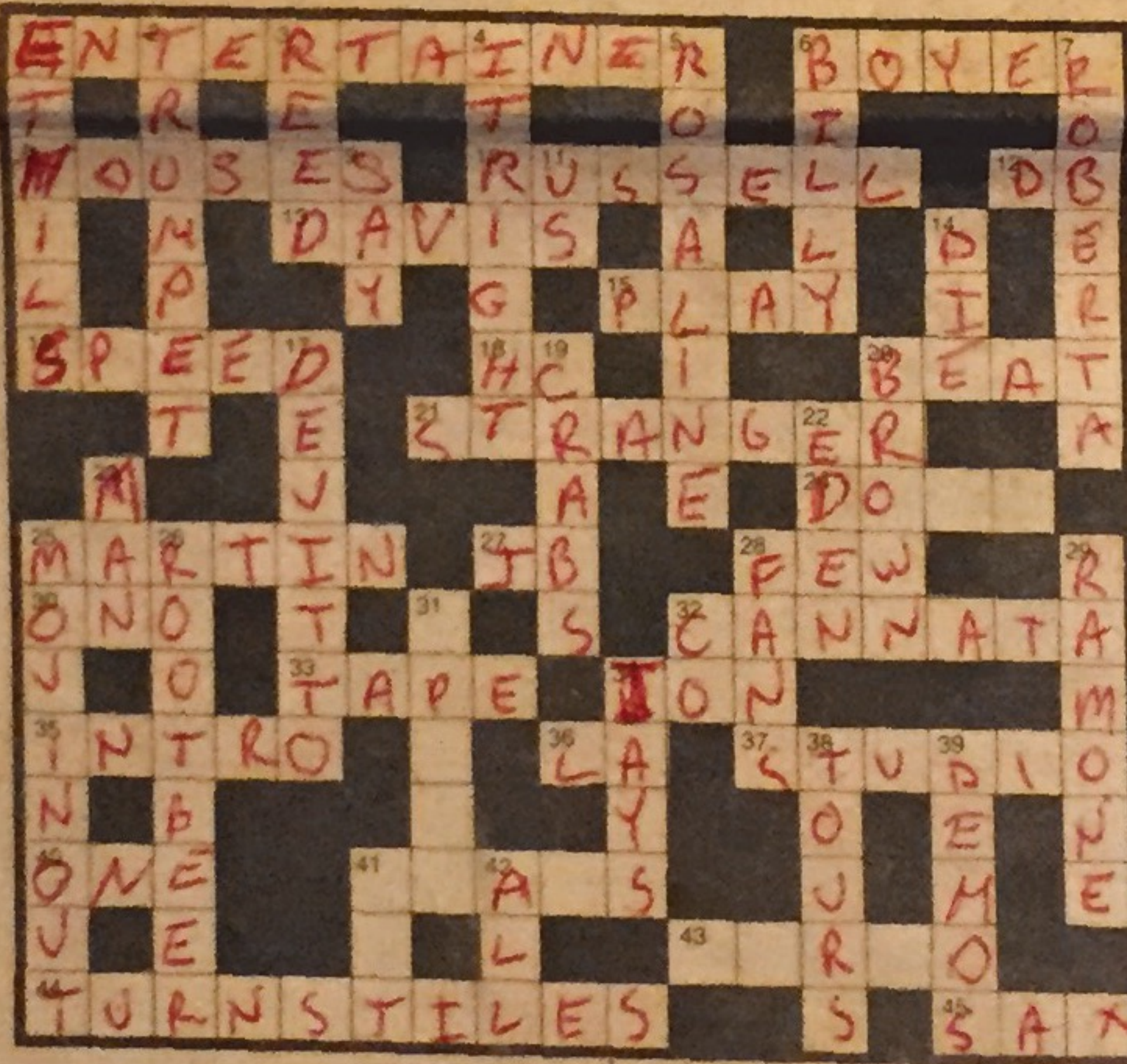
## More Grammys

For the third consecutive year, Billy Joel received the Grammy Award, long considered the music industry's highest honor. Presented by the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), Billy received the Best Rock Vocalist Award for *GLASS HOUSES*, and Phil Ramone was named Best Pop Producer of the Year. Both Billy and Phil were present to accept the awards at the nationally televised ceremonies broadcast from Radio City Music Hall.



## Crystal Globe

In recognition of selling more than five million albums outside the United States, Billy was recently honored with the Crystal Globe Award, presented by Allen Davis, president of CBS Records International, and Dick Asher, deputy president and chief operating officer, CBS.



### DOWN

- 1 Band BJ joined at 14
- 2 Instrument on 52nd Street cover
- 3 Mouthpiece part for 45-Across
- 4 Get \_\_\_\_\_ The First Time
- 5 BJ's Mom's name
- 6 Who owns the glass house on album cover?
- 7 Song from *Streetlife Serenade* LP
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ Goodbye To Hollywood
- 11 You and me
- 14 Only the good do this
- 17 Liberty
- 19 BJ's softball team
- 20 Newest band member
- 22 Adam's garden
- 23 Piano \_\_\_\_\_
- 25 Anthony's Song
- 26 A Rag
- 28 Subscribers to this newsletter
- 29 BJ's producer
- 31 \_\_\_\_\_ Blackwood Music, Inc. (publishers)
- 32 Company: abbr.
- 34 Dee \_\_\_\_\_ (disc jockeys)
- 38 On-the-road trips
- 39 Gigs
- 41 Song from an album
- 42 \_\_\_\_\_ For Lenya





Canada

Japan

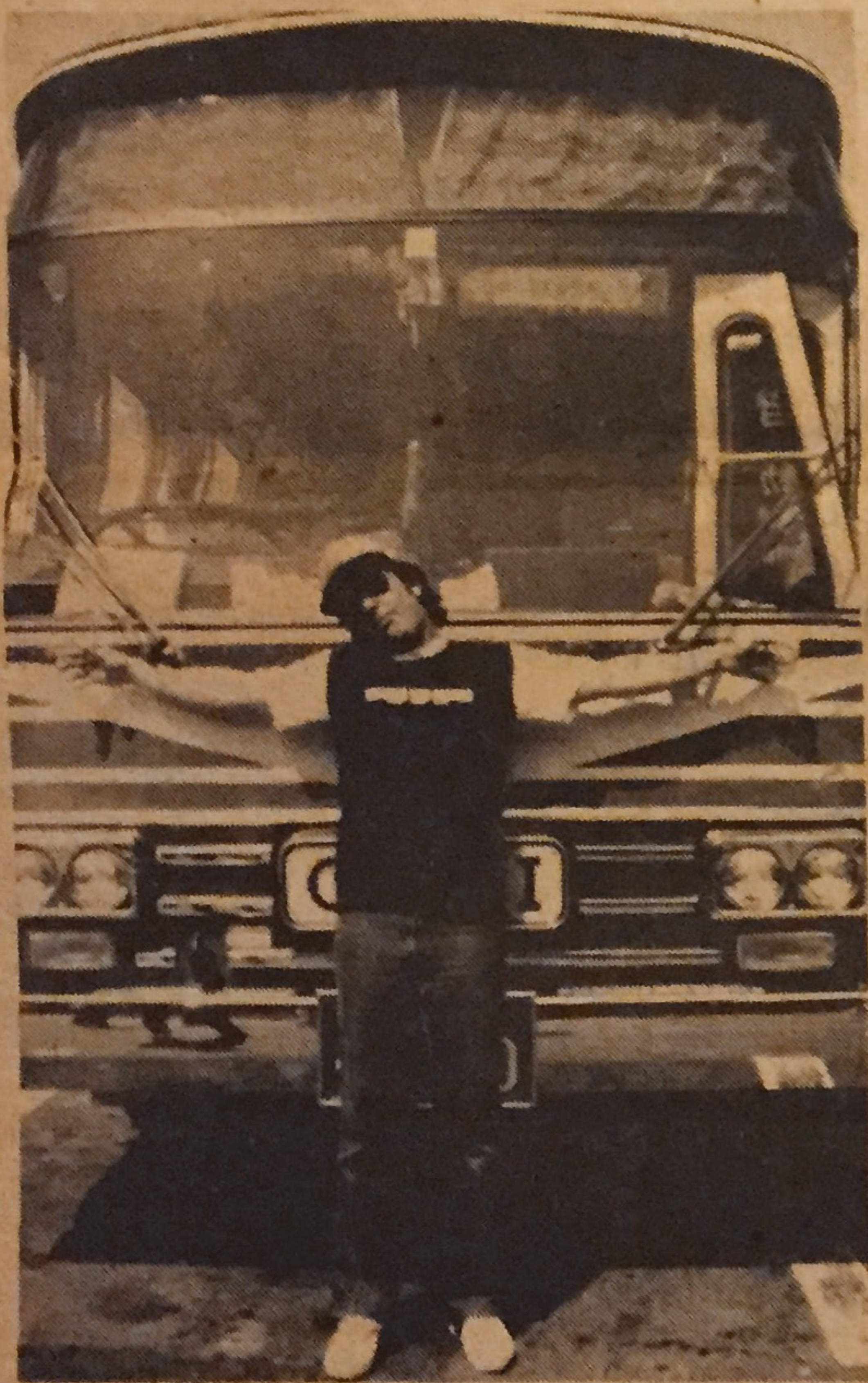
BILLY JOEL

TOUR

'81

Australia

New Zealand



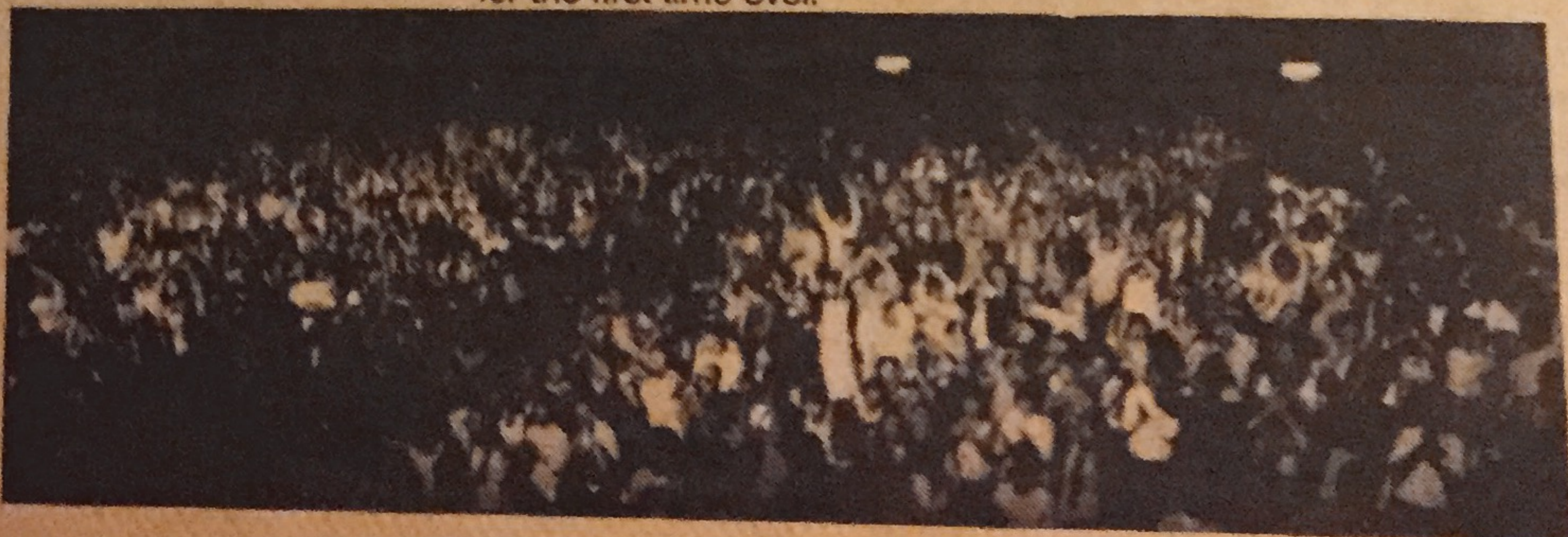
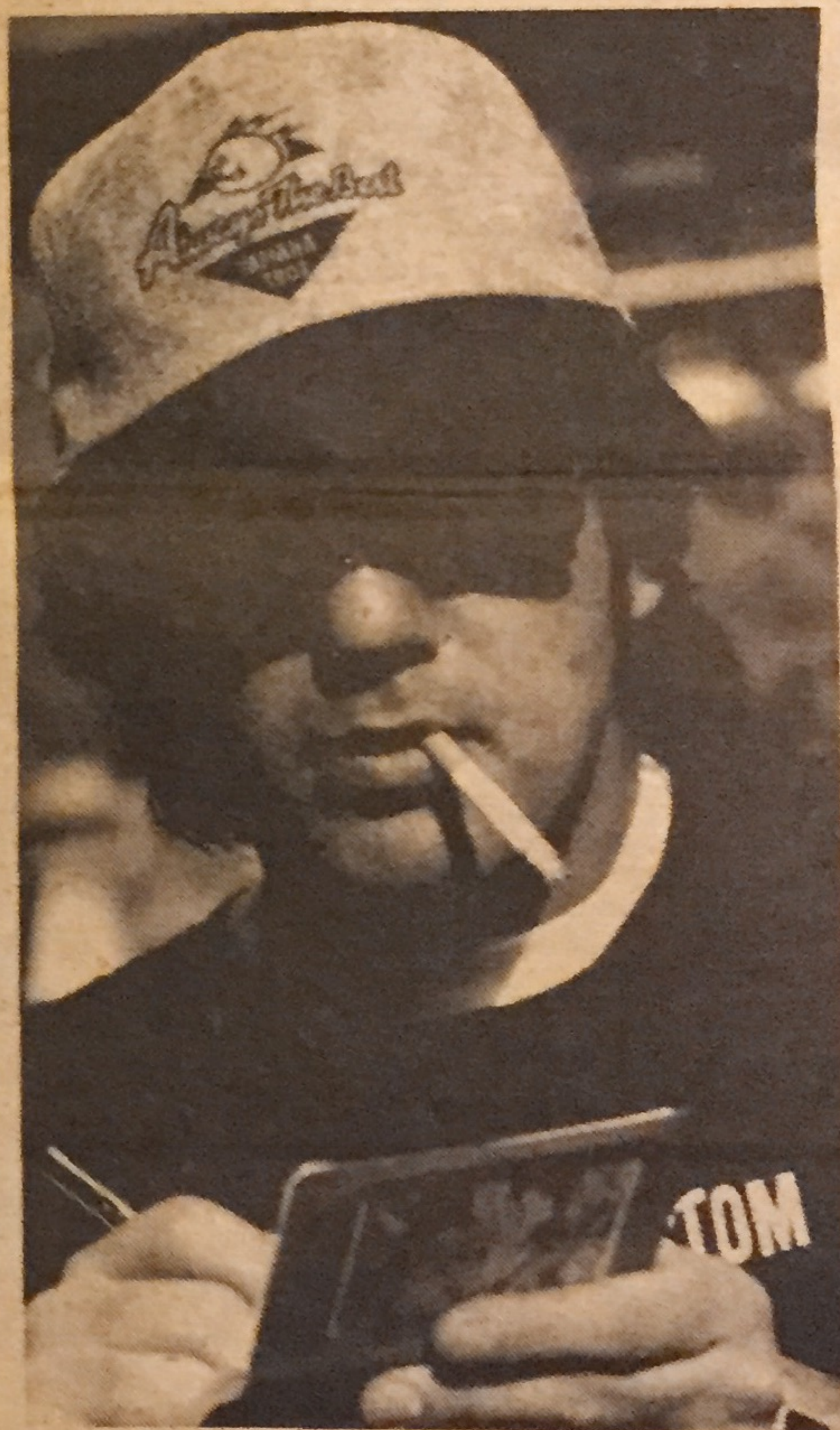
With tours of Europe and America behind him (RBR, Spring '80), Billy's recent sold-out concerts, in April and May, spanned three continents.

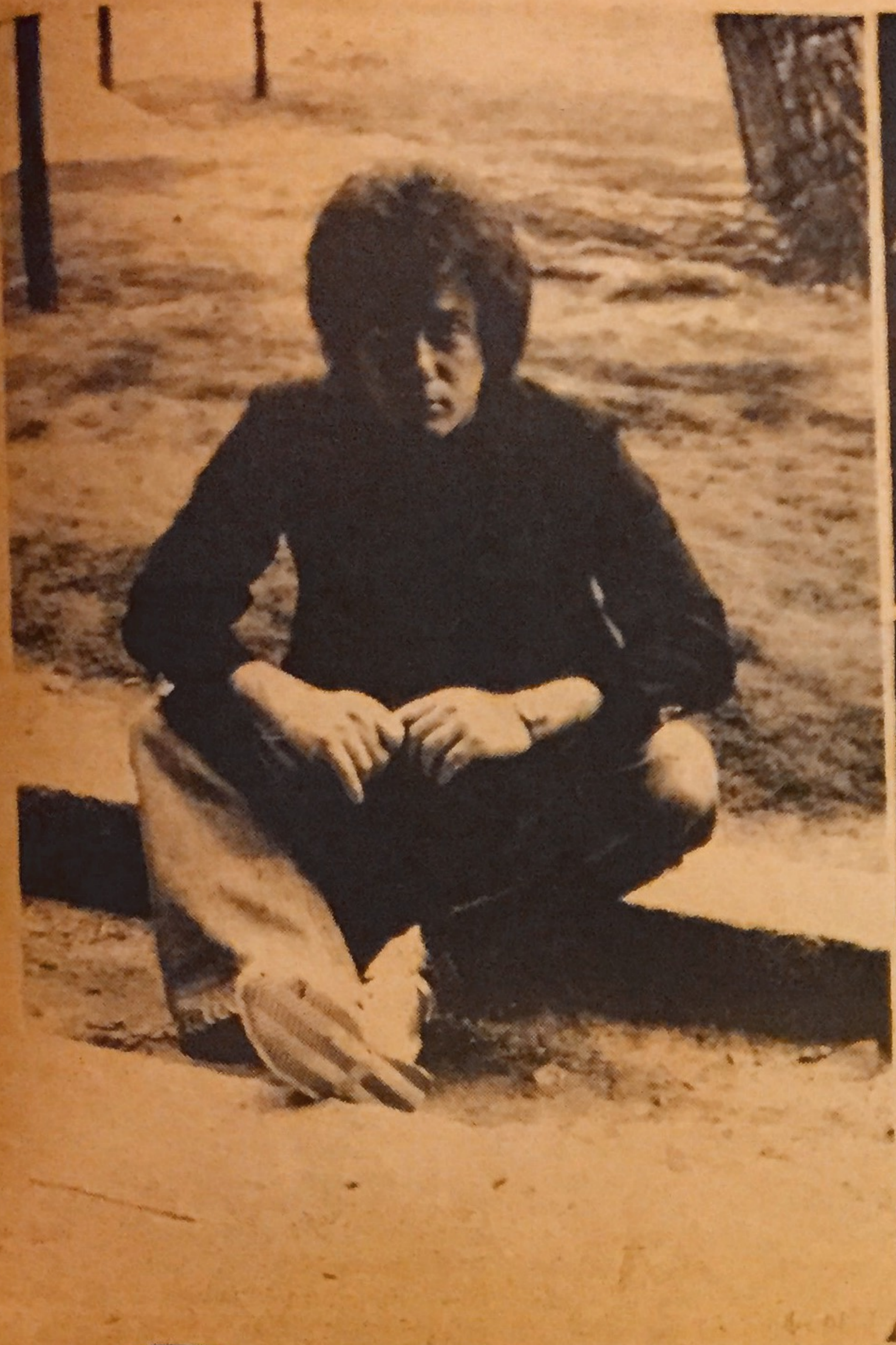
In Canada, BJ Tours set new box office and attendance records, prompting music critics there to comment that, "Billy puts the fun back into pop music... performing with an unusual combination of taste, joy, and energy." Shows in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver marked Billy's only scheduled appearances in North America this year.

It's been two years since Billy toured Japan, and much excitement was reported at his return. During one performance at the famed Budokan theater in Tokyo, Billy shook the audience by playing the early Beatles classic, *I'll Cry Instead*, dedicating it to the memory of John Lennon. When Billy and the band weren't sightseeing, they were consuming sushi, sake, and checking out all the latest electronic recording gear. Friends and fans extended a grand welcome, and Billy had special thanks for Mr. Udo, and everyone at CBS/Sony.

The next stop for Billy was Australia. At the beginning of their three week, five city tour, road manager Rick London was happy to report that, "Things are going great, mate!"

From Australia, Billy was to perform in Auckland, New Zealand for the first time ever.





# Odyssey

OF A BILLY JOEL RECORD BY MARTIN TORGOFF

*ROOT BEER RAG* asked music journalist Martin Torgoff to chronicle the step-by-step history of Billy's hit record, *It's Still Rock And Roll To Me*. The first installment explored how Billy writes his material and plans the recording. In this issue, the second phase of the record's odyssey—recording, overdubbing, and mixing—is detailed.

Picture the recording studio: The performers were set up with their instruments and microphones, which were wired to an imposing piece of equipment in the control booth called a mixing console. With hundreds of levers, switches, and knobs, the mixing board looks like it might be involved in controlling a flight to outer space instead of the creation of music. And each item on the console has a specific function. The console itself amplifies the signal coming in, raising it to the precise level at which it can be processed and recorded. Signals can be combined onto a tape channel; values, tones, and timing of sounds can be adjusted; and switched and patched signals can be routed back to the players' headphones and/or heard through speakers. The console is like a series of circuits waiting to be told what to do and where to send audio signals. It can "edit" sound coming in, or alter it with special effects such as echo, reverb, and phasing.

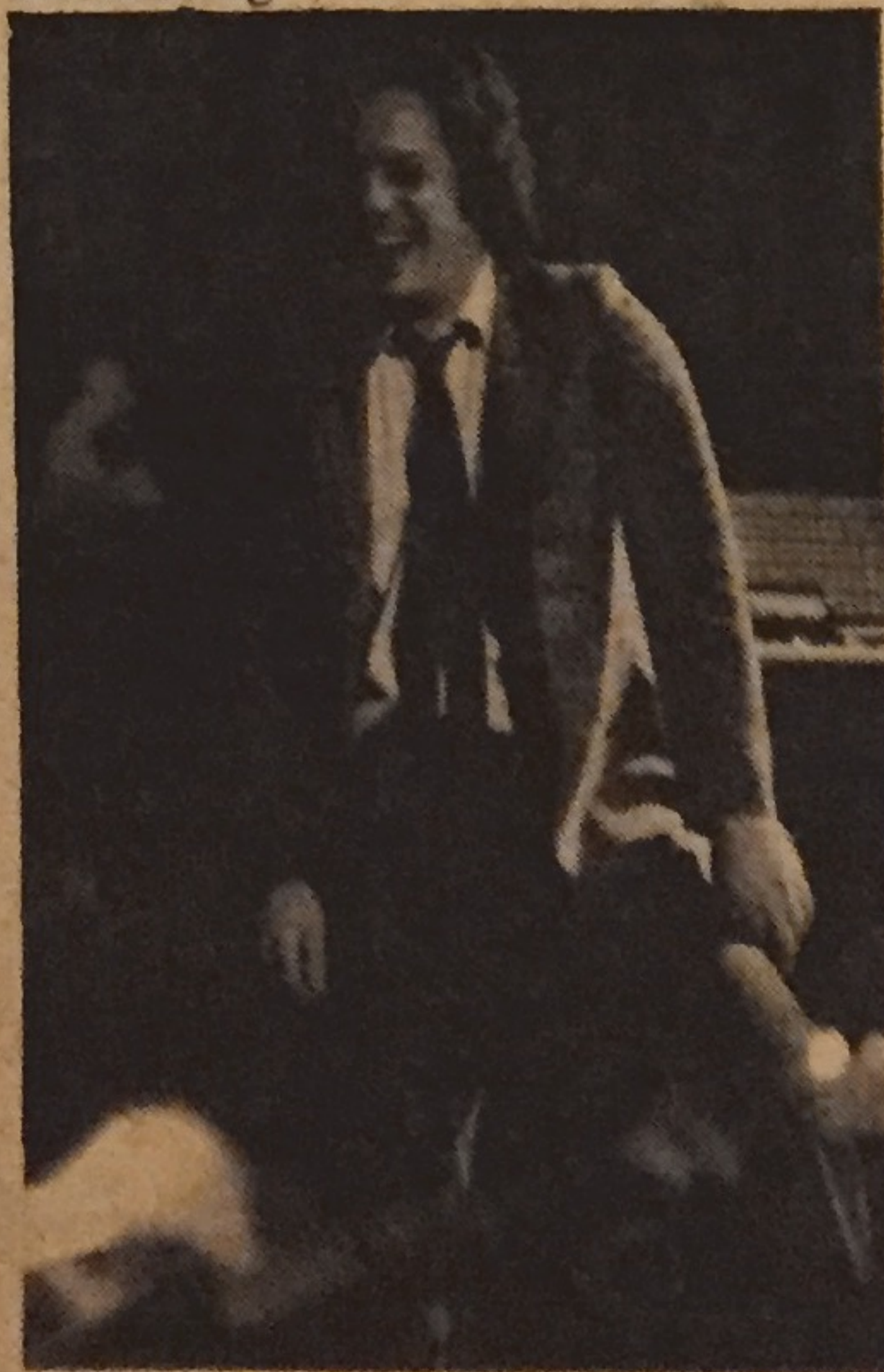
As the band fiddled with the song, bringing it closer to a recordable level, Jim Boyer, the engineer, made basic adjustments for piano, drums, bass, guitars, and vocals. Boyer, who worked on Billy's two previous albums and on other projects with producer Phil Ramone, knew that Phil was seeking to capture the quality of the music as it evolved spontaneously in the studio.

"The secret of what exists between that band," Phil says, "is what exists on stage. I learned that on *THE STRANGER*, the first album we did together. I like them to always have eye contact; I like them to

be right on top of each other."

"The technical things come second," Phil continues. "Everybody is primed to go for the home run right there. If you play with the attitude that you can fix things later on, you don't get that feeling. We're bound to make some mistakes the way we work, but when the chemistry is heard, people feel the magic."

Billy's piano and vocals ended up as three tracks of the tape and required four mikes; Liberty's drums and cymbals, with twelve mikes, became five tracks; Doug's bass, with one mike, filled two tracks. The remaining tracks were reserved for the two guitars and any other effects or overdubbing.



Even though the lyrics to *It's Still Rock And Roll To Me* were still incomplete, Billy had more than enough of the song for a "take." He likes to sing live at the piano, even though sitting is physically more difficult for breath control. He performs best when he can sing and be part of the track as it is recorded instead

of singing to it later on.

Boyer explains that Billy uses an instrument called a DDL, heard in his headphones, which "creates an effect that makes him sound more live, an actual doubling of his voice that makes him sound like he's singing in an alley or on a hill." Otherwise, according to Boyer, "the phones can seem bland when he's singing; the sound of his voice can seem microscopic."

The tape rolled—one, two, three, four takes over a three-hour period. Billy modulated his voice as he sang, giving the crisp lyrics varied textures and feelings with different verses. The energy of the song was driving, angry, biting, and fun. Billy spit out his phrases emphatically, warbling and rocking out on the refrains. Phil says he can always tell when Billy hits his vocal groove: he sits at the piano, cocks his head a certain way, and just lets it fly, giving it everything.

What's the matter with the clothes I'm wearing?

"Can't you tell that your tie's too wide?"

Maybe I should buy some old tab collars?

"Welcome back to the age of jive."\*

"That's it—we've got it!" Phil shouted after the fourth take.

Billy Joel, by his own admission, can be very critical of his work, but as the tape played back in the studio, enthusiasm mounted. After weeks of hard work, the completion of *GLASS HOUSES* was suddenly a thrilling, tangible reality, and excitement filled the air. Everyone knew that one song still needed work; it cried out for the touch of Cannata's sax solo. Enough for one day, Phil decided. Elated but exhausted, everyone went home.

As Jim Boyer recalls it, the next day, before anything else happened, "Everybody just went screaming out into the studio. We put up a microphone, played the tape, and started to clap." Group

handclapping would be overdubbed later to give the song a syncopated backing like on the Beatles' *I Want To Hold Your Hand*. Richie Cannata grabbed his sax,

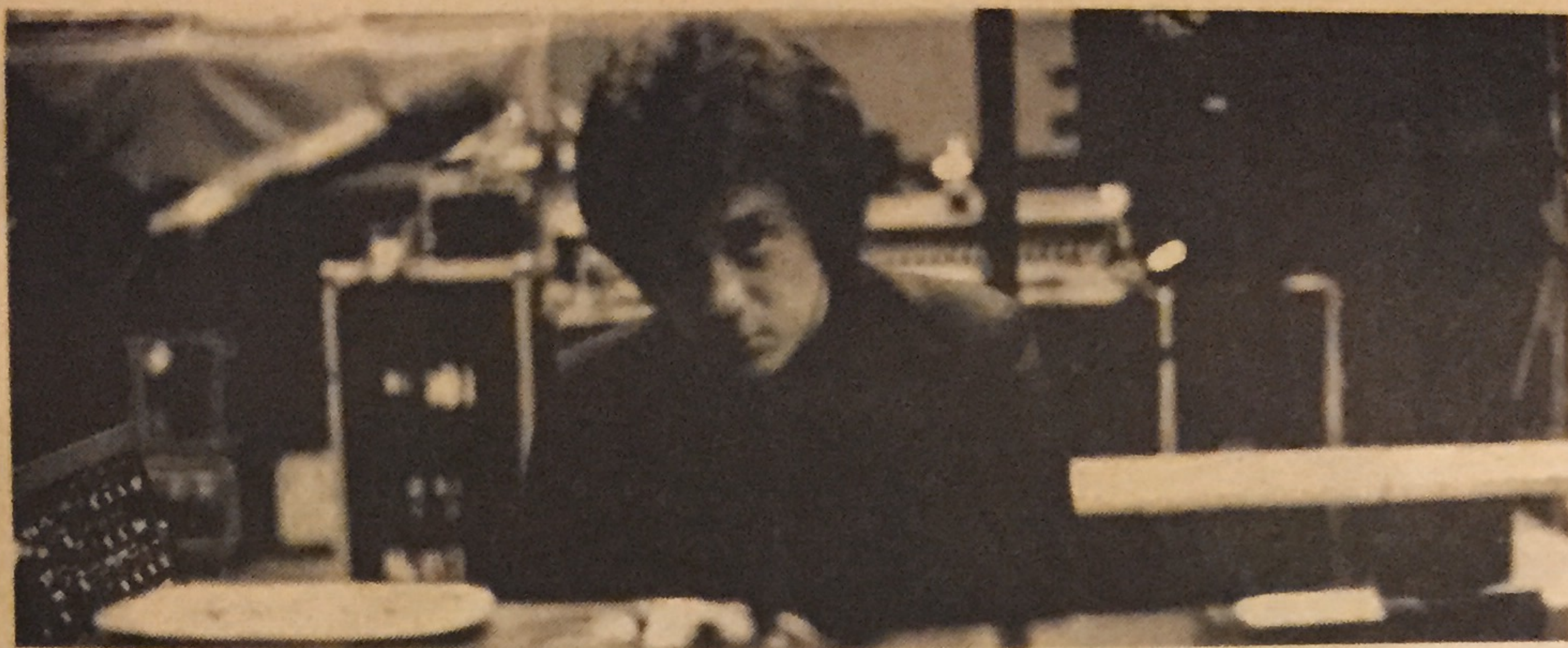


Engineer Jim Boyer

**"Billy either likes it or he doesn't. He's very straightforward."**

Phil Ramone





his head brimming with ideas. His task: to add a solo that fit precisely into the space allotted for the instrumental break, which he did as the already-recorded music filtered through his headphones. "We wanted something sleazy, trashy, raunchy—*fun*," Phil informs. "It really had to say a lot."

Jim Boyer used two mikes for the take, one very close to the instrument to capture its raspy sound, another about four or five feet away to pick up the tone and sound in the room. The tape started to roll and Richie wailed, improvising different lines. Playing back the tape, Phil and Billy made suggestions, and it became a matter of choosing a combination of riffs co-directed by them all, which Richie fitted together. (The other method of overdubbing a solo is to actually write it out, and have the musician play it note for note.) Two hours later, Richie played it perfectly. The break was nasty and funky, and as the tape played through the speakers, feet tapped and everyone smiled. It was time to mix the song.

The mixing process involves blending all 24 tracks recorded into two signals, one for each stereo channel, which is recorded directly onto a master tape that's used later for disc-mastering. Mixing is an art in which the producer and engineer must constantly be aware of every

Jim Boyer says. "That way you can view the song more objectively." Phil Ramone's belief in "being absolutely true to the song" became the guiding factor in the mix. "We wanted a rock and roll song as straight ahead as we could get it," he says. "We wanted it to be simple and nontechnical because that's what the song is about. Yet we needed certain sounds to make it good. Textures had to be reached along with a clarity of lyrics; we needed shuffle drums with the bass afloat and dry guitars. It required a certain kind of equalization and different kind of echo from the standard big echo chambers. The idea was to enhance what we had captured in the recording and never change anything...."

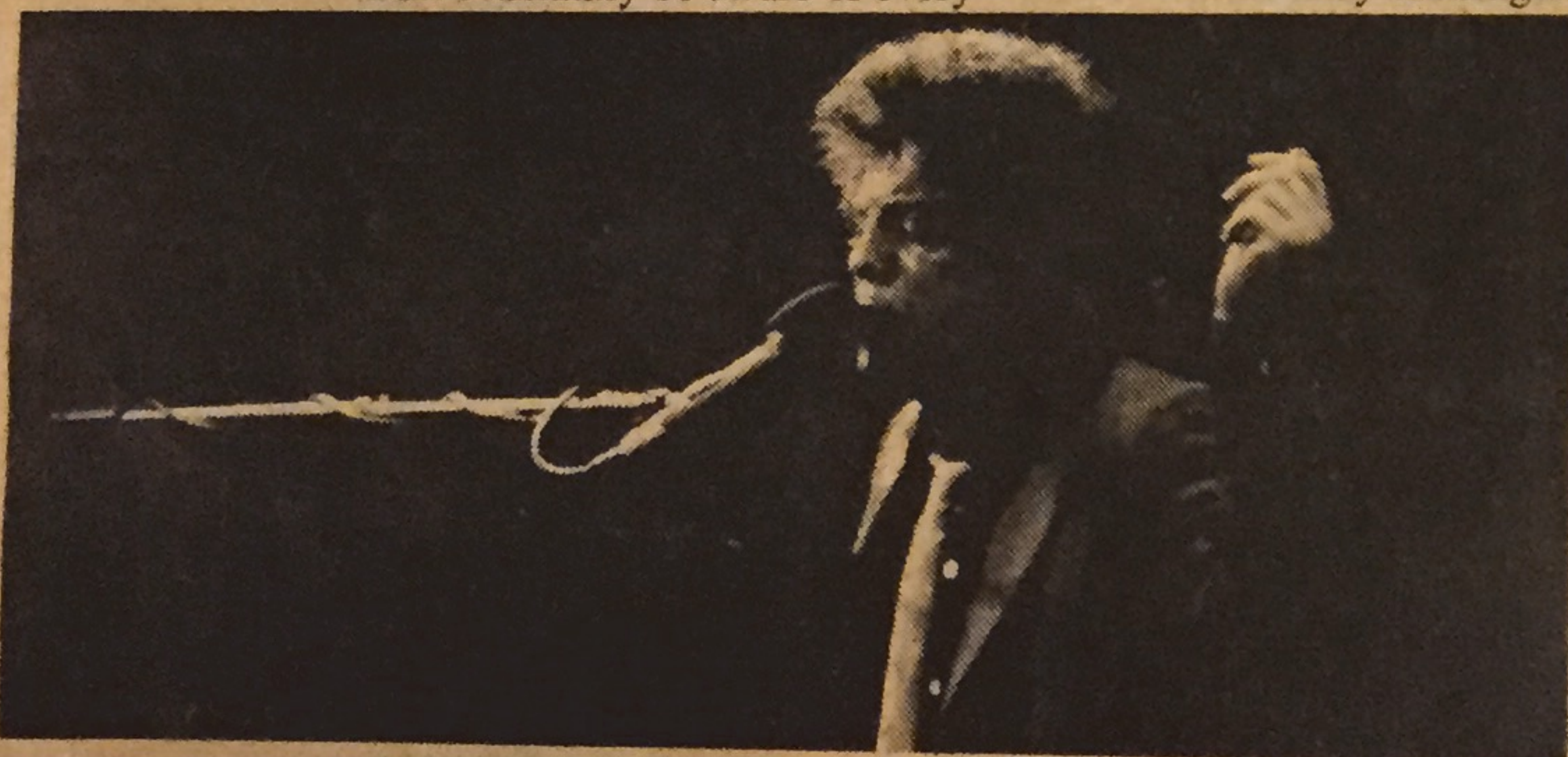
Each channel was heard separately and then blended with the others as the 24 tracks were mixed to two. The mix can take hours or days, but in the case of *It's Still Rock And Roll*, the process was speeded by the use of a computer built right into the mixing console. "The computer is running continuously," Jim explains, "monitoring every move we make. Once the correct proportions of sound are achieved and in the computer, it presents the exact mix." Phil continues: "Once the computer plays it back the way we like it, we print it and have the mix."

The process took another three hours, with Billy sticking his head in occasion-

song of the album. There was still so much to be done. For the next two days, the mixed songs were to be organized and placed in playing order for the album. Sequence selection is a subtle but critical process involving experimentation to see how one sound follows another. Everybody agonized over the decision. "We were playing with it right until the final hour," says Phil.

For weeks the entire machinery of CBS Records had been turning toward the March release date for *GLASS HOUSES*—and if everything was to fall into place perfectly, each day would be crucial. Billy and Phil were fanatical about making deadlines; it was a matter of professional integrity. Pressure mounted: the album had to be mastered within the week. In their selected order, the songs were mixed onto the master tape. Then, carrying some four months' work in their hands—tapes which, once manufactured, packaged, and distributed, would play on millions of turntables around the world—Jim and Phil hustled to Sterling Sound in New York where the tapes would be mastered by Ted Jensen.

"At that point," Phil reflects on the mixing and mastering of *GLASS HOUSES*, "you have to expect to work around the clock."



technical and aesthetic consideration to be given the song. Changes can still be made at this stage, and special attention is paid to the balance, tone, and level of each instrument, and the emphasis of rhythms, melodies, lead solos, and overall sound quality.

The possibilities are many: where to turn up a guitar, where to turn down a piano, where to add reverb to a lead vocal, and when to execute a fade. The more complicated a song, the more complicated the mix.

Jim and Phil left the studio for the mixing room and began the slow, painstaking process, each of them taking turns at the console. "It gives each guy a chance to let his ears cool off that way,"

ally to comment on different tones and combinations. "It's no good for him to sit there for three or four hours, watching me finesse something and put it together," says Phil. "One of us always has to be neither bored nor tired, to give a fresh opinion; I like that person to be Billy. Besides, he can never hear what I hear in those little speakers; it drives him crazy.... Billy doesn't touch anything in the room because he thinks if he does, it'll probably fall over! Billy either likes it or he doesn't. He's very straightforward; he's relaxed about the mix because he trusts us."

When the song was mixed to everybody's satisfaction, there was no time for celebration even though it was the final

#### END OF PART TWO

Coming in the next issue of *ROOT BEER RAG*, the final chapter in the odyssey of creating and marketing a record.

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# RUSSELL JAVORS

Russell Javors has been playing rhythm guitar and singing background vocals with Billy Joel since '76, when Billy first toured Australia. **ROOT BEER RAG** went backstage and talked with Russell about his career in Billy's band, as well as his independent musical activities as a singer and songwriter.

**RBR:** How did you first meet Billy and the other band members?

**RUSSELL:** I grew up in Plainview (Long Island) and saw Billy in every stage of his career. I played in a lot of the same places. I've known Doug (Stegmeyer) and Liberty (DeVitto) since high school and have worked on and off with them since I was about fourteen.

**RBR:** So you started playing the guitar in high school. Did you take music lessons?

**RUSSELL:** I started playing in junior high, and I never took lessons. I still can't read a note. The only lessons I ever took were singing lessons about a year ago with a vocal coach named David Collyer, who's also worked with Paul Simon, Phoebe Snow, and Liza Minnelli.



**RBR:** When you were playing in high school bands, did you know then that you wanted to spend your life as a professional musician?

**RUSSELL:** Well, I made a lot of money with bands then. We did real well. We were working all the time. For a while, I thought about going into commercial art, but the only thing I ever really wanted to do was play in a band.

**RBR:** Who were your greatest musical influences back then?

**RUSSELL:** I always loved the Beatles and the Stones. Ray Charles was great.

**RBR:** How about today's groups? What current bands do you admire?

**RUSSELL:** I like the Police. I still love the Stones after all these years. I just heard a great record by Jerry Lee Lewis. He's one of the masters, a real special guy. I like Elvis Costello's new record. I like what a lot of people are doing, including Nick Lowe and Rockpile.

**RBR:** Is the music scene different today than when you started fifteen years ago?

**RUSSELL:** I think it is. When I started there were so many different undercurrents in music, so many styles. I don't feel that now. Today, the music scene is defined by more radical things—like by what fashion somebody may wear. It seems more superficial to me now...less for kids to sink their teeth into. New wave never really developed to any musical extent on the Island. I haven't seen it break out. And reggae doesn't have a mass-market appeal. It seemed like



there used to be more going on. There was black music—the Motown sound was fresh. There was Sam and Dave. Everything was merging, like in the fifties when there was country and r & b coming together. Today, somebody's got a mohican haircut and a nurse's uniform on! I want to go away humming the song, and I don't. A lot of the acts now don't have the impact. I appreciate their energy and conviction, and I won't put anybody down for using a gimmick. But when the Kinks came out with a record, they had the energy, the conviction, and a hit record that still sounds great today. There are a lot of records out now that I like, but not as deeply. This current stuff just doesn't move me the same way.

**RBR:** What advice would you offer a high school kid today who wants to get into the music field?

**RUSSELL:** It's important to hook onto what you're really good at doing. If someone has a really distinctive talent, they should go after it. But if they don't have their own thing, they should try and round themselves out as well as they can, and use any opportunity they can get. There are some great players in little clubs. It takes real conviction. You have to think positively.

**RBR:** You started playing with Billy on the *TURNSTILES* album. How did that come about?

**RUSSELL:** Doug and Lib and I had a band called Topper, and we had that going for a lot of years. When Billy needed a bass player, Doug was the first to join the Billy Joel band. Then for *TURNSTILES* we all joined the group.



**RBR:** Do you have a favorite Billy Joel album after all these years of working with him?

**RUSSELL:** That's a hard one! I like Billy's ballads a lot. I like *TURNSTILES* a lot, and *Vienna*, and *She's Always A Woman*. I like the more sensitive stuff that Billy does.

**RBR:** When you're not on the road or in the studio with Billy, how do you

spend that time?

**RUSSELL:** I've always wanted to do my own thing, but what I do with Billy is very special—so ideally, I'd like to keep them both going. I think of myself as a singer and songwriter as much as anything else. I just signed a record deal with Columbia. We'll be recording the album this summer after the tour with Billy.

that. Working in Australia is great too. It was the first place Billy had any real big success. My first trip there was in '76 when I had just joined Billy. In the States, we were playing big clubs, and moving up. But after only two weeks in Australia, *TURNSTILES* had just gone gold, and they were taking our pictures as we got off the plane. It was great. It was



nuts. It's the Wild West over there...just terrific.

**RBR:** What three adjectives best describe your personality?

**RUSSELL:** Is handsome an adjective?  
**RBR:** Handsome, adorable, and suave?

**RUSSELL:** Well, maybe loyal, dependable—and suave!

**RBR:** What's your professional fantasy fifteen years from now?

**RUSSELL:** I hope I'm still doing all this when I'm forty.



**RBR:** When you're writing, how much influence does Billy have on your own songs?

**RUSSELL:** I've been writing for so many years that Billy's influence on me has nothing to do with my songs musically. And it's funny how the same band sounds different playing with me. But Billy is a big influence on me in many other ways. He is a consummate professional on stage. It's intriguing working with Billy and watching him perform. His focus is great. He can turn Madison Square Garden into a living room.

**RBR:** You're about to embark on a concert tour with Billy covering Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Do you particularly look forward to the foreign trips?

**RUSSELL:** I've been in those countries a couple of times each, but I enjoy it every time. I love Japanese food! It's great! I'm looking forward to

Coming Up ...  
Special expanded fall issue of the **ROOT BEER RAG**

- ★ Album news
  - ★ Editor's interview with Billy
  - ★ Special RBR sports feature
  - ★ Backstage visit with David Brown
  - ★ Final chapter of "Odyssey"
- ALL EXCLUSIVELY IN THE **ROOT BEER RAG**

