



producer
**Herb
Alpert**

by Robert Carr
Photography by Stephen Burchesky

R-e/o (Robert Carr): Have you wanted to be a musician all of your life, or was it just a matter of fate?

Herb Alpert: I started playing when I was 8, but I studied formally for about 12 years. I didn't realize at that time that I was headed in that direction. I kind of slipped into it through the back door. I don't think of myself as the normal type musician who has been on the road with the big bands, and played with orchestras and groups. I went through another process. I think of myself as a producer of records who has a trumpet in his hands, who is combining both of those. I went to U.S.C. for a short time. That wasn't really happening for me, it was the wrong timing for me and college. I wasn't ready for that experience, although I was playing in the orchestra. I moved my name up on the draft because I was about to be drafted anyway. I went into the army for a couple of years, and was placed in the army band. Halfway through the Sixth Army Band I started to get into jazz, listening to Miles Davis, and the jazzers of the day. Clifford Brown was the one who really struck my ear. He is a wonderful player. I

October 1980 □ R-e/p 42

got intrigued with that whole idea of not looking at music and just playing what was coming out. When I got out of the army, around 1957, my ex-wife's best girlfriend was married to Lou Adler, and Lou and I became real close friends. Lou was writing poetry and I had some working knowledge of the piano, so I put some melodies to his words. It felt pretty good relative to what was happening at that particular point of time in the music business, so we started hustling the songs. Lou was always very aggressive — a lot more aggressive than I was. He got us in some doors and we cut some demo records. One company in L.A. liked the records a lot and hired us as staff writers. That's where we really got involved in the recording process.

R-e/p: Were you a song writer for quite a while then?

"... I treat every recording session as a rehearsal... the panic is not on, and I'm not into neat, clean records... I don't want any musician playing under the threat of making a mistake!..."

Herb Alpert: We started out that way in the business. We wrote some songs for Sam Cook — one was very successful, one was moderately successful. All that time I was still playing the horn on weekends, because I was hooked on it and doing it for my own pleasure. When the *Lonely Bull* came about, the trumpet was the perfect instrument for that particular sound that I was interested in laying down.

R-e/p: Did you know at that time that the Tijuana Brass would be a really excellent vehicle, not that I want to dwell on that a long time?

Herb Alpert: No, I had no idea. I knew the idea was sound, and essentially I was trying to translate a feeling I had at the bullfight, my first experience in Tijuana. I was trying to transfer it out to a record, trying to make a visual effect. After we put the crowd sounds on, the "ole's" over the introduction of the record and on the ending as well, the record really came alive. I expected that it had a great chance because it was different.

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It caught your attention immediately, and in those days the publishers and record people were really talking about hooks — put a hook in the bridge, put a hook here, and put a hook there. This thing really had a hook from go.

R-e/p: So it was just a gut feeling that you had with the song?

Herb Alpert: It was a gut feeling that the record was real good. When we finally released it, it was overwhelming.

R-e/p: It must be a great feeling having another hit record again, and winning a Grammy.

Herb Alpert: Well, I'll tell you, the feeling of having a hit record is certainly great, and also the fact that so many people were pulling for me. For some reason I had it wired wrong. I felt that since I had been so successful in the past as a musician, there would be some little built-in resentment. I found just the opposite out there. The people were really supportive.

R-e/p: You still have the name. You're still really well known.

Alpert: I know, but there's something about when you reach a certain status in the business, you almost kind of pull for someone else to come along. I don't know if it's honestly resentment . . . I felt like in some areas, I had this Tijuana Brass image to side-step. People who remembered me from those days either wanted to hear that type of sound repeated or felt that my music was in a particular pigeon hole. Rise kind of took a left turn. I think Black Radio gave me a shot at it, because they didn't get involved with the Tijuana Brass. They just heard the record, liked it, and played it.

R-e/p: There were a couple of tunes on your recent album that had almost a Tijuana Brass flavor to it.

Alpert: Yes, I'm sure there's traces all through it, but I try to be as honest as I can on records. It's work trying to carve away all your craziness, and all the things you're not willing to show. Little-by-little, I'm showing more-and-more. My sound is pretty much the same as it always was.

R-e/p: You're the only artist/producer who's also vice chairman of his own record company, and you mentioned that you don't write anymore because you feel you're better equipped to listen to somebody else's songs and inject your own ideas. Do you feel that when you wear three different hats it creates a strain on your objectivity?

Alpert: I separate it. When I'm in a creative

mood or when I'm recording, I don't take part in the cigar smoke meetings.

R-e/p: But isn't it in the back of your head?
Alpert: No, I've learned how to do both now. We have a tremendous staff of people I feel really comfortable with, and they're very capable. My partner is understanding of that process and I'm able to slip into the artist's groove real nicely. That's what gives me pleasure. If this wasn't pleasurable or a pleasure experience for me, I wouldn't do it.

R-e/p: The music business is cyclical. You had a big hit with "This Guy's In Love With You," in 1968. Has your basic philosophy for production changed very much over the years? I'm sure you've grown over the years in many areas as far as production goes, but has your basic philosophy stayed pretty much the same? Or maybe the cycle has gone around and caught up with you again?

Alpert: I think it's yes to both parts. It has changed, and it hasn't. The thing that I was disturbed about when I was recording for a major company prior to A&M was that it was a very sterile environment — it was white on white. Engineers were running around with buttons on their lapels; my hand was slapped because I wanted to put up a little more bass on the board. They were lecturing me on the unions and how I couldn't do that because this, that, and the other thing. I realized that it was not the way to get the most out of a creative person, and at that point it was in my head that if I ever had the chance to do it, I would do it much differently. It seems so simple . . . you can't force anybody to create; you can't give anybody demands to create, but you can at least set the stage right. If the artist feels comfortable there, he feels comfortable to do whatever he or she chooses to do. This is one of the main things I try and touch when I go into the studio. I select the musicians I feel most comfortable with, and the song I feel most comfortable working on at that time and set the environment for them so they don't feel threatened; they don't feel that they have to produce something or else this person who's paying their bills will be disappointed. I leave it very loose. I treat every recording session as a rehearsal. If it doesn't work out, we'll get it next time. The panic is not on and I'm not into neat, clean records. I'm into a certain naturalness that allows spillovers and goofs. I don't want any musician playing under the threat of making a mistake. I'd rather he be adventurous and express his insides through me, having an understanding of what I'm looking for and then allowing the freedom of letting him express himself through those thoughts. It's very important for me to set that stage right.

R-e/p: I notice on your albums that most of your tracks are basically done by the same

" . . . to get to be a good producer . . . you've got to be a real good listener . . . and a quick listener . . . sometimes it happens in seconds . . . you've got to be able to spot it!"

musicians. There is a definite similarity all the way through. I get the feeling that A&M is a great family-feeling organization. Is that what you're striving for — that family feeling? Do you feel that's very conducive for a creative environment?

Alpert: I don't think we actually identify them like that, but the feeling is here. It started with Jerry and myself in 1962 in my garage, and we've always hoped that every employee we've brought in would reflect our feelings, our philosophy, our general concept about the business — about quality and caring. Jerry and I have always thought that money and all that was just a by-product of doing something well.

R-e/p: And if you enjoy it, then the money will come to you.

Alpert: Yes. So I guess I have just instinctively been very conscious about the environment. I believe strongly that everybody should have their own personal integrity intact. You have to feel good about yourself and what you're doing.

R-e/p: And again, it shows up in the music.
Alpert: It comes back.

R-e/p: Who would you feel is your biggest influence in terms of you being a producer? Is there anybody in particular that you've really looked up to as a producer?

Alpert: No, mine was kind of a seat-of-the-pants operation. In the very early days, I was watching Bumps Blackwell. He was producing Sam Cook. I watched how he was doing it and I think it's just a real personal experience. When I'm producing others, I feel that it's my job to be the middleman between the tape machine and the artist and try to get the most out of an artist. When I'm working on my own thing, I try as best I can to be an audience to what I'm doing, and not just being a musician listening to a trumpet play, wondering whether it's in tune, or out of tune, or all the other things that sometimes we get caught up in. I'm watching for the total picture. It's a real personal experience that you can't transfer from one person to the next. What I think might feel really good might not feel good to the next person. I always liked what Bix Beiderbeck said, "Just because I ain't receiving, don't mean you ain't sending." And that's true.

R-e/p: Yes, it's important to have a producer that's in tune with the people he's working with.

Alpert: Yes, of course, I think the major function of a good producer is to know how to set a good tempo. He knows where that flow is.

R-e/p: And then keeps it going.

Alpert: Yeah. There's a lot of producers that know how to get good sounds, and they know how to manipulate an artist, but they don't know where that tempo is. For me, that's the key.

R-e/p: That's where you get the magic from.
Alpert: Right. That's the magic!

. . . continued on page 49 —

" . . . letting the artist express his insides through me . . . understanding what I'm looking for . . . allowing him the freedom to express himself!"

some people who record real dry — no echo, no pump-up. I couldn't do it that way.

R-e/p: So you put everything into basic tracks then? All the effects?

Alpert: Not all the effects, but I like to pump up the track. I like to maybe put myself on just a taste. I came out of the Gold Star school (Dave Gold's Gold Star Studios, Hollywood) in the early days and they used to really pump up that sound. Sometimes you'd walk kind of dejected from the recording studios into the control room waiting to hear this playback, and all of a sudden it comes to life, because the echo chamber is doing its thing. There are some problems that all of a sudden don't exist. I like to get a little bit of a rush going.

R-e/p: Did you run into any problems when you used the digital machine?

Alpert: Well, we had one of the first three off the line and we were kind of a testing ground for it. There were little odd things that were going wrong — unfortunately at key times. We lost part of the take on *Rise*. We had to reproduce a section, and at that particular point with the 3M process, they didn't have the editing capabilities. The process was: we recorded it on digital, transferred it over to 24-track analog to do our editing, transferred it back to digital and then added any other sweetening like the hand claps and guitar. In that particular case, we mixed to 2-track analog. It wasn't a total digital test, but it was nonetheless an amazing sound.

R-e/p: Did you notice a lot of degeneration when you went to analog and back?

Alpert: Yes. We were very cautious when we plugged straight into the machine, and were very conscious of especially the bass drum and bass. We tried very hard not to lose any of that sound, but you just naturally pick up some tape noise and some of those little things that would be undesirable. We did have some problems with the digital but I still think it's a brilliant way to record. I love the sound. When the little pops and cracks appear at odd times when you don't want them to appear, you have to call in the think tank for them to start tweaking the machine. They're talking a whole different language so it's not easy to track what's happening. One time we had to borrow the Record Plant's machine to finish this, that, and the other thing. But my overall feeling for digital is very positive.

*R-e/p: So you would definitely use it again. Well, you used it on *Beyond*.*

Alpert: Yes, we used in on *Beyond* and stayed with it until the mixdown process which we mixed to analog, because I wanted to be able to intercut.

*R-e/p: *Rise* was a pretty long song. Did you originally record it in that length or was there*

a great deal of editing?

Alpert: The long version was that long version. I think we chopped the intro. The short version was obviously an excerpt from the long version. We did change the sequence. The middle section of *Rise* was originally part of the ending. We disliked the groove on it, so we moved it into the breakdown in the middle. We had plenty of ending left over in addition to not repeating anything other than that one part I told you about where there was a verse after the original breakdown on the live tape that was eaten by the machine. Still the editing is somewhat of a hassle. That's kind of a producer's delight if he edits here and there, but it's not that easy to do on digital. I was willing to wait out the process, but it kind of digs into momentum. You want it done now so you can go to the next thing. Everything goes "ho hum" while they're setting things up to make the editing happen.

R-e/p: Were there any problems that related specifically to production, other than the machine breaking down, that you might like to see changed?

Alpert: Well, the editing process up until now has been very complicated. And there was some type of problem interfacing a 32-with a 4-track and getting all that into sync. I don't quite understand how the whole thing works. I'm kind of in awe with these two machines, editing and doing all sorts of space age stuff.

R-e/p: Just the sound you got back, the clearness, the three dimensions from it, and so forth . . . did that make you alter your production technique at all or maybe let you expand on it? Did it make you change in any way?

Alpert: I was certainly aware of the possibilities. It's a great experience to ping pong on the machine, because you can go endlessly from one track to the other without degradation in sound. That process is really very attractive. The choice of microphones sometimes would be different, because you can capture some real tingle on digital that you don't get on analog. At times I would go for a more sophisticated microphone, like the AKG-451. That's a real nice sound. There are some things that I didn't recognize before. In fact, on one of the cuts on the *Beyond* album, there was a little saliva in the trumpet that I didn't realize at the time and it got picked up. It's dull-like when you listen to the record gurgling away. It's certainly human, but analog wouldn't have picked up that sound. The sonics are terrific.

R-e/p: Did you transfer that back to digital in order to master it, or did you keep it on analog?

Alpert: We mixed analog and stayed there. The next one it's possible we'll continue on all the way.

R-e/p: Did you pick up any new production tricks by using the digital in the last couple of albums — things you might not normally do?

Alpert: I don't know if they're tricks as much as each sound has its own little frequency response and you can hear layer sounds a lot better than you can on analog. You're not dealing with hiss factor and the build-up of all the nonsense. You can put on a lot more if you're careful not to jam frequencies. For example, on the last cut on the second side of *Beyond* is a track called *The Factory* which has a lot of different sounds going on — backwards stuff, bottles dropping, and chains falling, pianos with MXRs, and a lot of stuff that I'm not sure would have been that easy to do on analog. It's so clear that the horn just sits right on top of it. It's nice that you can hear every bit of what the horn is doing and also hear all the little details that are happening. We became aware of both possibilities and at times went for some more salt and papper than we would have normally.

R-e/p: Have you done much work with the automated consoles?

Alpert: Just in the real early stages.

R-e/p: Do you have any here at A&M?

Alpert: We have one coming, and it should be here next week. It'll be hooked into our Trident board.

R-e/p: How did you like working with it?

Alpert: This was years back when they first became available and I liked it. It was working when I was able to keep my hands on the board and then make some moves myself. I don't like to sit back and clinically make decisions that the bass is too soft or we need more piano. It was nice when I was able to move it and then come back to it two days later and have that same mix up and just touch up a spot without trying to get too clinical. The problem I feel is that you could get too analytical about what you have, be over intellectual about the process and clean it up to the point where it doesn't live; it doesn't breath.

R-e/p: When you do a tune, do you do it all at once? For example, you go in and cut the basic tracks, sweeten it, and mix it at one time, or do you do a few different rhythm tracks, sweeten them all at one session, and then come back and mix all the tunes at one time?

Alpert: It's done in different ways. Usually I go for various tracks. I have a day for sweetening and collecting ideas; layer it, and take a look at it. I do it over a period of time. I find that for me it works best when I don't labor too much on it. I like to go with my first instinct. If something hits me right, I go with it. I try not to overthink it.

R-e/p: Do you find that if you go from day-to-

... continued on page 54

Digital? " . . . it's a brilliant way to record . . . I love the sound . . . you can hear layer sounds a lot better than you can on analog . . . you can put a lot more on . . . go for more salt and pepper than we would have normally!"



day — let's say it takes you a week for your basic track, sweetening mixing, and the other stuff — then your feeling, of course, would change over that whole amount of time? Does that bother you at all?

Alpert: It does, and I try to stay on it and not have too much time between the time the track is recorded and the time it's finished and the last sweetening is put on because you do change. You can get tired of it, too, if you hear it over and over. It feels like a hit record you don't want to hear anymore or a record you don't want to hear, period, which sometimes has its plusses. When we record more than we need for an album, after hearing them over and over, the ones that don't work start sticking out, start bugging me, and I'll without hesitation either eliminate it or change it drastically.

R-e/p: What's the first thing you do when you're approaching a mix? Let's say you have all the basic tracks, you have everything you need, you're going to sit down and mix it. What would you usually go for first?

Alpert: The right room and the right engineer. Make sure you have the right engineer — one you trust — and a room that you feel comfortable with. Musically, you have to get a good bass sound. The next thing is to lock in that good bass sound with a good bass drum sound. That's the foundation of the record. You can't build a top floor before you have a ground floor. Then you go for the drum sound — the overall kit — and there you have choices. You can spread them 'way out, or move them into the center, or sometimes if it's spread too far left or right, it can sound like the Jolly Green Giant. It's not always comfortable and we prefer to keep them pretty close to the center. Most of the time I don't choose to go to the extremes. I think the drums and bass sound are really the key.

R-e/p: You mix those basically in the center?
Alpert: Well, the bass stays in the center and the bass drum stays in the center as well.

R-e/p: That's pretty much your basic concept — dealing with those two instruments first?

Alpert: Yes, for starters. Then I lock in the rhythm section. It's important that the rhythm section be one section. They have to be tight — not letter perfect, but tight in sound. Everybody should have their place. I'm not crazy about equalizing either, unless you're going for a special effect.

R-e/p: When you're working with the drummer, do you let him basically tune his own set and find his place in the track, or are you very concerned with the way the drums are tuned?

Alpert: Oh, sure, I'm concerned with that, and I usually use the drummers that are aware of that, too. They're aware that you can cancel out sounds. If the bass drum is too close to the frequency of the bass, he's not going to be heard. Most drummers want to be heard so they're becoming aware of that problem now. It's important also to get a drummer that has a good kit — a good sounding set of drums. There are a few drummers in town that have everything together but the sound of their drums. The cymbals are a little bit too skinny, the snare

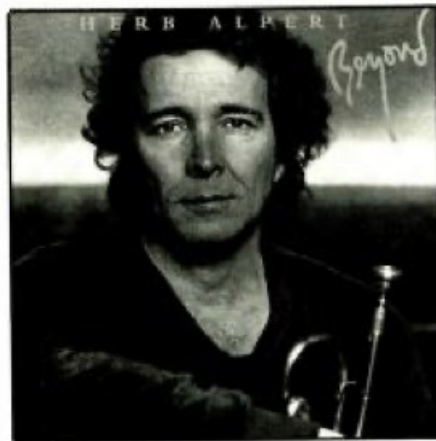
"Mixing . . . I don't labor too much on it . . . I like to go with my first instinct . . . I try not to overthink it!"

drum's a little undernourished, and the bass drum is not tough enough. It's all real personal.

R-e/p: How do you get that sound on your trumpet? Is that an echo, or a reverb. There seems to be a characteristic sound that runs through all the cuts on the trumpet. There seems to be a little reverb or echo, or digital delay, or something.

Alpert: On some cuts I use some additives, a little Echoplex here and there. For the most part, it's just the sound. I use the C38 Sony microphone, the old tube mike. I like that sound as opposed to the more sophisticated microphones. It gives a little warmer sound. I'm conscious of mike placement, the distance between the bellhorn and the microphone, the acoustics in the room, and I'm using a real mellow horn with a rather large mouthpiece so I have that particular sound. I don't affect to get it. That's the sound I get.

R-e/p: I notice a distant sound to it.



Alpert: On the *Rise* cut we used quite a little bit of just natural chamber or EMT, I should say. I think there was an interesting relationship between the horn and the track. I purposely didn't want to stick it out too far. I wanted a haunting sound like a Continental sound, like recorded in Mexico.

R-e/p: On *Rise*, you said you recorded it all at one time. Do you like a little leakage on your trumpet mike?

Alpert: Not really. On the horn, I prefer to keep it pretty well isolated because sometimes, even though I like to play live while we're doing the tracks, it gives me the indication whether the groove is right, or if the fill-in parts are working against what I'm doing. I still like to have that option of being able to take it off and re-recording it. If there's too much leakage, you get the shadow horns and you have a real problem trying to Kepex sounds out.

R-e/p: What about the rest of the instruments? Are you very concerned about keeping them all clean?

Alpert: Sometimes. I never used to be. It was never even a concern of mine until digital. I started to realize you could get both cleanliness and sloppy at the same time. You can get good clean sound but it doesn't mean

that every one has to be letter perfect — especially on the drums. It's nice to get a good tight sound on that snare without a bunch

of additives coming into that microphone. You don't want guitars and bass leaking into that snare mike if you want a fat solid snare sound, because you're going to have to deal with all those sounds when you mix down. A lot of records are made by putting on the drums after the fact so you can isolate the snare and get a big sound. That's like letting the snare hack some wood at you. I haven't found it to my liking to do it that way. I like when there's a response. There has to be an interaction.

R-e/p: That energy carries through the music and through the record.

Alpert: Yes, energy isn't just a thing that one person creates. In fact, that's one of the things I picked up on when I did the album with Gato Barbieri on the *Caliente* album. I was listening to his music and I realized he had a tremendous amount of energy. For the most part the guys behind him were kind of snoring away. They were afraid to really get up there and shout with him; there was a governor on them. When I was doing the *Caliente* album I was very conscious of getting guys like Lenny White, a drummer and bass player who were willing to go with him, be adventurous. I think that's what jazz is all about — the interaction.

R-e/p: Do you tend to monitor with the speakers very loud, or very soft, or in between?

Alpert: I listen all different ways. I have staying power. I can listen for a long time and not get distracted by centering in on what I'm doing.

R-e/p: A lot of people, when you talk to them, say, "Well, I can listen for a while but then I start losing the top end; I can't hear the top end." They keep boosting it and when they listen again, they're shocked at what they did the last time.

Alpert: I've never really run into that problem. Here, again, it's important to have a good engineer at your side. When you start questioning whether something has enough top end, you turn to somebody that you trust. It's important to get that feedback. I never had that be a problem. Once I start recording, everything else stops. I'm just into what I'm doing.

R-e/p: Do you bounce the sound back and forth between different sets of speakers?

Alpert: Yes.

R-e/p: Which ones are you using?

Alpert: We're using the Altec crossover system in the studio at the moment. And then I'll use the small Auratones at times. Don Hahn, the engineer, has his own favorite little set. I don't think he has a name on those. He calls it job security. I recognize that all systems sound differently. I once went into a stereo shop and took in one of my records. I switched between eight major systems to find that they're all totally different in the bass response. Sometimes it seems like the echo disappears, or the middle tucks away, or juts out at you depending on how much midrange is boosted. It's hard to make a record or tape to satisfy all systems. I try to get it in the middle there someplace by listening loud,



soft, medium, on different types of speakers — sophisticated ones; some need cheapos.

R-e/p: You're a real speaker junkie!

Alpert: Yeah! In the room here I have the Altec 604s that I've had for years. They're a little harsh but I know what they sound like.

R-e/p: You made a statement, "Things have changed so much, I don't know if there's a demand for a tour." What could you do to launch a new group in the 1980s? Do you think touring is important for success or do you think video cassettes and video discs will become a replacement for touring?

Alpert: I don't know. It's a little too new to have enough information. Suspicion has it that it's going to be a major event. In terms of myself touring, I've had offers and I'm considering doing some interesting things, like to do a few weeks on Broadway — a show called "Herb Alpert Now and Then." Maybe have two groups — some of the members of the Tijuana Brass and then the things I'm doing now. We'll bind them together on stage, and thread it together with some kind of story.

R-e/p: Sounds like it could be a lot of fun.

Alpert: Yes, it could be a lot of fun if all the elements got together right. But touring in the traditional sense the way we used to do in concert halls is pretty tough. It's expensive.

R-e/p: Do you think touring's pretty much out for any group? Even if you had a new group?

Alpert: Well, it doesn't seem to be out for Led Zeppelin. The big rock groups find no problem with it.

R-e/p: But they've been established for quite awhile. With them it's a media event — a nostalgic social gathering.

Alpert: I think the older generation is a little frightened, they're not used to going out any more. They're used to doing the summer circuit, the outdoors, the amphitheaters, but I don't think they're conditioned anymore to go to the Civic and listen to someone they can identify with.

R-e/p: They've matured now; they have money.

Alpert: I don't think it's that, I think they're just been frightened. They hear about the craziness that goes on — like what happened at the Who concert, the drugs, and they don't know how to deal with that. The sound of it, I think, is frightening to them. I think they're conditioned not to do it at this point. It makes it harder for an artist like myself to think of touring because it's a little different out there. It might be able to work in Las Vegas, or Tahoe.

R-e/p: I have a feeling that's where it's going to go; more intimate showrooms like that —

"... the problem with Automation is that you could get too analytical about it... clean it up to the point where it doesn't live... doesn't breathe!"

a little classier atmosphere where you get dinner and watch the type of music you were raised on.

Alpert: But that's another category. I don't know if it turns me on to get into something like that.

R-e/p: Do you think it's a little too clinical?

Alpert: I don't know if it's clinical, but that's "show time;" that's getting the lights right. It's another way of doing it. It's not just making music. It becomes an eye spectacle. Music is secondary to seeing the artist and hearing vaguely something that resembles the record.

R-e/p: Do you think when video discs do come out, that they'll find enough established artists to work in that medium?

Alpert: Yeah, I do.

R-e/p: What type of format do you think could work?

Alpert: I just don't know, but I suspect it would be a lot of young talent to be involved at the other end of that camera. Some new ideas and some innovative things are going to start coming out of the woodwork. It's here, and I think it's going to be real exciting. It's going to be good and it's going to be healthy.

R-e/p: Do you think there'll have to be a whole new breed of entertainers? It's hard for me to imagine most established rock stars making the transition into video, into a visual media.

Alpert: It depends on how it's done. It's certainly not going to be like the Scopatone, or whatever it's called — the juke box with the pictures, that corny stuff. It was static and didn't go anyplace. There was music but nothing happened. It was the novelty of seeing. It's not going to be that; it's going to be a far cry from that. It's going to be very sophisticated with optics and all sorts of effects.

R-e/p: So you don't necessarily think it will be the entertainer in the picture?

Alpert: I think it will be a combination. The guy behind the scenes will be as much a part of the entertaining as the entertainer. No, I don't think it's going to be a band playing their song on a stage. That isn't going to satisfy anybody. You see that on *Midnight Special*. That's not going to happen, but I think there's going to be some exciting things.

R-e/p: Pink Floyd has done some things with good visuals along with the music, but if you see it a couple of times, it tends to become boring.

Alpert: Yes.

R-e/p: I'm just wondering what kind of staying power it will have to get people motivated to buy software like that. If they will only watch it a couple of times. They could always just listen to it, of course.

Alpert: I suspect there's going to be some eye appealing things happening that are going to make you rewind it and check it out again.

R-e/p: Have you seen the thing that McCartney did with "Comin' Up?"

Alpert: I heard a lot about it.

R-e/p: He was all 10 of the musicians, each a totally different character. There was a personality there that I was excited about. I wanted to see it several times and check out each one of the characters that he was portraying. To me, that was something I wanted to see over and over again.

Alpert: I've heard about it and just by knowing what he's done in the past, I'm sure it's good. He has a lot of charisma, so he can carry something like that. I don't think that just a regular old stare-you-in-the-eye artist is going to come off in that media. You need a little action there. They're going to have to think of it more than just making music. It's going to be visual as well, and McCartney does have the instincts for something like that.

R-e/p: Do you think you're going to be getting into very much video production?

Alpert: Oh, sure, we're tooling up the big sound stage right now. We spent last month revamping it.

R-e/p: What kind of plans do you have as far as artists and format?

Alpert: I think right now we just have to wait and see. Let the biggies fight it out and see what kind of configuration they're going to go for and let them test the market. We don't have that type of money in our slush fund to toss around, but they'll give us the indication and when it's there we'll jump right in the deep water and go for it. At the moment we're kind of just holding back.

R-e/p: It's just a matter of being ready for that particular time.

Alpert: Yes, we recognize it's around the corner.

R-e/p: Let's say you take a music group, make it visual, and broadcast it across the TV through a small speaker. Do you find that you would have to do a different kind of mix for that kind of speaker? Maybe different than you would use for records?

Alpert: Oh, sure.

R-e/p: What kind of compensation would you make?

Alpert: You know, I don't know enough about that process and how that sound is transferred to be accurate. I noticed when we were doing TV specials that if you pushed the bass too much and it hits that limiter at the TV station you get a lot of mush. It rolls and folds everything in.

R-e/p: Did you make any compensations on those shows as far as the mix? I'm anxious to know how you changed your mix or if you just pulled out a record mix and used that.

Alpert: No, a lot of times we heard it through television sets — not mixed it through, but at least at the last stages we heard what it would sound like through television sets, which is certainly not a great indication, because you don't have all those additives. I believe on the



last two shows we did somehow convince them to turn off their limiters on a national level. I know it sounds kind of grandiose, but we were reasonably happy.

R-e/p: So the source tape you use is basically the same mix.

Alpert: Well, it was and it wasn't because we were dealing in TV and dealing with mono and it's certainly different from making stereo records. Some of us use the CSG process and some of us get the mono mix from the stereo mix.

R-e/p: What is the CSG process?

Alpert: Well, it compensates for the mid. When we play a 2-track tape through a mono system, it would be the same as squeezing a hot dog bun with a hot dog in it and having the hot dog squirt out in the middle. Everything in the middle would come up about 6 dB in proportion thereon. So the CSG process allows you to push back at the center portion of the record in 3 dB steps. For the most part everything else remains intact. That's what allows a mono station to play a stereo record and sound much better than if they were just playing a tied stereo record. That was one of the problems we ran into in the earlier days when we switched from mono to stereo. A lot of stereo just sounded terrible on mono AM radio. The bass kind of disappeared, and nobody knew where to put the bass. We were too involved in effects. Put the bass here, put the choo-choo train over there, put the guitar over there — spread that sucker out and it sounds sounds like hell on the radio. We had to find a way to compensate for that. And then Howard Holtzer came up with this CSG — compatible stereo — that has been very good. Also, in TV you're fighting major problems in that the American system, for the most part, is not too efficient. In Europe it's different. The Telefunken television sets are more concerned with sound and get a much better bass response.

R-e/p: They have these receivers now where you can pick up TV signals and play them through your stereo system for good sound.
Alpert: I know. Eventually it's going to go to that in TVs themselves; it has to. Of course, there's simulcast, too.

R-e/p: Well, this whole 25 - 45 age group has been raised on quality sound — records, discos, concerts, and so forth. There has to be a better sound on TV to get the people to watch.

Alpert: You're right.

R-e/p: You've been quoted, "If I ever had a record company, I would definitely give more importance to the artist because it all

centers around the artist." Is that still your philosophy with money being pretty tight and the record business cutting back?

Alpert: Yes, but that doesn't mean they can't make independent decisions about what they want to record. It's important for the artist to feel comfortable, that they have a home and that the company is emotionally and musically behind them. They need a certain amount of freedom within some limitations to be able to do what they have to do. I don't think you can just deal with bottom lines, and how much you want to spend, or "give us this type of record, or else." It might work for some, but it wouldn't work for our company. It's an artist oriented company, for sure. Jerry and I always base all of our decisions on how our stomachs feel.

R-e/p: That's usually what's in tune?

Alpert: I go straight for that and really deal with first instincts. There were a couple of times in the past where I passed up a good record or good song and my first instinct was to go with it. A couple of times it came back to haunt me.

R-e/p: What do you do to stay in tune with what's going on in the business so that your instincts stay in tune?

Alpert: I have a good balanced life.

R-e/p: So you're not out seeing a lot of groups?

"Monitoring Fatigue? . . . it's important to have a good engineer at your side . . . when you start questioning whether you have enough top end . . . you turn to somebody you can trust!"

Alpert: No, I don't personally go too often. For some reason, I'm just not a great audience to know all the different types of groups and artists. I just don't get off doing that. I appreciate great artists, and the arts, but I can't . . . I'd rather spend the time developing my own, practicing the piano, looking for songs.

R-e/p: To get back to my other train of thought . . . when money is tight and times are real hard, people tend to spend more money on entertainment. Do you think the recession that we're going through now will be healthy for the entertainment business?

Alpert: Only time is going to tell that. It's pretty hard on everyone right now. Everybody's pruning down pretty well. It's been healthy in a sense for the record business, because we've taken down a lot of dead wood; we've taken some marginal artists away. We're all trying to get to the creme-de-la-creme and put out select records and quality records. In our case, it still leaves some room for the off-the-wall stuff — the stuff that you would least suspect, because we're right in the middle of the target that deserves to be heard, which is again, real personal opinion.

R-e/p: Do you see the record industry teaming up with the TV industry in the next decade?

Alpert: I see us teaming up with the radio industry, because we have to work a little closer together. We're on the same team. At times you get the feeling we're working at cross purposes. They need our music, and we need them.

R-e/p: I'm thinking more in terms of visual media. With video discs and video cassettes becoming more popular, do you foresee more of a union between the TV and the record industry? Do you foresee the two getting together to go after that market? Video discs, video cassettes?

Alpert: I don't know. TV's a mystery to me. For my personal purposes with TV, there's so much garbage on it. Unless something drastically changes on it, I don't see much hope for it.

Well, you can get good learning tapes and great quality tapes by your favorite musician. I think it's going to replace all these sit-coms and these nonsense shows that they're trying to shove down our throats and are pretty successful at the moment. I think it's going to catch up to them. You can only eat so much of that and then you realize you haven't had any nourishment. You realize it's not doing anything for you and you have to find something else that will.

R-e/p: I noticed you had on the back of your album, "Thanks to Randy and Andy for helping to show me another color in my rainbow."

Alpert: Real poetic, huh? I was happy that I got together with Andy and Randy. There were some things that they were listening to that I really wasn't aware of on account of my background and my age, and they made me aware of and vice-versa. It was a give and take. They certainly added a lot to the things I'm doing. I recognize it and appreciate it.

R-e/p: So you'd say you are a man who embraces

growth and development?

Alpert: I like to think so. Still water gets stagnant. You stop living if you stop growing.

R-e/p: What do you see your direction being on your next album, or next couple of albums?

Alpert: I'm not sure. I would like to improve on what I'm doing. I've reached another place with the horn and I'm starting to become more comfortable. I think I'm able to express myself in a little more adventurous way than every before, and my experience with these two albums will certainly be an aid to anything I will do in the future. It's always a weird question, because I'm not really creative until it's time to dig in. If I was an architect and somebody said to me, "Man, whenever you get the plans finished for this house, put it on my desk," they'd never be on his desk. But if I have until September 30th to get them on his desk and \$30,000 to do it, they'll be there and be darn good.

R-e/p: So you're saying you need a little bit of pressure then?

Alpert: . . . Yes, maybe it is pressure. I need some guidelines, but once I start getting creative and getting into that mood, things start to get into focus. So if you ask me that in a couple of months, I'd be more than glad to answer. I'm not in this business for the money. I'm in it because I love music. I don't have any hang ups about accepting the money, because I feel I've earned it, but if all you go for is the bucks, you end up with a hole in your stomach. I've been lucky to be successful at something I love — playing and producing music. □ □ □