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THE WINDOWS

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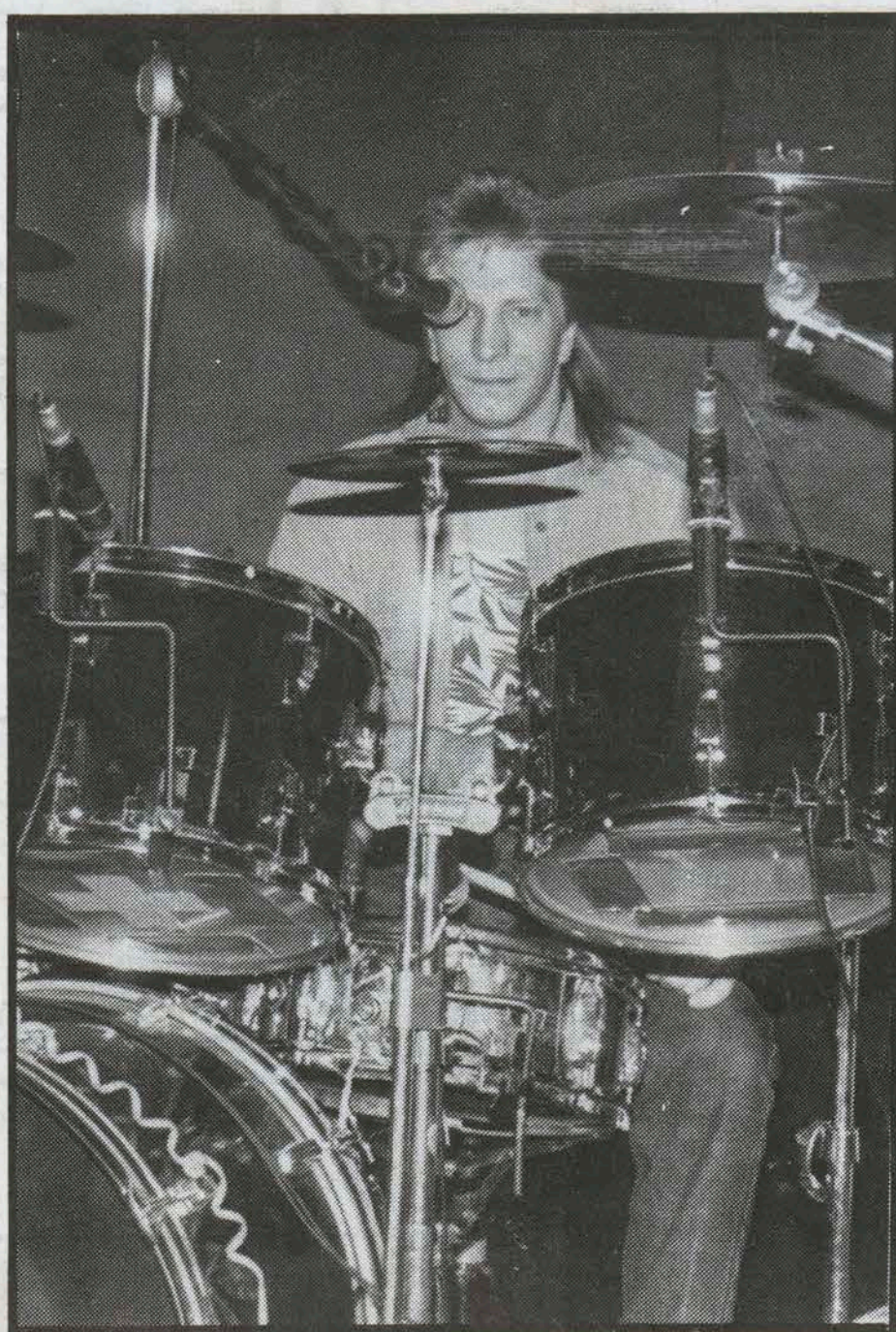
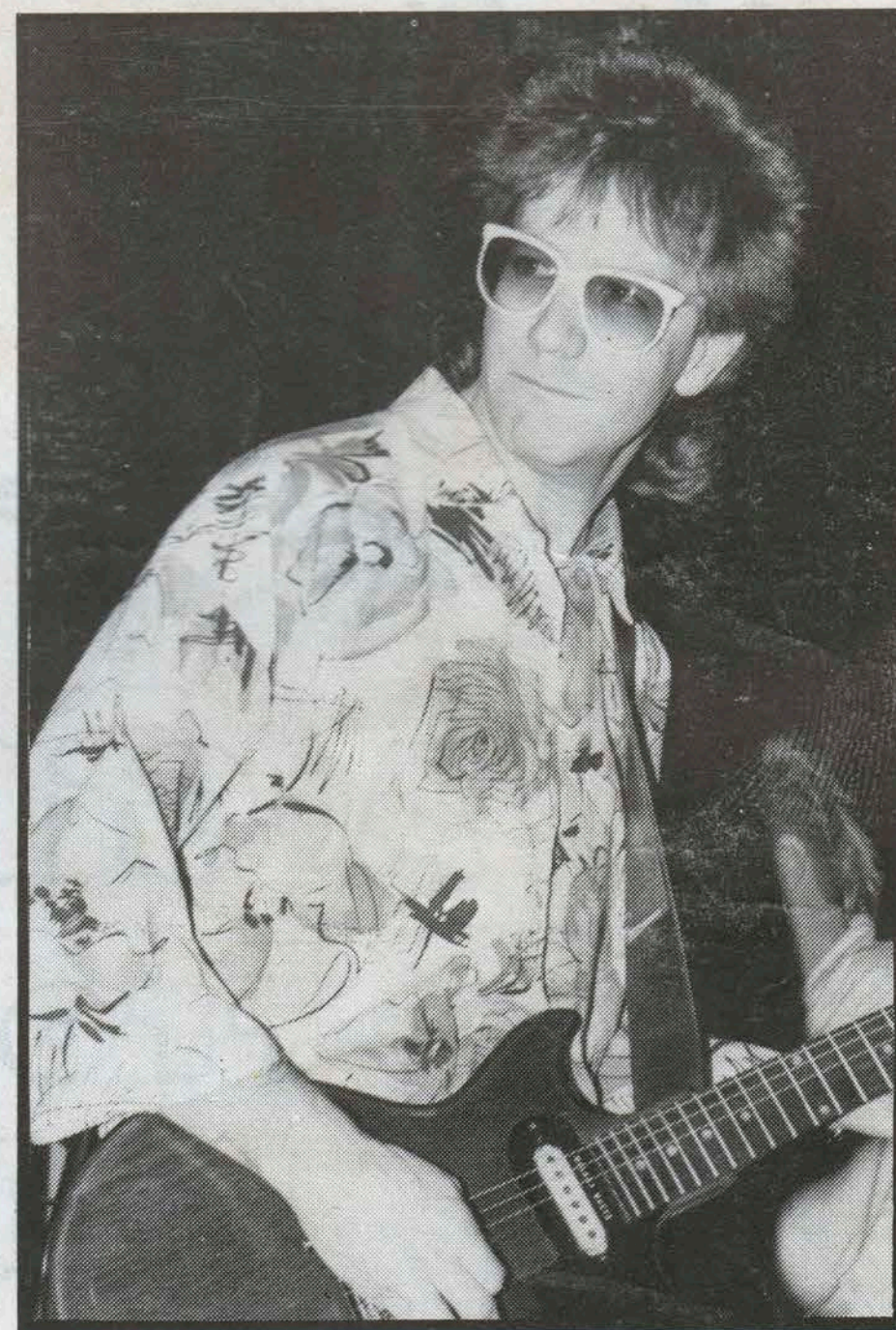
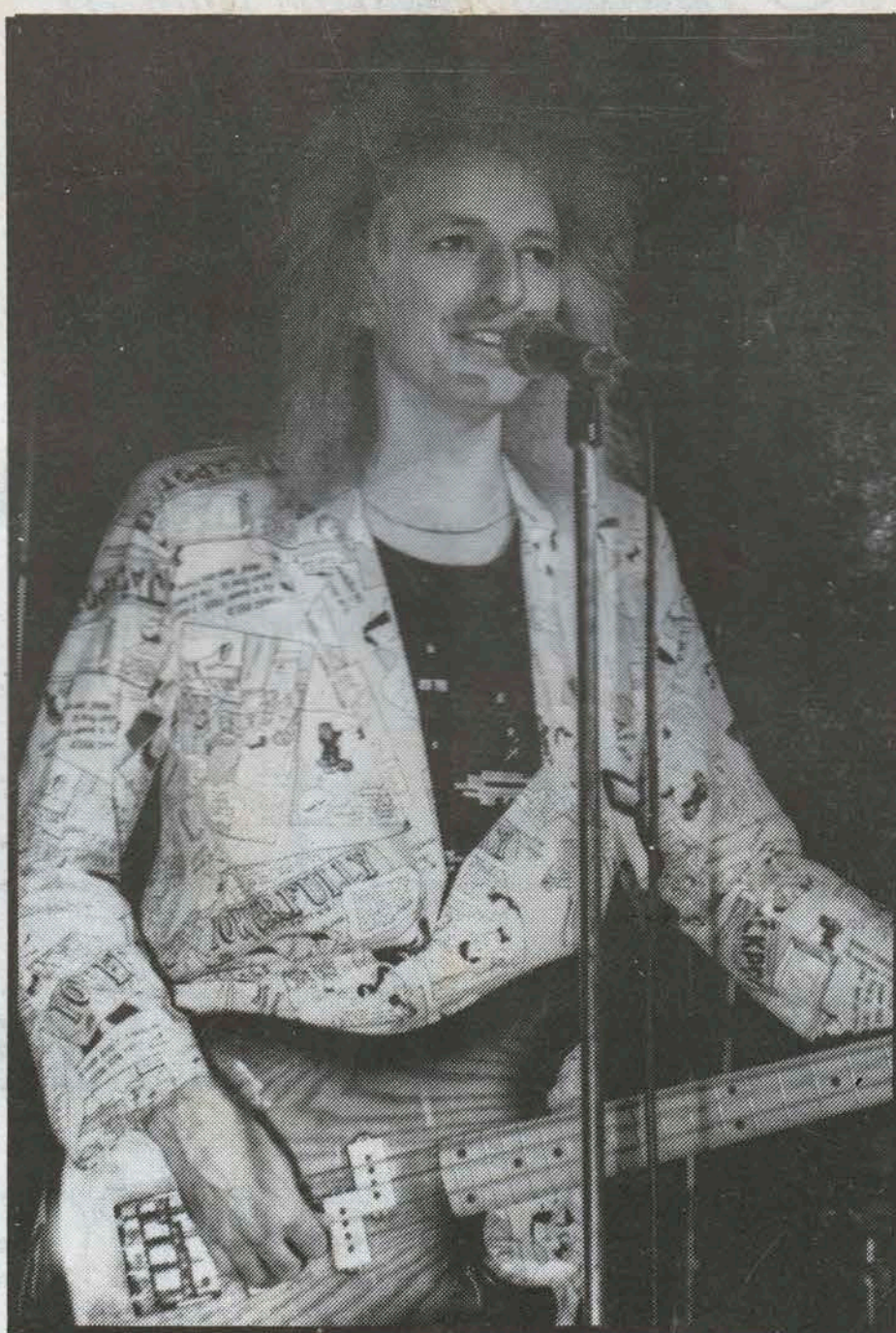
**THE WIND-
BREAKERS**

On The Road

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Return of a Pro

**NASHVILLE
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THE SOUND OF THE WINDOWS BREAKING

BY RICK WILSON

HEROES?

“John Lennon,” a bespectacled Larry Brewer says with reverence. Larry, 33, is the chief singer, songwriter and guitarist for the Martin, Tennessee based Windows.

“And not just because he died, but because he was such a great rock lyricist. He knew how to put words together and I’ve always been infatuated with him. Can you imagine him walking into the studio and saying, ‘Hey guys, I’ve got a new song, let’s work it up. It’s called *I Am the Walrus*.’ Hey, this guy was out of here. He was an absolute genius.”

“Definitely the Beatles,” adds Paul Doege (pronounced Da-gee), the Windows’ 32-year-old bass player and vocalist. “When I first saw them on the Ed Sullivan show, that’s what started it for me.”

These are answers that should come as no surprise to anyone who is familiar with the music of The Windows. Their debut album, *Runnin’ Alone*, is pure power pop, circa 1965, with an ’80’s crunch. Eight non-stop, up-tempo tunes filled with all the melody and harmony that made the first wave of the British Invasion so appealing.

“Their music is not too heavy and not too light,” says band manager Dolphus Blackmon.

“Moms and dads like our music,” smiles Paul.

Larry says, “We’ve been told that we sound like the Cars; we’ve been told that we sound like the Producers. I don’t know what we sound like really, but the Beatles’ influence is very strong. We don’t think about it when we’re writing but it just comes out. And if you’re gonna be a songwriter, Lennon and McCartney are a couple of good ones to study.”

As Larry and Paul talk about their music, the Windows’ 30-year-old drummer, Alan Brewer (Larry’s younger brother), sits quietly and listens.

“Is there something in your contract that prohibits you from speaking?” I finally ask.

Alan just shakes his head no.

Larry whispers, “Alan is the quiet one...like George.”

SHORT ROAD HOME

“When we’re not here, we’re there,” Paul says describing the band’s touring schedule. “If we play Jackson every two months, then we play that often everywhere we play.”

“Last year we played 288 dates,” adds Larry.

Since 1980 the Windows have played clubs in 25 states and opened concerts for acts such as the Beach Boys (in Jackson), the Producers, Molly Hatchet, and the Starship. The band’s extensive touring has gained them strong local followings in towns such as Carbondale, Ill., Paducah, Ky., St. Louis, Memphis, Fayetteville, Ark., and Starkville, among others.

“The band’s home base is Martin, Tennessee,” explains Paul. “Our management (Frasco Entertainment) and record distributor’s (Parallax Records) home base is Jackson, Mississippi. I feel at home anywhere I can be myself.”

RUNNIN’ ALONE

“\$38,000 to record the album and another \$15,000 to get it out,” Larry says. This is the album that was not to be an album at all. Instead, the band’s intention for the tapes they recorded at Ardent Studios in Memphis was to shop them with the major labels.

“We’d just record two or three songs and go back on the road,” says Paul.

Band manager Dolphus Blackmon then carried the tapes to New York and looked for a record deal for the band. There was plenty of interest in the tapes but nobody was drawing up contracts.

“I wanted to show these people in New York that the Windows were not just a one hit band,” explains Blackmon. So back into the studio went the band. And back to New York went Blackmon with three more new songs. Still no contract. Undaunted, the band recorded more new material. This sequence continued and within two years the band had recorded enough material for nearly two albums.





LARRY BREWER • PAUL DOEGE • EDGAR RILEY • ALAN BREWER

RCA, Warner Brothers, Atlantic, Elektra and Chrysalis Records were interested in the group, but none was ready to put ink on paper. "They didn't know if this band could make it in major markets like New York and Los Angeles," Blackmon says. "We've never played those markets. So we put the album out ourselves to show them that we *could* sell some records."

"And we did it for the fans," adds Larry. "We've been telling them for two years that there was gonna be an album, and so we did it for them."

Over 250 radio stations in 23 Southern and Midwestern states received the album by mail in October. In those areas where the band plays the club circuit, radio stations quickly picked up on the album. This was what the band had expected. Outside the circuit there were some surprises. Alexandria, La., was an area they'd never played, yet the album began receiving heavy airplay at the local rock station. The same thing happened in Nashville, another

area they'd never played.

Motorcar was an immediate hit in many areas. This was no surprise. Of course, *Motorcar* had been a hit since 1985. "Although it was never released until now, there are a lot of people who think *Motorcar* was already a hit, because most of the time it was the song we used in the commercials," explains Blackmon. "When I first became manager of this band in 1984, we sat down and decided what we were going to do. One of the things I thought was very important was if radio stations were going to be running ads whenever we played somewhere, then let's use our music...not the Cars or any other popular act's music, but the Windows' music."

JESSICA LANGE

"She's a great actress and very sexy. I'm a big fan of hers," says Larry, explaining his inspiration for the song *Photograph*. "I was in

Continued on next page

THE WINDOWS, Continued from 17

the grocery store one day in Martin and saw her picture on the cover of some magazine. I can't remember what magazine it was. You know, you can get inspiration from anything. But it was just this photograph of Jessica Lange and that's where that song came from.

THE TRAGEDY

"Of course, we miss him," says Paul solemnly. "The hardest thing is that he won't be coming over to our houses, smiling and cutting up."

Keyboardist Kirby Jackson celebrated his second anniversary as a Window only days before the tragedy.

"The tragedy" is the phrase used by the band to describe the accident that took place on the night of August 25, near McKenzie, Tenn.

It is believed 23-year-old Kirby Jackson fell asleep at the wheel. It is known his car crossed the median of Tennessee Highway 22, collided with an 18-wheeler and burst into flames.

The band delayed the release of *Runnin' Alone* six weeks to redesign the cover, dedicating to Kirby the record he was so much a part of.

"He was a great guy," Larry says. "And very talented. He would have made it without the Windows."

"We miss him," adds Paul.

"We miss him," repeats Larry, as if to say "amen."



New Windows Keyboard Man EDGAR RILEY

Photo by Randy Kwan

REPLACING A WINDOW

The newest addition to the band is keyboardist Edgar Riley. When the band arrived at On The Rocks for this interview, Edgar was eating catfish and talking VERY LOUD. Now he's slumped over on the bar doing what looks like his impersonation of a coma victim. He's been this way for forty-five minutes. Edgar is a nice fellow when he's asleep. Awake he's VERY LOUD. Right down to his clothes. Tonight he's wearing a day-glo green knee-length kimono, a green headband and red sunglasses. His hair is red and yellow and spiked in the back.

"Where did you get this guy, anyway?" I ask.

"Who?" grins Paul, as if he didn't know.

"Samurai Mohawk," I say, pointing to Edgar. "The comatose guy at the end of the bar!"

"Through the Frasco agency," says Paul.

"Edgar was the first person that came to my mind when we got around to the business of selecting a new keyboardist," Blackmon explains. "I had seen him work with another group called the Kangs."

"And he's got experience in the studio," Larry says. "He's got eight albums under his belt—four on a major label."

"Another thing that impressed me about Edgar is his dedication," adds Blackmon.

"Are we talking about the same person?" I ask.

"He had a big night last night," explains Larry sympathetically. "Alan, wake Edgar up. EDGAR WAKE UP! Tell us about Frank Zappa." Turning to me, Larry says, "Edgar played with Frank Zappa for two years."

Edgar wakes up, walks around to the bartender's side of the bar and begins to dig in the garbage. He pulls out something that looks like catfish and pops a piece into his mouth. As he's doing this, he tells me in all seriousness: "Frank is the most together person I've ever met. If he would run for president, I would vote for him. The man is very together."

Continued on next page

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THE WINDOWS, Continued

Edgar seems like an odd choice to replace fallen Window Kirby Jackson. Paul is friendly and jokes a lot. Larry is soft spoken and intelligent. Alan is quiet and attentive. Edgar is VERY LOUD.

It is not until the band takes the stage that the connection becomes clear. While Paul is bouncing up and down John Lennon fashion and Larry is crooning into the microphone, Edgar is putting on his own show from behind the keyboards by simply doing what he does best, which is being VERY LOUD. On stage Edgar is quite visual, with his punked-out hair and his contorted Zappa-inspired movements. His keyboard work blends well and his vocal harmonies are flawless. And yet it is his visual impact which is most impressive.

Even with the death of Kirby Jackson, little has changed in the Windows musical performance. Covers of sixties classics by The Beatles, The Who, and The Rolling Stones, along with new material from INXS, Talking Heads, and Simple Minds are mixed with a generous slice of Windows originals. But something has changed. Tonight they are more than just another rock band that has been playing this turf for a while; tonight they are celebrities. The near-capacity crowd knows this band and many people have brought copies of the new album to be autographed. This may not be Windowmania but it is a large gathering of fans who seem to sense themselves as part of something big about to happen.

BIG ENUFF?

"The man at Atlantic Records said, 'Hey, you know what people are gonna think when they hear this song!'" laughs Blackmon.

"Our producer, John Hampton, liked that song too. He thought it should be our first single," says Paul.

I replay the chorus in my mind. *She says it ain't Big Enuff. She says it ain't Big Enuff for her.* "Is it about what I think it is?" I ask.

"I don't know what it's about," says Larry, with a straight face. "Our lightman, Roger Elmore, wrote the lyrics and Kirby wrote the music. They were just messing around in the studio and John Hampton said, 'Hey, lets cut that one!'"

WINDOWS BREAKING

The real question is, are the Windows big enuff? Can they sell records? Will they break nationally? Most of the necessary elements for success are in place: local followings in numerous cities and towns; radio airplay in areas where they perform; management that promotes the group relentlessly. All that's lacking is the financial backing of a major record label. Will they get it? The major labels are watching and every record sale counts.

"We've got a long way to go but right now we're in good shape," Blackmon says of the record's sales in its first month on the market. "In the first few weeks after release, a lot of acts on major labels don't sell as well as this record has."

"I think a lot of the fans have bought the album already," says Larry. "Now we've gotta convince the people who've never heard us play to buy the album."

If you've never heard this group perhaps it's time you looked into the Windows. But don't just look—listen. And listen for the sound of the Windows breaking.

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THE WINDOWS



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PAIN OF A
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