

tuck

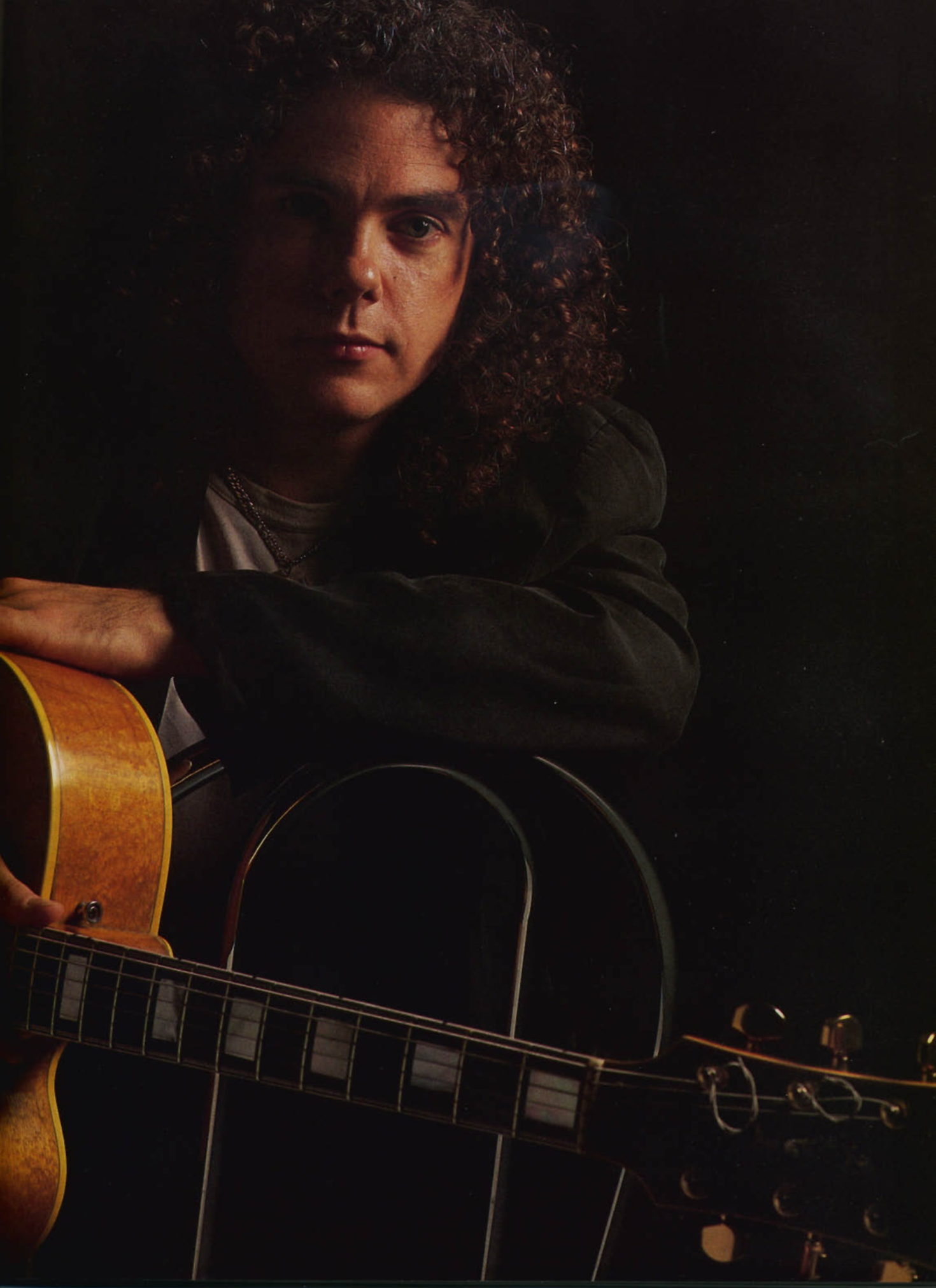
The Reckless Precision Of

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Andress

iF THERE'S SUCH A THING AS A PREVIOUS lifetime, then Tuck Andress must have been a magician—not the kind who does hokey dime store tricks, but a great one on the same plane as Blackstone or Houdini. With movements nearly invisible to the naked eye, the 38-year-old Andress conjures an astonishing yet subtle complex of sounds that expands the definition of fingerstyle guitar—especially in the context of jazz and pop. In Tuck's musical universe, the flashiest skills encompass harmonics licks, multiple string bends, and percussive slaps, clicks, and pops. Yet, it's the subtle aspects of his technique that are most amazing and distinguish him from other finger-

stylists, past or present. * Classical players relentlessly strive to achieve a high level of finger independence, but they've got nothing on Tuck, who can juggle three and sometimes four independent lines with apparent ease. His right hand's controlled, multiple personality enables him to play simultaneous notes with separate articulations as his thumb executes bass lines with alternate up and down strokes. At the same time, his left-hand—aided by extreme physical flexibility—gives him **by jim ferguson** access to sustained melodies and tight harmonies. While the late Lenny Breau may have been the first to utilize some of the same elements, Tuck is an



original, with his own ideas, voice, attitude, and aesthetic. * For a decade, Address gigged in the San Francisco Bay Area with his wife, Patti. In the process, the duo built a loyal following, and Tuck's playing captured the imaginations of local guitarists. In 1988, the pair signed with Windham Hill and released the acclaimed *Tears Of Joy* and *Love Warriors*. But while the rest may be history in the annals of vocal/guitar duos, Tuck &



"When you hear me play garden variety chords, the odds are very high that I'm not fingering them in the normal way."

Patti's success and artistry left one unanswered question: "When is Tuck going to do a solo album?"

Recorded live in the studio, his long awaited solo LP, *Reckless Precision*, sparkles with innovation and musicality. Integrating the seemingly incongruous qualities of exactitude and spontaneity, Address, with his trusty 1953 Gibson L-5, offers a broad look at his musical persona—and maybe even a glimpse of fingerstyle guitar's future.

Will aspects of Tuck's approach become part of the instrument's standard vocabulary? Perhaps. But if not, *Reckless Precision* at least demonstrates that he's one of solo guitar's most unique, creative figures.

"Man In The Mirror"

For an instrumental arrangement, "Man In The Mirror" is very faithful to the Michael Jackson version.

It took me a fairly short time to do the arrangement, but a long time to capture the right feel. I got the timing down, and then just studied and studied Michael Jackson's phras-

ing, which is articulate and rhythmic, with a lot of detail. I spent a long time copping it as if I were learning a George Benson solo. Since the song is relatively simple, it didn't require that I play independent lines. But when I first recorded it, my playing sounded absolutely two dimensional compared to Michael Jackson's version, which has four dimensions or more. That was a very sobering experience. So, as I have so many times, I went back to the drawing board. I didn't end up changing the arrangement all that much; it was just a case of putting some life into it. I don't know what happened. From the start, I got the parts I could, and left out the others. I mainly put more intensity into the melody.

What made you want to do "Man In The Mirror"?

I wanted to represent the different things I play. My concept was to just sit down and play, but not to record a practice session, which would be boring to the average listener [laughs]. Actually, "Grooves Of Joy" comes pretty close to being a practice session. On any given day, I might play any given tune. It all depends on what's kicking around in my mind.

Do you tap the harmonics at the end?

I use my right-hand index finger to slap 12 frets above the left hand's position. You can slap straight across the fingerboard, or go diagonally. Every note doesn't necessarily have to be at the same fret. For instance, if you slap this D9 at the 17th fret, you still hear the F#:



I try to be as accurate as possible, but sometimes I have to surrender to the fact that I'm not going to be exact. Even getting a small percentage of the harmonics comes across to the listener, but I try for all of them.

"Over The Rainbow" / "If I Only Had A Brain"

How did you select the tunes for your Wizard Of Oz medley?

I could have picked another combination; I've included others at various points—but those are the two that I usually play live. I do "Over The Rainbow" in the key

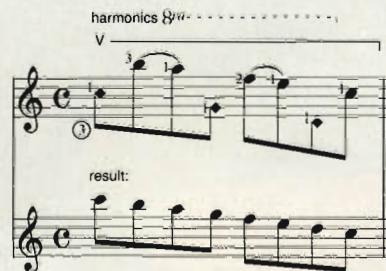
of C, probably because I just happened to play it in that key once. Most of my instrumentals just happened one night at a club.

A lot of guitarists have arranged "Over The Rainbow." Did you have a particular version in mind when you recorded yours?

Not that I'm aware of. [Vocalist] Bobby McFerrin is the only person I've heard do "Over The Rainbow" recently. My recollection of the tune is mainly from the movie, but it's funny how people have the same idea for a certain part of a song, while making everything else completely different.

You use a variety of harmonics techniques in the medley, including some things that Lenny Breau did.

In the introduction, I play a Lenny Breau-like scale passage that combines octave harmonics and fretted notes:



Larry Carlton was the first person I heard do that. He played a total of about three notes, and I went home and figured out how to expand it. Later, I realized that Lenny Breau had done all that, plus lots of other stuff. The technique works beautifully. "Over The Rainbow" is fairly straightforward. At times, I've used it as a vehicle for atonal harmony, and played the most bizarre chord voicings I could, but the recorded version is pretty straight.

Did you give much thought to the arrangement's voice-leading?

Not at all, because I just automatically put chords together in a smooth way. A lot of voice-leading takes care of itself. I'm not sure how much Wes Montgomery thought about voice-leading, but his chords took care of themselves because of the fingerboard and the way he heard things. I'm convinced he heard every note, but I don't know if he was more aware of a chord's highest voice, with the rest perceived as a general texture, or if he really heard those inner lines moving back and forth. It was great, regardless of how he did it.

When you construct a multi-part arrangement like "If I Only Had A Brain," do you ever think in terms of a big band?

I have in the past. I've asked myself how

Jimmy Smith's trio, Count Basie, or Earth, Wind & Fire would sound doing a particular tune. I don't need to do that so much now, but it's a guaranteed way of coming up with new ideas. I try to work things out as many ways as possible so I don't have to think about voice-leading very much. I've always found *actual* orchestration difficult, because



"In a way, this album is a message to guitar players, even though I'm sympathetic to the average listener."

I don't relate to a lot of the different instruments. I relate to the notes, but I don't relate to the sounds. It would be difficult to start thinking about a lot of textures at once. I could come up with good rhythms and pitches, but it might sound really weird when I started assigning them to instruments.

Does playing a solo version of a tune like "Over The Rainbow" enable you to improvise much?

Certain parts are set, although I might have improvised the entire arrangement originally. It's likely that I spontaneously change the rhythmic pattern.

"Louie Louie"

Why?

Somebody suggested that I should change the name and hope nobody recognizes the tune [laughs]. I like comical things, and "Louie Louie" is inherently comical. It's been recorded a lot, and every new version seems to add to the humor. At the same time, the first guitar solo I learned was on the Kingsmen's record. The song wasn't at all comical to me then; learning that solo was a momentous achievement. At the time, it was all I could do to hear a I-IV-V progression or whether a chord was major or minor. So, playing "Louie Louie" is like going back to my roots. Overall, I wanted the album to be relentlessly me, although I didn't go about it

too self-consciously. I've always identified with solo guitar records that have something really quirky or in utterly poor taste. Guitarists seem to put out things that nobody in their right mind would do. Some of my favorite records have the worst guitar sound you could imagine, but I get off on those kinds of weirdnesses.

But your version of "Louie Louie" has more than curiosity value, because it's very musical.

I envisioned doing the song relatively straight, but it ended up having a swing feel. I worked out the guitar solo and the bass part to maybe show how I can play independent lines, but that version started sounding horrible. So, a swing treatment emerged on the day I recorded the tune. Of course, doing something like this is completely different from my versions of Jimi Hendrix' songs, which are intended to pay tribute. I've taken Hendrix' solos off of records hundreds of times for hundreds of students, as well as for myself. Each time, I've gotten a little more accurate, although I don't think that anybody can do justice to Jimi Hendrix, in terms of writing down what he played.

"Body And Soul"

Since "Body And Soul" changes keys a lot, it's kind of the ballad equivalent to "All The Things You Are."

To me, it's a vehicle for exploration. For a long time, I'd get lost in "Body And Soul" and modulate to the key a fourth or fifth away, so it's also a vehicle for not getting confused and not getting lost. Fortunately, that didn't happen on the album. For some reason, an F# and a Gb sound very different to me, which makes it easy to get all twisted around when those sharp keys change to flat keys.

Where did you get the idea for the opening descending line?

Bobby McFerrin. I especially like the tune's melodic sparseness, and I use a simple contrapuntal line that descends chromatically. Later, I open up to other things. I often use a tune like that as a means of exploring textures and arranging techniques. No two takes were the same. Some were out of time, and some voiced the melody in different ways.

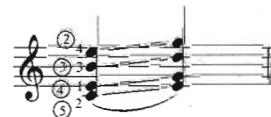
"Sweet P"

Your ability to play independent lines is featured on "Sweet P," although the song has a relatively simple opening.

I've never thought of myself as a composer, but "Sweet P" and "Manonash" were two of the first tunes I've called complete. I still don't pretend to know anything about composition. A lot of the stuff I do is for guitar players only, I guess you could say.

The slides add a lot to the introduction.

I generally pay attention to detail. I assume that musicians who play other instruments do, too. The hardest part of playing the guitar is smoothly using little embellishments that make the music come to life. The guitar isn't naturally expressive like the human voice. The piano is kind of the extreme of what you can't do, but the guitar leans in that direction, so you really have to fight to give life to a song. I've practiced slides a lot, and fingerings play an important role. For instance, if you use the right fingering, you can slide chords in parallel and maintain all the voices:



[Ed. Note: "Sweet P" is transcribed on page 48.]

"Stella By Starlight"

A lot of solo players would consider transposing "Stella" to a "guitar key," but you kept it in Bb.

I didn't envision using open strings in the tune, plus I probably learned it in Bb because that's how Miles Davis did it. His was the first version I heard. When I first saw the song in the *Real Book*, I thought that one of the chords was wrong. For a long time, I'd get annoyed when I heard the tune with what I was convinced was a mistake—it's impossible to always know a composer's original intention. But I ended up getting used to that chord, which I eventually realized was correct, and it opened my mind up to all kinds of chord substitutions and harmonic possibilities.

You seem to take special care with the melody line.

Most standards are good vehicles for my kind of detail work. Left-hand independence is important to getting a melody line to sustain. In a way, it's about the most significant thing you *don't* hear when Patti and I play,

because I normally don't deal with the melody. A lot of solo guitarists don't give the melody its proper due. One of the things I love about Earl Klugh is that he does make a melody stand out, so he's been an influence in that regard.

What's the main technical challenge of sustaining a melody?

You almost always have to dedicate a finger solely to the melodic line. So even when

you hear me play garden variety chords, the odds are very high that I'm not fingering them in the normal way. It's something you wouldn't be aware of unless you saw me play.

What's your right-hand fingering for the strummed octave harmonics?

To strum the strings in either direction, I hold my right-hand thumb and index as if they're grasping a pick. As each string is plucked, I simultaneously touch 12 frets

above the fingered note with the nail side of my right-hand little finger which is bent toward my palm. Once you get used to the right-hand position, you can do fast arpeggios that start on the high or low strings, and even tremolo chords in harmonics.

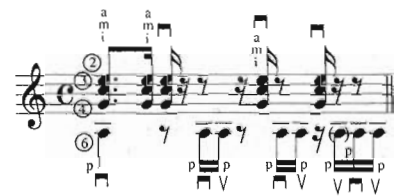
"Manonash"

This is another right-hand tour de force. Where did the title come from?

It's from Meher Baba, and it means the annihilation of the mind that happens at the point of God realization, where your individual mind disappears and the universal mind becomes eternal. I wrote it about 10 years ago when I was in India. For years, it was the only song I had written. It was impossible for me to play, but I'd try to do it anyway.

Does it use the same alternating thumb-stroke technique as "Sweet P"?

In parts. Since the technique is so tricky, it's best to begin slowly with something simple that has a good groove:



It's also a good idea to practice the lines individually before putting them together.

"Manha De Carnaval"

Your version of "Manha De Carnaval" is a study in theme and variations. How did you come up with such an original version?

It was done in a desperate last couple of hours prior to mixing the record. The song I originally intended to do didn't work, so this one came to mind. When I play the tune, I usually start with what the recorded version ends with and then go on to do a lot of chordal stuff, but it didn't feel right to do that. Instead, I took a minimalist approach with the beginning. I normally tend to overstate this song, so I encouraged myself to experiment with a more subdued version. What you hear is completely different from anyway I had ever thought about playing before.

This tune includes a lot of single-note work, which you don't usually so.

For the longest time I didn't play single-note solos, because I felt a need to create a full sound. Intellectually, I knew I could play

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"So far, I've either played with Patti or have been in some sort of pop group . . . these tunes always fascinated me."

notes and *m* plays the sixteenth notes that come between. I've made such an effort to learn how to alternate *i* and *m* that I don't often use my thumb for single-notes. I still play lines better with a pick, but using my fingers feels pretty good most of the time.

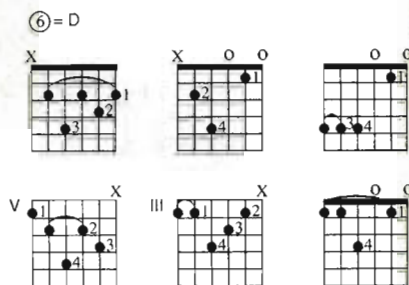
"Grooves Of Joy"

Most of the tracks are played live. What made you want to do this kind of tape

song together, but we also might show each other some interesting licks or grooves. So this gives me a chance to present stuff that you ordinarily wouldn't find anywhere; some of it is just repetitive grooves with small variations. One recurring section underlines an idea that I've tried to communicate to students, which is that repeating something over and over again can be very meditative and show you how something can develop of its own accord over a period of time.

In the snippet "24 Little Beats," did you have a particular chord sequence in mind?

Not in a conventional sense; I just played what I heard. A couple of the voicings are pretty outside sounding; I tune the sixth string down to D:



lines, but I'd always resort to chords, and couldn't hold myself to a single-note solo for more than second. I've always admired the way Joe Pass does it; George Benson and Bruce Forman are amazing, too. So it was an accomplishment to get myself to do it on tape.

What right-hand fingering do you use for single-note passages?

Usually *i* and *m*, where *i* plays the eighth-

montage?

I had a lot of bits and pieces that really didn't stand on their own, so I thought it'd be fun to put them together. In a way, this album is a message to guitar players, even though I'm very sympathetic to the average listener. Guitar players tend to listen to solo guitar a lot, so they're going to hear this album in a very personal way. When I get together with other players, we might play a

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tuck

"Begin The Beguine"

You don't hear jazz players do "Begin The Beguine" very often, probably because its length makes it impractical to blow over. Why select it?

I love it, but I didn't discover it because it was a classic. I found out about it because Meher Baba instructed that it be played repeatedly when he dropped his body back in 1969. For his followers, it's a very spiritual song of love between the lover and the divine beloved, and it reflects on that whole relationship. There are accounts of him in India having people listening to the tune. For Meher Baba, the song communicated a feeling of longing for someone you're not with, or for a moment that was but can be. You're right about the length; I sure wasn't gonna do a second chorus on that one.

Did Meher Baba's interest have to do with how it unfolds musically?

Possibly. It's a miracle how it supports the lyrics, which I read during the song's takes. I probably played that song a little more straight and unembellished than any other on the record. I didn't do a lot of reharmonizing or complicated chord alterations. Texturally, I tried to keep the feel happening, but with the minimum of extraneous stuff beyond the bass line and melody. So it was more of an exercise in minimalism than most things I usually do.

Did you consciously make "Begin The Beguine" different from "Manha De Carnival"?

They're both Latin numbers, but they're not very similar. Patti used to sing "Begin The Beguine," which is why I do it in *E*. One of the great things about playing with Patti is that we share the same musical perspective. We don't rule out a song just because it's been recorded a lot. Compared to musicians who do a lot of standards, I live in something closer to a vacuum. I've been playing and working for a long time, but I haven't done a lot of these tunes with other musicians. So far, I've either played with Patti or have been in some sort of pop group—mainly soul bands—but these tunes always fascinated me. It isn't as apparent to me that numbers like "Misty" or "Girl From Ipanema" have been overplayed. To me, those are as fresh as something really obscure, so I tend to listen to them on their own merit. On the other hand, a lot of the songs I play are probably obscure to somebody else. Basically, I play what I like, and don't worry about it. ■



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Inside Tuck's Technique

TO SIMPLIFY THINGS, I'VE WRITTEN OUT ONLY THE A, B, AND C SECTIONS OF "Sweet P." In the recorded version, the recurring parts vary in subtle ways. Nevertheless, this transcription covers the piece's essence and offers a clear view of its materials and techniques.

One of the difficulties connected with putting "Sweet P" on paper concerns the notation of durations—especially in the A and B sections. After a murky attempt to write things as accurately as possible, I opted for basic values and brackets above the staff that show where notes should generally be held for as long as possible. The C section's durations are notated more accurately, and brackets are employed only near the end.

In measure 10, your 4th finger sustains the second-beat G on the second string; to sound the C, flatten the finger at its first joint, and then arch it again to execute the first string's A to B slide.

The large X's in measures 28, 32, 34, and 36 indicate muted-string open-handed down strums, while the ones in bars 33 and 35 designate muted-string finger clicks that anticipate plucking the next chord. Throughout section C, observe how *p* alternates strokes.

I find it difficult to transcribe my own playing, so if you notice any discrepancies between the written and recorded versions, write to me *c/o Guitar Player*.

While taking this music off of the record, I was constantly reminded of Terry Saunders, the incredible San Francisco Bay Area guitarist from whom I learned so many of these percussive techniques. [Ed. Note: For a detailed look at Tuck's approach, see the April '88 issue of *Guitar Player*.]
—Tuck Andress

"Sweet P"

By William C. Andress

The musical score for "Sweet P" is presented in four systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes treble clef, guitar-specific symbols like fret numbers (0-4), accidentals (sharps, naturals, flats), and performance markings such as brackets above the staff indicating note durations and large 'X' marks for muted-string techniques. Section A is marked from measure 1 to 12, and Section B is marked from measure 13 to 16. The score shows a mix of chords and melodic lines with various articulations.

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