

TOWNSHEND

TOMMY & TODAY



MUSICIAN

JULY 1993 \$2.95

PRIMUS

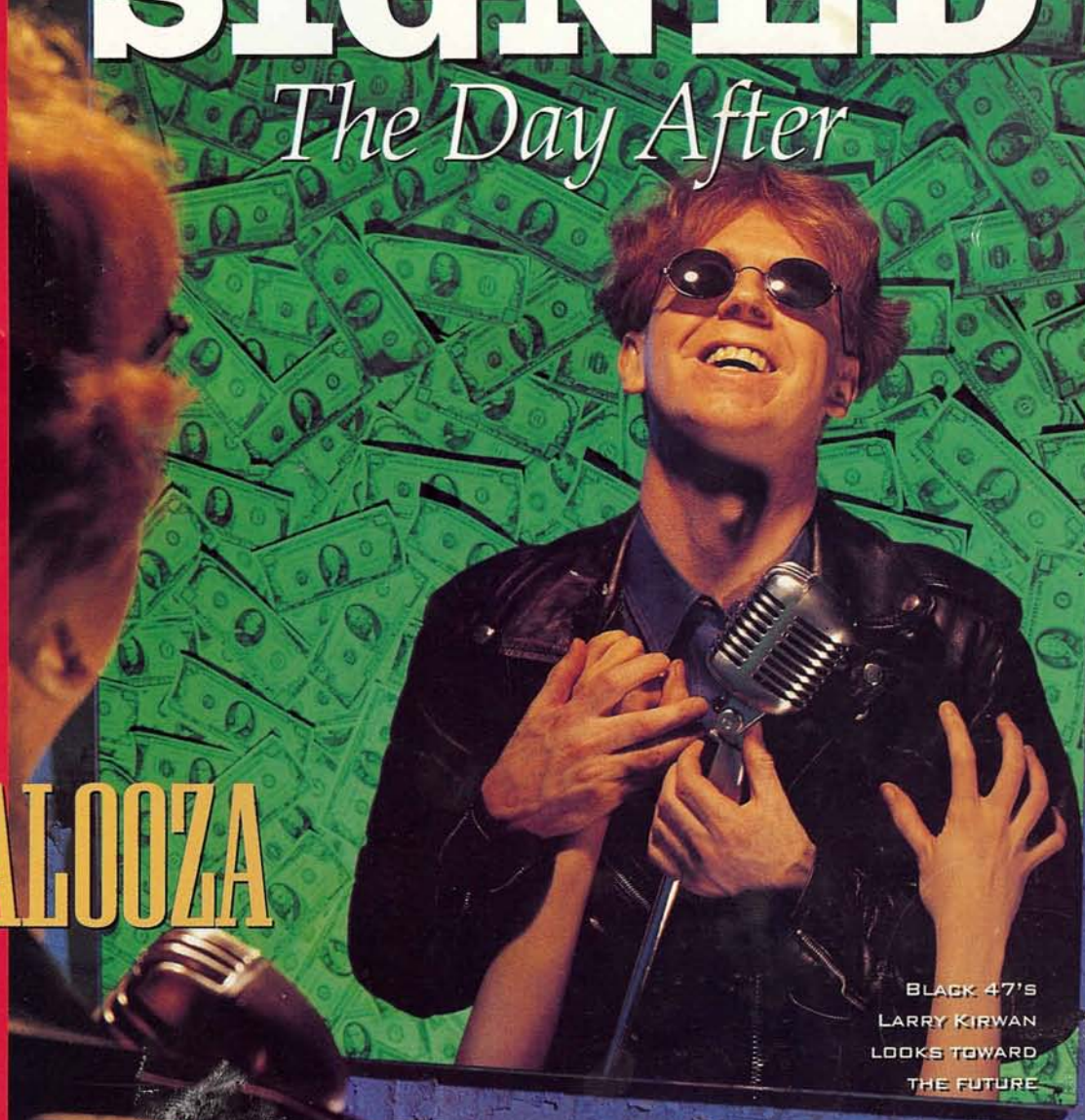


PLAYER'S
PLAYERS
HEADLINE

LOLLAPALOOZA

GETTING SIGNED

The Day After

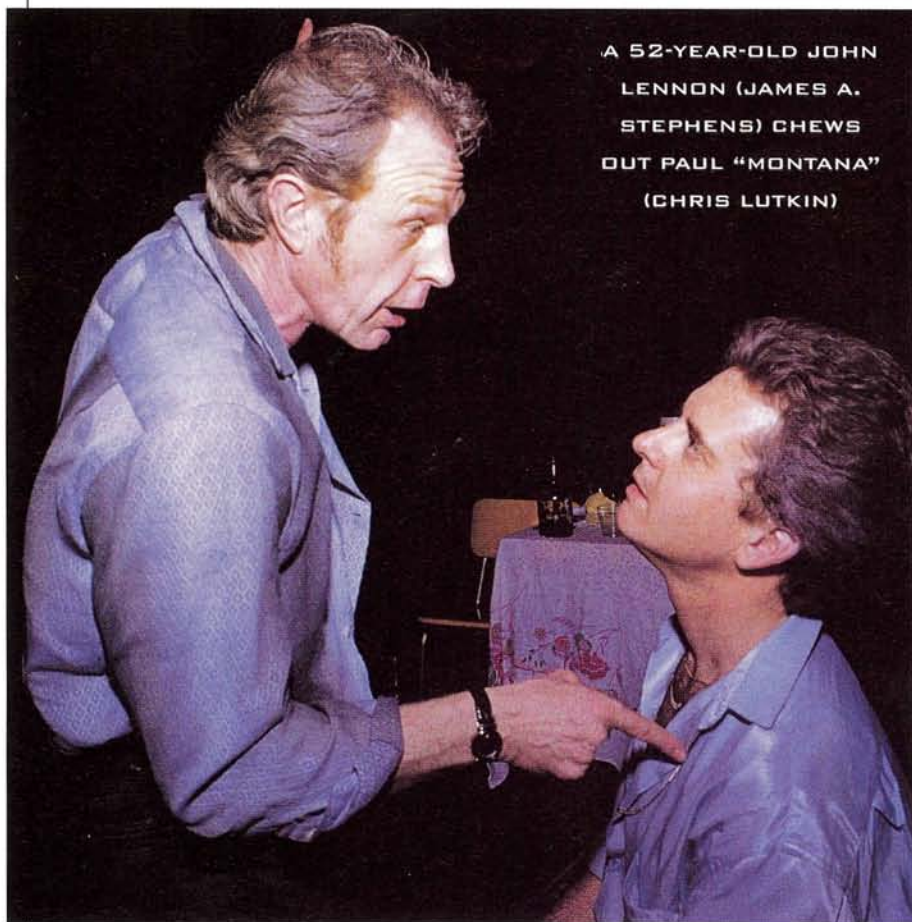


BLACK 47'S
LARRY KIRWAN
LOOKS TOWARD
THE FUTURE



YESTERDAY AND TODAY

A 52-YEAR-OLD JOHN
LENNON (JAMES A.
STEPHENS) CHEWS
OUT PAUL "MONTANA"
(CHRIS LUTKIN)




*What would have
happened if the Beatles
broke up in 1962?*

by the Beatles breakup as the bitter Lennon. The difference between them is that Paul doesn't show his pain, while John revels in his.

We've all been to parties like this—the old bandmates embarrassing their wives with talk of how they were just one big break away from stardom. Halfway through *Liverpool Fantasy* the lives of the Beatles on stage seem far more realistic than the extraordinary thing that really happened. It is the curse of the play's Lennon that he can imagine what might have been.

What will make *Liverpool Fantasy* resonate for musicians is its underlying theme of the importance of collaboration to great art. Kirwan suggests that John without Paul could never get beyond Menlove Avenue or his cynical view of the world. (John snickers with contempt when Paul tries to tell him about the benefits of Primal Scream therapy.) Paul without John has great ideas for songs but they remain incomplete. At one point he sings the melody of "Yesterday" with idiotic lyrics about Dan Quayle. One of the play's biggest laughs comes when George and Ringo try to help Paul remember "She Loves You," a song he never finished.

Kirwan also suggests how different the world would have been if the Beatles had not come along to revitalize rock and make progressive ideas trendy. The fascist National Front shares political power with the Tories in this imagined England. Rock 'n' roll died out years ago; aside from Paul, the only British singers to make it big internationally were Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck. It is Kirwan's great accomplishment that by showing us the dull musical world that did not happen, he makes us appreciate the miraculous one that did. 

THE WEST BANK CAFE IN MANHATTAN RECENTLY STAGED A VERSION of *Liverpool Fantasy*, a play written by Larry Kirwan, the leader of the band Black 47. It is a what-if play about the 1992 reunion of four old friends in an obscure northern English city. Ritchie Starkey is an Andy Capp character whose wife runs the local beauty parlor. George Harrison is a former Jesuit priest, just released from the loony bin. John Lennon is a bitter 52-year-old drunk, a burden to his friends and an embarrassment to his estranged family. The neighborhood still whispers about the night Lennon ran down the street singing some idiotic song about "All You Need Is Love."

The three old mates have come together to welcome home their famous friend, the Las Vegas star Paul Montana. They knew him when his name was McCartney. Thirty years earlier the four of them had a band called the Beatles that had one minor hit single before an argument between Paul and John caused them to split up.

That's the founding conceit of *Liverpool Fantasy*, a parallel history fable that

BY BILL FLANAGAN