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The Complete Mark Pinske Interview
by Chris Michie

DAY ONE

Pinske: Where I'm from originally? Where I was born? I was born in Arlington, Minnesota.

Mix: Are the Pinskes a family from there?
Pinske: It's a German name. I was born and raised in Minnesota, basically. Moved to Florida to go to college. And from Florida went out to California, which is where I started the trek on everything, there.

Mix: How did you get into audio? Were you doing audio in college?
Pinske: Actually, yeah. I kind of did it on the side as I was in college. I actually played in some groups, some music bands, and started doing sound and live sound. I kind of got to be the guy in Gainesville, Florida. When I got there, I kind of got to be the guy that made the demo tapes for people. I started getting interested in it, and I had a little 2-channel Revox recorder, and mics and stuff. I made lots of demos for little bands around town, plus went out and did sound. Kind of took it on as a hobby at that point, while I was in college.

Mix: What were you doing in college?
Pinske: I started studying for architectural acoustics, and then I went into electrical engineering. I got a degree in electrical engineering. A BSEE degree. I came out of college, took one of the first jobs I could, designing power lines and stuff. Went out on the road with some of the P.A. companies, Clair Brothers and Showco. I worked for Maryland Sound. Did a lot of touring.

Mix: What year is this?
Pinske: That would have been '76, around 1974-76.

Mix: So this is a time when those companies you just named were pretty established. The whole touring industry was-
Pinske: Oh yeah. I did a lot of different things. I did B.B. King, I did sound for Weather Report. I did some of the Broadway show plays that would come through. I did some of those-"Jesus Christ, Superstar" for a short spell.

Mix: Mixing front of house?
Pinske: This is all front of house. Just front-of-house mixing.

Mix: Not many people had monitor mixers then.
Pinske: I did Melissa Manchester. Had a lot of live experience. I decided that there was not a lot of credits there, and if I wanted to get a little bit better known, I needed to do recording. I went out to Los Angeles. I actually took a job for a manufacturer out there, just to get me out there, which was Quad Eight Electronics, and I was working there as an engineer. Designing film consoles. That's when I managed to get an audition set up to audition for Frank Zappa.

Mix: I know quite a bit about the musician's auditions, because there's a bunch of stuff on the Internet about interviews with them, but I never heard that he also auditioned engineers.
Pinske: Absolutely. It was a little tough, because originally, he'd just built the studio.

Mix: And this was a high-end home studio?
Pinske: It was a $3.5 million studio he built at his house up on Woodrow Wilson Drive, up in the Hollywood Hills. Very elaborate studio. It was designed by Rudy Brewer, originally. It had a huge 48-track setup of a Harrison console. And when I auditioned, he was just finishing up the studio. A guy named David Gray, who works with Dolby now, was there, pretty much putting in some of these elaborate systems. I remember when I did the audition, what he did was he auditioned each engineer for about one day in the studio, and then you'd go down to a sound stage, and he would see how you would do live, and had you put some stuff on tape. So one of the first things that happened to me with Frank-it was a similar thing. I got there, he asked me to put his guitar through a whole bunch of stuff. There was a new console without patchbay that wasn't even labeled, and I was patching around, and he said something to me like-this is one of the things I'll never forget-he said, "I'm not a robot, you know. I can only stay interested in these things for mere moments." And I was just taking a little tone generator and patch it around to see what would light up. Later on, it was kind of interesting. I thought, "Oh, man. I'll never get this job. This guy's too quick." So I did some stuff for him, mixed it on tape.

The next day, went down to a sound stage where he had everything set up. He was getting ready to do a tour. They had all brand-new Midas consoles, the kind with--the brand-new line of Midas that was out there. He had a guy kind of mess them all up. Said, "OK, make it sound good." And he walked around with his wireless guitar. Then he had me put the stuff on a cassette, while we were doing it. And he said he was going to take that tape and the tape in the studio and he'd get back to me in about two weeks. Well, two weeks went by, and I didn't hear anything, so I figured, oh well, I didn't get that gig. And all of a sudden I'm in my office at Quad 8 and the phone. Honest to God truth, this is so funny. The phone rings and he says, "You ready to go?" He didn't say who he was, he just said, "Are you ready to go?" And I just said, for lack of thinking what else to say, I just said, "Well, the car's running." "The motor's running." I said something like that. And I had been at this place for almost three years. Actually, it was a little over three years I was there. So I just pretty much accepted the gig. I cut a deal with him that I would fly with the band. Because I told him I had done too much road traveling, and I really didn't want to be on the bus smelling dirty socks again. And I really wanted to concentrate on doing a better job, and he said, "OK," so we went along with that setup.

So I started off with him. We went out, got ready for that tour. We did live tours. This would be-that was the fall of '79, so 1980 and the beginning of '81, we did some live tours before we built the recording truck. So I did all front of house then. Then we did a couple of remotes as we were on tour.

Mix: Were you recording to 4-track or something, while you were doing front of house?
Pinske: We did some recording to 8-track. We rented a recording truck a couple of nights. We kept an 8-track and a 4-track, and we had a little Soundcraft 1-inch 8-track that we were running some tapes. But we didn't tape all the time. We just taped some shows. I mainly did house mix, and then when we got back in the studio, after the tour, we started working on studio albums, and then putting together tapes from some live tapes that he had previous to before when I was there. When Kerry McNab, Joe Chicarelli, Davey Moire,

some of the guys that were there just before me. They had a collection of all kinds of tapes.

And Frank pretty much wanted to spend all his time, and now that he had his own studio, he pretty much wanted to work around the clock. That's when we got the idea that when we were going to go out on the '81 tours-we'd just finished up-we'd put together "Tinsel Town Rebellion" album. That's the first full live collaboration I did with him. You'll see a lot of engineers credited on there. My name's the first name, and then there's a bunch of other ones of people who did a lot of the tapes-the collections of tapes-and it was a double album. And then we did the studio album, "You Are What You Is," which is pretty much an all-in-the-studio album. Which is pretty much all my baby. I even did some vocals on that one. That was pretty funny.

But when we finished that up, we started moving into, "well, what can we do to have a better situation live?" That's when I decided that we could build a recording truck. And that's where the Utility Muffin Research Kitchen recording truck was pretty much born. I bought-the shell of the truck I bought from the Beach Boys. They had this sitting up in the backyard of their house. They hadn't been using it so much. So I took the shell of the truck-it was a 27-foot trailer. We pretty much had to redo everything in it. Added a new hydraulic airbag, shocks, and all that kind of stuff. It was a little bit beaten up. But the inside of it was still pretty good shape. We took a Neve-had a Neve 8108 on the front of it. We wired it up for an elaborate amount of inputs, because I didn't want to have to be somewhat in a tour, have some bad channels, and stop and do repairs, and stuff like that. So we kind of did an overkill on all that.

Mix: You wired it up for extra channels?
Pinske: Right. I had 142-channel ins. Three 24-track machines, and four videos.

Mix: Video recorders?
Pinske: Right. And we had a Neve 8108 across the front. Then we had a custom made Midas made for us by Midas, that went down along the wall, which is pretty much normal the first hundred channels. Now we also did an endorsement with Carvin, which adds a couple extra boards, but normally we would use like 96 channels live. We would put everything on its own channel. All the channels that were over the 96 that we used were pretty much all spare channels. So we did a little endorsement, we took a little picture of the truck and put a couple little Carvin boards up on the wall for anything that was over Channel 100. And Frank stood there and took a little picture and they recycled that thing, and we were able to get some free equipment out of it and all that kind of stuff.

Mix: It doesn't sound as though you used it as primary mixers.
Pinske: No, no. They were just there for-what happened was, we took that picture, and we got extra keyboards and amplifiers. The keyboard players on stage would use some of the Carvin mixers for their keyboard rigs on stage left and stage right. We had Tommy Mars at that time.

Mix: Peter Wolf?
Pinske: This was just after Peter Wolf. I came in right at the end of Peter Wolf. Before we did the recording-truck stuff, it was all Tommy Mars and Bobby Martin. Bob Harris. Ed Mann came back around.

Mix: For that "Tinsel Town Rebellion," Steve Vai was the guitar player, right?
Pinske: Steve didn't really come in 'til a little later.

Mix: I don't know my history as well as I should.
Pinske: That was mainly a collection of a lot of live stuff. Steve came in a little later. Steve was a whole interesting story all of his own, to tell you the truth. We auditioned him. He was a kid that was going to Berkeley that charted out some of the music for Frank. And he had a number of different people all over the country that he would take our cassettes and send them to, and they would chart out the sheets and send us back to them. And Steve was one of those kids that did an immaculate job on charting out the sheets. And one day Frank said, "I'm flying him out here." And I'm thinking, "What the heck's he flying out another guitar player for?" So that's how Steve's audition happened. He was like 19, 18 years old then. Just turning 19. That whole band, when we got Chad Wackerman, after Vinnie Colaiuta had left, we auditioned like, gee whiz, I think it was somewhere like about 31 drummers or something. A huge amount of drummers. We had trouble trying to replace Vinnie, because Vinnie was really good. We ended up with Chad Wackerman, who was 21 years old. Then we had Steve Vai, who came in at 20. And we had Scott Thunes on bass who was 21 years old. They were all young guys that had come in, that had pretty much won the auditions. So that's when we had the younger set coming in.

Mix: Between Vinnie and Chad, there's a drummer called David Logeman.
Pinske: David Logeman played on the "You Are What You Is" album. He was pretty much a studio drummer, but we did do a live tour. We did a short American tour that David Logeman was on as well. He wasn't with us overseas, I don't think. Maybe he was, for one of our short overseas stints. But David Logeman was with us for a pretty good while in between there, too.

Mix: You were talking about getting the truck together and going-you actually had three 24-track recorders running simultaneously?
Pinske: We overlapped the tapes. Originally we started off analog 2-inch tape, at 30 ips. We ran two Ampex MM1200s. And I had a 3M M79 machine in the back. The one in the back was primarily a spare. So what we did is, we took the 24 buses that we ran, and we overlapped the tapes by about a minute or two minutes, so that we could always edit them all together later. I tried to make as many big reels as I could, 14-inch reels. Normally, we just took out of the box, reels, ran them, started this next machine one minute before the other one would run out, and we just kept altering the machines as the night went on. And that way everything got caught on tape.

Mix: So 30 ips?
Pinske: 30 ips, yep.

Mix: Non-Dolby?
Pinske: Non-Dolby.

Mix: How many reels would you go through? How long were the shows, at this point? Did he play with an opening act?
Pinske: On the first three-months tour, we had 946 master tapes, if I remember correctly. I can almost remember the number. A huge amount of master reels of tape. Matter of fact, we did use Dolby on some channels, but most of the time we didn't use Dolby. He hated Dolby on the cymbals and stuff. I'm trying to remember how many reels we had on an average-normally it would take about eight reels a show, overlapping them. Somewhere along that, depending how long the set was. A lot of times we did these small theaters in America. We did like the Fox theaters, the Palladiums, those kind of places, so we would do double shows. And that way we would record two whole shows, and Frank had a habit

of not repeating any of the songs from the second show to the first show, so we'd have pretty much different tunes through both shows.

Mix: What date are we at, with the beginning of the truck, when you got it from the Beach Boys?
Pinske: I built the truck in the spring of 1981. That's when the very first tour it went on, I guess would be in-- the first tour we did in 1981, and then we recorded-it pretty much went on every tour after that. We took it overseas. We put it on the Queen Mary, and we shipped it across to-we rehearsed originally over in Denmark, or Amsterdam. We took it all around Europe. We recorded all of Europe on the truck as well.

Mix: Presumably there was a driver. If you're traveling with the band, and also presumably at some point you stopped doing front of house and you started working the truck.

Pinske: Yeah. At that point, in 1981, is when we went through about two or three different house mixers. Bob Stone came on board a little later. He did some house mixes. We had a couple of guys-one guy, Chris that was with us for a while. Mike Abbott. We called him Rat Man. We had a variety of different house mixers. We had Marque Coy doing the monitors. It was a real elaborate set up. What we did was, I used to do some of the submixing from the truck. We had that, like I said, 142-channel snake, but 30 of them were like direct lines. So I could take an individual input, for instance, on all the drums. I could have 22 channels on the drums. We'd have Syndrums or Simmons drums, or a combination of a whole set. We'd have a lot of individual direct mics inside. I would take the combination of all of it, and send, for instance, tom-toms left and right back out to the house. The house would have it's own kick, it's own snare, it's left and right toms, left and right overhead cymbals and the separate hi-hat, whatever. And I would take things like that on the keyboards, as well. We might take nine different stereo keyboards, and I would mix them all down to a stereo keyboard mix. And the stereo keyboard mix could go back to the monitors onstage, and back to the house mix. What we found by doing that is we had a lot more control over the feedback, and we had a lot less problems with the recordings because we had the same sonic tone, and the same path pretty much going to each of the locations.

Mix: Then the truck was an integral part of the whole P.A. setup.
Pinske: Absolutely. That's one of the reasons we used it all the time. Because I had 85 noise gates in the truck, and we could pretty much really, really control everything. And I could solo stuff up up there. It was really brilliant because we could solo stuff up and I could hear problems, like little buzzes or hums or something like that. We could isolate the problems, and I could treat them with some of the best outboard gear you could get, and send it back to these guys and it would be all spiced up. And of course, you're not going to get the kind of equalization that you have in a Neve console out of a little portable Midas board.

Mix: So you were contracting with different P.A. companies in America and Europe.
Pinske: With me personally, or with the Zappa tour?

Mix: With Zappa.
Pinske: With Zappa we owned our own P.A. We bought the John Meyer system.

Mix: Which one? A JM-3 system, or an earlier . . .
Pinske: Yeah. We had the very first M-3 system that he made.

Mix: The MSL-3s?
Pinske: Yeah. We took it all over the whole-we bought that system from John. In fact, that was the first one he made, and I even helped John out with a couple of problems. He had a couple of microprocessor problems in the first ML-3. The microprocessors had a little bit of a problem, and we ended up having a little problem more on a couple of the horn things. But after that-that was just a PC board problem. Once that got fixed, we never had any problems with the stuff. It was fabulous. We had A and B amplifiers, a full spread of his stuff. Took it all around the world.

Mix: At this point, you would have been just stacking at the side of the stage, rather than flying it?
Pinske: We flew it. We flew it as much as possible. But in America, most of the time, as you know, there may have been only room to fly a center cluster or something. And some of these small theaters, we'd stack it, right. We had to stack it on the side of the stage. But when we went over to Europe, it was all bigger places. And when we'd play something like Madison Square Garden, for instance, in New York, then we would hire Audio Analysts to come in as a back up system. And we would tie in with them. We'd do our time alignment, and use them for support, so that we could carry those huge, huge venues.

Mix: It sounds to me as though, by the time you joined the Zappa organization, pretty much all the equipment was owned or bought for the tour.

Pinske: Oh yeah. That's the way he did things. We owned all the sound and all the stage. What we would do with the lights, though, we would buy a system from LSD Lighting, we would use it for three months and then sell it back to them. And he would hire three guys on the crew for the lights. He did that instead of renting the lights. And he had a-Frank was a pretty smart businessman. By the time we would finish a tour, we would actually save a lot of money by buying the system and just paying for the crew to run it, than we did-especially on lights, because light rentals were so expensive. So he would do things like that all the time.

Mix: And obviously you owned the recording truck. Did you buy buses as well? I'm just curious about the evolution of the touring business, as he did it.
Pinske: As far as the methods he used?
Mix: . . . Never mind. . . . The first thing you did was mixes for "Tinsel Town Rebellion." And then a studio album, "You Are What You Is." And then you were out on tour for the rest of '81 with this new truck.

Pinske: No, we didn't go on tour the rest of '81. We did recording in the studio in between, as well. Every time we came back-like we did an American tour for three months, then we went in the studio, then we went in Europe. Then we came back and went in the studio. Every time we were off the road, we were back in the studio. So we were putting together a whole bunch of different albums. We did the "Ship Arriving Too Late to Save the Drowning Witch," which was the whole "Valley Girl" thing. We did the "Them or Us" album. We did "Man From Utopia." We just kept putting albums together, one right after the other. A whole slew of them. Then we did a bunch of guitar albums, based off the live stuff that we found. "Shut Up 'n Play Your Guitar" instrumental stuff. We just kept, all the time, trying to get as much product as we possibly could. The cool thing about doing the truck was, we came back and we had all these tapes that we could listen to, and then we could sort out good performances live, and edit together sections of a song. That's when we started putting together the Mammy Nun escapade, which was a six-sided-was originally going to be a six-sided album Broadway-play-type thing.

Mix: Oh, the "Thing-Fish?"
Pinske: The "Thing-Fish," right. "Thing-Fish" was the actual title of it. It was a six-sided album. That was basically done off of all live recordings I had made in the truck. But then we overdubbed some different lyrics and different vocals and stuff in the studio. So that was kind of interesting, because we had enough isolation. As a matter of fact, the whole thing starts out, the whole "Thing-Fish" album starts out with the song "The Mammy Nuns," and it's a guitar that Frank had during a soundcheck in the Sportehalle in Vienna. Which is this huge place that if you drop a chair, it would last for eight seconds. He did a little guitar segment during rehearsal. And Frank used to love the sound of the room when it was empty, when there were no people in it. And I had PCM microphones up on the stage, facing out toward where the audience would be, so you would hear the whole room. And he started a little guitar thing and put it in a loop, and set it down, and it was just looping. The whole start of that album is basically that live track of him just playing it during the sound check, which is how the album started out. We started doing things like that. We started recording things during sound checks just for the, "OK, let's put this down on tape and then later on maybe we'll use it on something." That got to be a lot of fun, because that's when we started experimenting with taking live stuff, segueing it into whatever we did in the studio, spicing stuff in the studio, and back and forth. And doing edits and cuts to other live shows.

Mix: I'm not sure where I read it, but I think one interview I read, I guess with a musician, said that some of the basic tracks which appear on the album as maybe four songs in a row where they segue, or they seem like they're hard edits, in fact they were recorded as tracks the way you hear them.
Pinske: As a matter of fact, he segued almost everything live. He would always segue the songs, and he would give it a little-you know how Frank directed on stage. He had these little signs that he would do. He would pull his hair and they would go into a reggae temp, or hit his forehead and they'd go into a New Wave or a punk tempo. And he would always direct a downbeat on the end of a song which would go right into the next song. So a lot of those segues were actually just the way they were performed. A lot of times we would use those segues as a place to edit. We would come from the Hammersmith Odeon in London to maybe Frankfort, and come back to the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. And the same song might travel through a number of different shows. Which was unbelievable, because that meant that the tempos had to be right, everybody had to be in tune. He was really hard on everybody when it came to that. The musicians were nothing but top notch when it came to that stuff.

Mix: This must have taken a lot of work every day, in terms of sound check and setup. Was there a schedule, or did it depend on the traveling?
Pinske: Every day, I had a guy, Tom Ehle, who works with Dolby now also, who aligned all the machines in the truck for me. I would come in with the band, we would do a sound check. Sometimes we would lay some stuff down on tape. Normally do a sound check to make sure the house and the monitoring system and everything was all in sync. A lot of times the recording truck wasn't too far off, because the Neve and everything had pretty much detented settings. Because we had the same microphone built inside the drums. We worked with John Goode, who is the vice president of DW Drums, him and I developed a system with Randy May, May Systems now is a pretty well-known drum-type mic setup. We developed a system. John and I worked with Chad Wackerman, and also with Sugarfoot, with the "Thriller" tour, developing this thing. We used mics that were built inside the drums. We tuned the drums exactly the same every day. John would put new heads on, between the soundcheck and the show. We used little Teflon nuts that would not slip, to make sure that everything stayed in tune as well as possible. We did an

elaborate setup with the drums, but normally the mics and the direct pickups and everything on the stage were identical. So we didn't have to change a whole lot in the truck, because the Neve had detented settings. So everything was repeatable. It really didn't change too much from day to day as far as what we had. It was a matter of fine-tuning it, and bringing the room into control. We might voice the room a little bit differently because of the acoustics of it, or the size of it. We'd make sure that the monitors were not conflicting with what was going on with the truck.

The stereo side mixes for Frank-he would have sidefills as well as his footfills. And the sidefills-I did a mix from the truck that went to his sidefills. So he could hear the whole band a little bit coming through the sidefills, which were some more Meyer MSL-3s. There was two of them on each side on stands, facing him in the middle, and I would do a little stereo mix that went to him there. And then Marque Coy, who was the monitor mixer, would have the overall volume control over it. That way he could get kind of an idea of what the whole band was sounding like in a little bit more of a high-fidelity situation than what was going on in the truck. It just gave him a better feel.

Mix: He had a quite elaborate guitar-I know it was at least stereo. Did he have more than two cabinets?
Pinske: Absolutely. We tracked five channels of guitar on every show. He had a rack, a double rack, which he called "the blue box for bimbos," which is pretty well known over the years. It had everything from the cheap Electro-Harmonix Big Muff on up into it. Almost any kind of guitar gimmick you could ever imagine. He had what was called a "dirty" setup and "clean" setup. And both the dirty and the cleans were in stereo. So if he hit on a switch and went to his Marshalls, or in this case with the Carvin versions of the Marshalls, that drove his Marshall cabinets, he'd play his powerful distorted setup. Do whatever effects he'd have on in the rack. And then there was another switch that hit him through a clean setup, which went through Crown DC300 power amps, into a real clean, elaborate speaker system. It even had an 18-inch speaker. It was just real powerful and real clean sounding. So what I did, was I would stereo mic both sets, the clean amplifier in stereo, the dirty amplifier in stereo, and they would take up four tracks on the multitrack. The fifth track was used for a direct out. He had a wireless coming from his guitar, and we went through a Vega wireless system, and I took the wireless direct and went right directly onto tape. This way, if the amplifiers screwed up during the show, we could take the direct channel, put it through amplifiers in the studio, which we did a lot anyway. We would take the direct signal, put it through amps in the studio, and maybe mess with it while we were mixing. Because he usually didn't like playing again in the studio. We would take a live solo, and then we might enhance the recording with putting a couple Marshalls in the reverb chamber or something like that, miking them up. And we could use that direct signal to just kind of recreate what we did on the live stage.

Mix: But presumably on the live albums, including all the guitar albums, the guitar tone you hear is what he was getting on stage at the time.
Pinske: Absolutely. With a few exceptions. Like when we did "Coneheads," for instance. The "Saturday Night Live" thing. I got him to do a real elaborate solo on that thing in the studio, which was just an all-studio solo overdub. But most of the time Frank used to like to use the live-whatever live show he felt was the best solo.

Mix: I've read quite a lot about it, but actually this is one of the few albums I don't yet have. Apparently all the guitar solos on "Joe's Garage" were actually live solos flown in over tracks.

Pinske: Absolutely. They were live solos. A lot of them were flown in over tracks. Some of them were taken from different shows.

Mix: But that was the album that came out before you started working with Frank.
Pinske: The end of "Joe's Garage," I was actually still working on. But Joe Chicarelli was the engineer. In fact, Joe Chicarelli had quit at that point, or gotten fired or something. So I kind of had to finish that up. That album wasn't really one of my albums. I'm not credited on it, but I did some work on the end of it. That was kind of my apprenticeship, so to speak. The real first album I did was the "Tinsel Town Rebellion" album, as far as having credits on it and doing all the work myself. That's where we started on it. We've continued to do those same tactics. For instance, we would do something like "What's New in Baltimore" from Hamburg, and then we would cut away to the 2-inch tape from the Hammersmith Odeon because Frank loved the way the guitar sounded in that theater. And then we would edit that solo in, and then come back after the solo and go to some other city. Maybe to Baltimore, or the Tower Theater in Philadelphia, or something like that. We would edit around all the time between live things. We would listen to solos, probably until we were totally sick of it. There's not many master tapes.

Mix: I was going to say, you presumably logged the tapes during each show, but did you make comments? Did Frank keep a log of what were good shows? Or did he just keep it all in his head, or did you listen to it all back again later?
Pinske: We both had our ideas which shows were the best. When we came back off the road, we did all kinds of exercises. Because Frank would sometimes get mad at the band when they'd make mistakes. So he'd come back and he'd write a little list and say, "Gee, I can't wait to listen to this show or that show." So we might listen to Paris, or we might listen to his favorite show. He would say, "What shows do you think were good?" We'd listen to some of my shows, the ones I had good recording nights on. And then we'd try to evaluate the performance of the bands. But Frank was always one of these kind of guys that would always try something-if something wasn't working, he'd say, "Well, let's try something stupid." He said, "What were the worst nights we co

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Mix: If I ask you a question about a record that you had nothing to do with, please correct me. Also, if you recorded tracks for an album, but didn't mix it, let me know that. I've found that the CD booklets often don't include proper engineering credits, at least for the studio albums. So just bear that in mind, that I'm not working from a full set of data.
Pinske: That's fine. Bob Stone and I did a lot of tag-team shifts on mixing. Bob never really did any of the tracking. Bob Stone was an engineer we brought in because what had happened was, I started putting in about 113-hour weeks. Frank and I were just - he's cranking almost every waking minute. A lot of times we'd be under deadlines, like a three-month deadline in between the tours or something, and we had a deadline to get an album out. And I would start a mix - we literally got it down to where I would start a mix, maybe halfway through a song. Sometimes we would mix segments of songs, and Bob would come in and take over the mix, or I would mix a song and he would mix a song. So most of his credits were pretty much just "remix engineer." Which is what he did. He would mix the stuff that I didn't mix. But the majority of the albums - probably a half-dozen or so albums that Bob and I did together were collaborative. On "Thing-Fish," I probably mixed the majority of the tunes. He mixed about a half-dozen of them or so.

Mix: That's good to know. What's happened - I don't know if you're aware of this, but when the whole catalog got reissued on CD, I think it's been reissued a couple of times, but anyway, the most recent, the supposedly approved versions, have restored artwork and new timing sheets -
Pinske: Are you talking about the Rykodisc stuff?

Mix: Yeah.
Pinske: Yeah. Some of that stuff got redone pretty badly.

Mix: OK. We can get to that. I'm going back into ancient history, here. I just wanted to clear up, before working for Frank, what were you doing for Quad Eight? Did you install and test out Quad Eights around Hollywood and elsewhere, or were you more of a bench-tech guy at the factory?
Pinske: I had a multiple number of roles when I was at Quad Eight Electronics. I started out there as an engineer on staff, and I worked my way up to - I was national sales manager, and I went from national sales manager to plant superintendent. Quad Eight had a couple different divisions. It was a pretty large manufacturer. We did a whole side that did nothing but custom film consoles for Burbank and Universal, all kinds of different film studios out in Hollywood. And they were just custom film consoles. We also had another building where we started a commercial line of recording consoles. So there was a whole nother building, a whole nother manufacturing inside that started up that did a regular slew of products. Quad Eight actually, I don't know if you know this or not, but they actually came out with the very first digital reverb that was ever done.

Mix: I didn't know that.
Pinske: Yeah. They had the very first digital reverb. So I was the plant superintendent of the manufacturing plant that did all the commercial products. The was the job I had at the time I auditioned for Frank. The last job I had. There was about 45 people working under me. I had research and development. One of the guys who actually invented the digital reverb stuff, a guy named James Ketchum, who now has DTS systems, which is another film thing, he was one of the guys that was in the research department that worked under me. It was quite an interesting adventure there. That's where I got most of my manufacturing background. Which is more of what I'm into now.

Mix: How did you hear about the audition, and why did you give up this excellent job to go and work with Frank?
Pinske: That's kind of an interesting question, because some of my friends thought I was crazy to give up the job I had, which was a really good-paying job. But, initially, one of the main reasons I went out to Hollywood in the first place was to try to do studio recordings. Like I told you before, I had recorded a lot, most of my life, on the side, and then I did all this live touring. I had pretty much come to the realization that in live touring you never get credits. You don't get album credits or anything. So I thought, if I wanted to benefit my career, and get ahead in my career, that I needed to do some serious work that would have the credibility, that would get on albums, and this kind of thing. So this was the reason - at least I thought at the time - the reason I was coming out to L.A. So I took the job there as a stepping stone, so I could have employment and be working in L.A., and try to look for some of the other stuff on the side. When I got involved with that company, it became real serious. I really enjoyed it. I was still pretty young, yet. I still wanted to do some more touring and do some recording and stuff. So when the audition opportunity came up for Frank, one of the engineers that had worked for me, that had worked at Quad Eight, had heard about it, and made a couple phone calls and got beyond the list, along

with a number of other musicians that were doing auditions. So it was really just a straightforward thing. I went up there, not really knowing any of them at all.

Mix: When Frank Zappa auditioned you for a position as recording engineer and live sound front-of-house mixer, was the UMRK facility fully functional? Or was part of your audition to actually make it work?
Pinske: That's exactly what's happening. It was actually December of 1979, and he was finishing up construction on the studio. The Harrison board had been put in. David Gray, who's now the - I think he's Vice President of Dolby, was the technical engineer up there. He was the guy that was doing all the wiring and installing everything, and pretty much was with Frank Zappa for a number of years. After I'd gotten hired, he was the assistant there. He moved off to Dolby shortly after that. When I got there, he pretty much was finishing everything up. A very elaborate monitoring system, for all the individual musicians, they could all do their own little monitor mix, with the headphone system and everything. It was an unbelievably elaborate setup. So the studio was just being finished. The main reason he was doing these auditions was because he, for the first time, needed a full-time on-staff engineer for his own studio. Before that, he'd always recorded at Cucamonga, or whatever other studios around town. And they were always doing different albums at different places, or maybe a collection of a lot of different places. So this was the first time he needed a full-time engineer. Once all of that went down, once the audition all went down, and we were going on tour, he just wanted to have a full-time guy that would do - at that point, do the sound on the road, and do the recording and mixing with him in the studio when he was off the road.

Mix: So was part of the test to see how you could find your way around an unfamiliar and brand-new studio?
Pinske: Oh, yeah.

Mix: Did he get you to mix stuff, or just, as you said in your last interview, patch him into various things when he was playing guitar?
Pinske: Oh, no. He wasn't playing guitar. Interestingly enough, when I walked in, there was a couple of people there trying to goof around with some microphones through the system. There was a studio technician there also, nicknamed Midget. They were having trouble with the headphone system, and they were just trying to do a couple of vocal things, and I walked in, and one of the first things he [Frank] said to me, he says, "Look, can you help them fix this problem?" Well, my chops were up pretty high with troubleshooting consoles. I wrote all the troubleshooting procedures and everything at Quad Eight. And I heard this noise coming out of the cue send. It was like the sound an op amp makes when it's going out. It was a very familiar sound with me, because we used a lot of the similar op amps. It was a Signetics 5534, basically, is what it was. And I said, "That sounds like a bad 5534 op amp. So Frank kind of perked up and looked at Midget and just said - and Midget said, "Well, there are no Signetics IC chips in this console. The Harrison console doesn't use Signetics chips, is pretty much what he was saying. So that was the first meeting that I had. It became an interesting turn of events from there. We lifted out the module that the cue sends were on, and sure as heck, there were some 5534 chips on it. We unplugged one. They were all in sockets, so we plugged another one in, and plugged it back down, and the headphone system came up and started working immediately. So it was kind of like a fluke, because - all of a sudden it really looked like I was cool. You walk into a situation, and lots of times you know something or you don't know something. And you say what's on your mind. In Frank's case, if you didn't know something, the best thing you could do was say, "I don't know." Because you couldn't bluff Frank. It wasn't that kind of situation. It was just that it really was a familiar sound that I

heard. So when we put the thing back down, Frank looked at Midget and said, "Midget, I think you owe Mark an apology." [Laughs.] And this was going on before we really started the formal auditioning. We were just goofing off. Needless to say, it put me off to a good start from a technical standpoint. Not necessarily from any other standpoint. That was kind of a fluke.

Mix: As part of the audition, you mixed some multitracks?
Pinske: As a matter of fact, the first thing we did is, we had some multitrack tapes on. Frank had some pretty raw guitar tracks that I remember. I think it was a 16-track tape that was on. And he wanted his guitar patched through a bunch of things. At this point, there was probably about eight racks of effects down one wall, and about four on the other. And just about everything you could imagine in these racks. Mostly the standard stuff, like your UREI 1176s, your EMT stuff. Frank like a lot of things like Mic-Mix Dyno Flangers and all kinds of different toys for guitars, your Lexicon reverbs, that kind of stuff. He wanted to just do some processing. I think I mentioned this to you last time, the patchbay wasn't labeled. There was all these rolls in the patchbay that had these white tape, the white numbers on them, 1 through 48, down the right side of the Harrison patchbay, but they weren't labeled yet. They were just numbered. The oscillator out was labeled, and the stuff that came from the factory on the board was labeled, but none of the auxiliary stuff that was wired in from the racks was actually labeled. That's where I just took an oscillator and started patch out to see what I could light up. And that's where that other comment thing came from. At that point, we just mixed a few things on the 2-track.

Mix: And the other part of the audition was to go to the sound stage and work with a band.
Pinske: The other part of the audition came the next day. Down at Zoetrope Studios, at the time Francis Ford Coppola, the studios, they were called Zoetrope at the time. We went down there, and Frank had a sound stage. There was a P.A. set up, and it was pretty much the old what we called the "dinosaur system," some leftover remnants of the red cabinets that he had, the JBL stuff with the long-throw horns and the bullet tweeters that you stack up, the stuff you pile up to hell and back. And two brand-new Midas consoles that were out there, that was the newest version of the Midas console that I'd ever - they had just done. And they were a very different-looking console. It was a different flavor on console that Midas usually did, because they had a slide fader in the mid range, for your variable frequency. So instead of the normal knob, there was a slide, so it was kind of a non-traditional-layout console. But it was their newest thing. Those two consoles were linked together to the P.A. system. And then there was a little rack there, and there was a little cassette machine in the rack that was wired up to it. Frank had Al Santos, who was the production manager at the time, just mess up the board. He just messed everything up. It sounded pretty shitty, basically. There was noise coming off the stage. And Frank had his wireless guitar, then he just looked at me and said, "Now make it sound good." That's the way he was. He was that way with musicians all the time. It's a little different with an engineer, but with musicians he was that way all the time. He'd chart something out and say, "OK, play it." In my case, I just fiddled around with the channels, started off with the drums, and went through in a somewhat systematic fashion, and grouped the drums, grouped the keyboards, and the band was just kind of rehearsing on stage. They pretty much were just rehearsing, it wasn't like they were doing a show or anything. And then I kind of whipped the thing together the best I could, and he said, "Now put some of it on tape." I grabbed a little cassette tape, and they played a couple of pieces, and that was pretty much all there was to the audition those two different days.

Mix: You told me the rest of the story the other day about how he called you in a couple of weeks. Back to the UMRK facility, you mentioned the board, which was a Harrison, and

the tape machines.
Pinske: At that time, or what we moved to later? Originally it was two MM1200 Ampexes.

Mix: Which were 16 tracks?
Pinske: No, they were 24-track machines, but Frank had 16-track heads that you could just unscrew the head stack and put on a 16-track head stack. And then the last 8 channels just didn't do anything.

Mix: And then monitors? Were they soffited, or did he have free-stand - how was the control room laid out?
Pinske: The monitors was an elaborate five-way setup. It was a typical Westlake-Audio-type setup, with the walnut horns. Have you ever seen - the big monitors with the walnut horns, and two 15s, and the big tweeter. Most of the big monitors, all the big monitors, there was five major big monitors, so right over the top of the console, of the Harrison console, were - it was all brown speaker cloth. So there was three monitors over the top. There was a left center, and a right. With the idea that he was always going to - that he had the potential of doing film mixing. Most of the time, the left and the right were the only ones operative. The board itself, though, had quad output and whatnot, so you could select the quad output and then there was two speakers in the rear also, that were identical. So all five of those speakers were Westlake systems that were built into the actual ceiling walls, the side wall of the ceiling. He had a conglomerate of different types of near field speakers that he liked to use. We used the JBL 4311s, which was pretty traditional, and then he would also have a pair of Auratones, which were always kept on top of the meter bridge of the console. For the most part, that was most of the standard monitoring system for most of the time.

Mix: On one of his albums, and I don't know which, there's a note to the effect that "this album was mixed on (brand name) monitors. For best results, leave your - "
Pinske: Those were 4311s or 4315s, or 4312s, I think. It might have been the white album, I think, or "Drowning Witch" or something. I remember he made a note on it. We mixed the whole album on a pair of 43 - doggone it. The 12-inch JBL three-way. Originally JBL had them called 4310s and 4311s, and they were called 4312s. He had the older version, which had a different crossover point than the brand-new ones he went to later. The 12As and the 13s. JBL kept going through the numbers as they went up, and they changed the type, the style of tweeters they had and everything. This was a kind I had run into before, on an album that I actually played on as a musician. Bill Szymczyk, who had done all the Eagles stuff, had kind of rubbed off on me because I was always asking him questions, I was an engineer asking questions, and he had mixed most of The Eagles' albums on the 4311 JBLs, and he would carry them around with him, and he'd set them on a pair of tripod stands sideways. So when I was doing demo recordings, and home recordings on my own, and recordings with bands in the studio, not anybody that was every known, as I was working my way up, I tried to use some of the 4311s, 4312s, and I usually didn't get the good results on them. So I finally asked Bill when I had the chance. He had all these Gold albums. He had something like 36 Gold albums, the guy was doing something right. And he said the trick is to not let them near any surface. You don't put them on top of any table, you don't put them near any walls, you don't put them in a corner. You don't put them up in a corner in the ceiling. You keep them away from any surface. Because JBL has a tendency to have a very colorated sound. Especially those kind of sounds, the 12-inch speaker with the cone midrange, and then the tweeter. There was just an adjustable path of midrange and treble control. So he always set the tweeter on 12 o'clock, and the midrange on about three o'clock, at about a quarter of the way up. So I started setting it the way he did, because I figured he knew something I didn't, and I

could learn from them. And sure as hell, when you took the things away from the surface, a lot of that extra low-end characteristic, that colorated sound is pretty much what I call it, the colored sound went away. They became a lot more of an honest monitor. We tried that. Frank and I had talked about all this kind of stuff a lot of the time. We didn't know what to trust or not trust. And you know the Westlake Audios were very colorated. So what would happen is, if you tried to mix on those, you would have all this fidelity that sounded really good, and then you take the record somewhere else and it would sound terrible. Because there was so much color, so much hi-fi sound. You hook up a mic bike and go, "Wow, this thing sounds great." So Frank and I got into this thing about not trying to - trying to use a more honest monitoring situation, where the monitoring speaker wasn't necessarily doing us a favor. And then you would spend a little bit more time getting the EQ better.

Mix: Back to the studio. Where there separate rooms for the Bosendorfer, drums, guitars? How many rooms were there?
Pinske: When you looked out through the control-room window - let's just take it from the control room out. The machines were in the back. There were two racks, one on the right side, one on the left side. Gee, I think I even have a Polaroid picture of the control room somewhere. You looked out through the glass, and there was what we called "the yard," which is, out front of the glass, was a carpeted area, close up front, and then it turned into wood. There was two booths on either side. If you're looking out from the control room, out through the studio, there was a sunken booth on the right side, which was pretty much developed and called "the drum room." It had a hardwood floor in it, and you stepped down two steps into it. And it was all glass around it. But it was like an oversize-type booth that was sunken in down the right side. When you looked out to the left side, there was another booth, which pretty much you would call the vocal booth, but again, it was a little bit of an oversize vocal booth. It wasn't tiny, like a lot of them you see. It was carpeted in Sonex, and carpet on the walls. It was a lot deader sound. The percussion room, the idea of the percussion room was to have it a little livened up, and then if you wanted to deaden it a little, you would roll out some carpet over the wood, but it was a wooden floor in it. So Frank had the studio built. It was designed by Rudy Brewer, actually. And Rudy Brewer had a number of typical configurations like this. When you looked out in the room, between the two booths, the room got narrower, and it all turned into wood. As it went back between the two booths, it opened up into this wide back area where the piano was, that had a real high ceiling. You'd go up probably 20, 25 feet, with skylights on it.

Mix: This whole complex was built on the side of his house, or in his yard, or something.
Pinske: It was built on the side of the hill. You had the house, then you had a basement that tied over to it, so it kind of was to the side of it. The yard itself, he actually built a tape vault in the yard. People must have thought he was putting in a swimming pool, but he put a tape vault down there. Because we had a huge tape vault. Which was locked in. The control room itself had one of your typical bass-trap back wall in it. And that was it. There's two other things that's probably important if you talk about the studio itself. Those were live plastered wood walls. To the right and the back there was a chamber that was 46 feet long that was about 4 feet wide. You could step down into this chamber, and we had feeds going out there for speakers, eight different feeds, and a whole bunch of different mic returns. So we could send sounds into different speakers. We had about six sets of JBL speakers in there, and we also had a Leslie in there. And the speed of the Leslie could actually be controlled by a knob that we had on the console back in the control room. So it was an actual live room. Frank was real fond of using real, live reverb. Because a lot of the digital reverbs weren't quite as good then. And then there was also a little chamber underneath the control room. There was another chamber that was under there. That you

had to go down the stairs, and you got to it. There was a tech room downstairs, and there was a little reverb chamber underneath the control room, which we also had eight stereo pairs of feeds going into, and also returning from, with lots of little sets of speakers that we would sometimes feed stuff to and then mic it back up again. We liked to create a real ambient sound all the time, instead of always having dry recordings.

Mix: Was there a permanent drum setup ready-miked? I got the impression from some newsgroup exchanges that once Frank finally had a drum sound he liked in the studio, he liked it so much that it was one of the reasons he replaced the drums and bass on "We're Only in It for the Money," and "Ruben and the Jets." That's the question. Did he have a permanent drum setup?
Pinske: He had a studio set of drums, but we normally used the artist's drums. In that particular case, we took Chad Wackerman's drums. We had over a period of time eliminated the fact that John Goode, who's now the vice president of DW Drums, John was our drum roadie on tour. Frank became very fond of him, so John tuned all the drums for us. And what we would do is, John and I and Chad Wackerman, or whoever the drummer was - the ones that you talked about where we replaced the drums on "Rudy and the Jets" and that stuff, I was not very fond of that, because I really wanted - there was a chance for me to be able to remix all the original albums, you're talking about the old box master set, probably, and I was kind of upset about the fact that he wanted to replace the drums, because I had already gotten a pretty good drum sound out of even the mono recordings that were on the original ones, but he kind got - that was him getting carried away again. Trying to say, "Well, we might as well make it better." What we would do is, we would spend two or three days, just John and I and Chad, and we would try all kinds of different drum heads, and all kinds of different microphones, and all kinds of different things to try to get the absolute best drum sound we could get. So when we were done, we would have a really elaborate, great-sounding drum set. And Frank really loved this. He got to love the drum set so much. Where we really started getting carried away was on, like a piece called "Cocaine Decisions" on "Man From Utopia." We just had this EMT compressors, and the toms would sound real big, and all this kind of stuff. So Frank started really liking this really good drum sound, and kind of wanted to start hearing it on just about everything. It was just a phase. We would go through these phases. Unfortunately, when we redid the old box set, a lot of the recordings were so bad, when we got the original 10-track 1-inch masters, and 12-track 1-inch master . . .

Mix: They were 10-track 1-inch masters?
Pinske: Yeah. There was a couple of them that were 10-track 1-inch masters. There was a machine that was built by Les Paul, down at Cucamonga Studios. It was a homemade machine that was probably the only 10-track tape that was ever existence in the world. It was a 10-track 1-inch.

Mix: You said Les Paul. Do you mean Paul Buff?
Pinske: No, no. Les Paul. Les Paul and Paul Buff together. Paul Buff was the recording - was the engineer at Cucamonga. Later formed Valley People. Paul invented the noise gates and everything else. Frank actually had the original noise gate that Paul Buff invented. He was always really innovative. But they built a recorder together. It was a 10-track 1-inch. And the funny thing about it is, the darn thing sounded really good. It looked like some old refrigerator or something. It was homemade. We transferred all that stuff over, and when I transferred a lot of these tapes, they would only, in those days, just give one track to the drums. Drums never had much priority, so they might just have one shotgun mic or something in front of a drum kit. It wasn't anything great to listen to.

Mix: That must have been around '84, when you went digital. You didn't transfer them to 24-track analog, did you?
Pinske: Oh, no, no. That stuff was later, yeah. We had the digital machine them, and I transferred them over to the digital machine. But what I did was, I had to almost make homemade - at that time - you know when I told you we bought the truck from the Beach Boys? In that truck was a Studer 2-inch 24-track. That was a lot better 24-track, sonically, than the Ampex MM1200s. We put the Studer in there, being the permanent fixture in the corner, and what I did was, I made, we kind of made homemade guides so I could take the 12-track 1-inch tapes and play them on the bottom 12 tracks of the 24-track 2-inch head. The problem with that was, it was a real meticulous thing, because you couldn't rewind them fast, because the tape would all creep up, and it wouldn't pack right. You could really only pass them through one time, because the guide system wasn't all that great. I took a pair of 1-inch rollers, for instance, and put them across there. So I meticulously striped those things. Also, we were concerned about the delicacy of the fact that they were old masters, and oxide's falling off them, and all this kind of stuff, so you didn't want to play them any more times than you had to. So, what I did was, I'd do a real slow wind in Play speed, and then I would stripe them across, and the stripe across and hard patch them right across onto the digital machine, so that we could preserve the tracks the best we can, in the minimal amount of time of playing the tapes. So we did that with all the old masters that we got back from the end, the result of the lawsuit. So time-wise, it probably was about '82, '83, '84.

Mix: You mentioned that 1. the UMRK Frank built, before you arrived, and it cost him $3.5 million, and then you also mentioned that the out-of-court settlement from Warner Bros. was 12 million or 12.5 million?
Pinske: About 12.5 million, plus all the original masters.

Mix: Was that money that they'd been holding in escrow, because it was royalties owed to him on his DiscReet catalogue, or was part of it a sort of, "OK, we'll give you this money to make you stop suing us?"
Pinske: No, it was just a settlement. Quite honestly, Frank had lost a lot of money. The sad thing about it was, he was already in the lawsuit before I came on board, and the lawsuit, I think, lasted a period of about five years, a little over five years, and he was spending a lot of money per month on lawyers. A huge amount of money. Appealing all the hearings that they had. [End of side.]

Mix: When did the Synclavier show up, and what did you do with it? Did it go in the studio?
Pinske: Yeah. The Synclavier came right in the control room. As a matter of fact, Steve De Furia, who was a gentleman from New England Digital, came in to do a demonstration for us. Gee whiz, I'm trying to think of the exact time, the exact year - when we did the "Francesco Zappa" album right after that. But he came in and did an audition with the Synclavier, and Frank saw it as a very usable tool. Something that would be - oh, gee, I don't know - something we could use to implement samples and making good recordings, and all that kind of stuff. (Beth, you might want to call Max on the other line. Something keeps beeping me. I think he may be trying to call.) Anyways, so when he auditioned the Synclavier, Frank said, "Well, we need somebody to operate this thing." So he offered Steve De Furia the job. To just come on board with us. And Steve accepted the job. Steve was working with me in the control room when we started going into the so-called Synclavier phase. And him and Frank started doing all kinds of archiving together on the actual Synclavier itself. Heck, we had - at one point, believe it or not, we lost about three months worth of work into that thing, when the Winchester hard drive crashed. It was just a heartbreaker. In those days we still had some of those reliability problems.

Mix: Do you have any kind of representative log of your hours worked at UMRK on one or more projects? Ideally I'd like a reproducible diary or studio log showing numbers of hours worked over a week or so. I'm thinking about a little graphic here.
Pinske: Actually, somewhere in the boxes that I did when I moved, I have a couple boxes in when I moved, I don't keep them readily handy or anything, but somewhere where I moved I have - I actually have some of the original studio logs of - they're basically red notebooks that I wrote stuff down in. there may be some track-sheet-type things. I actually have a real collection of studio lacquers that I did, because Frank had me pretty much do all the mastering runs. He got to where he trusted me, so I would go down to KenDun when we did KenDun, and when we did K-Disk. And then we started doing a lot of mastering over at Capitol, and eventually we ended up with a guy named John Matousek over at Hitsville, Motown. And John was really the coolest guy. And I would run down at two or three o'clock in the morning, and we'd run off a lacquer and I'd bring it back up to the studio and Frank and I would listen to it.

Mix: Of a complete album side?
Pinske: Of - all the albums we did that way, pretty much. Frank stopped going down to the mastering rooms, and pretty much sent me down. We would voice the room. I had a really elaborate voicing method. It would take me - I would spend hours and hours with an Ivie analyzer, voicing the room. And we came down with a voicing curve, to where you could really hear really minute articulate differences. Most people thought we were crazy. I would cut a lacquer, for instance, and Frank would say, "OK, go down and have them take off one half of a dB at 800 Hertz. And I'd go down there, and most of the guys'd laugh. One-half dB? Some of them didn't even have one-half dB increments. But we would do it. And Frank could hear the difference. We'd notice the difference. A lot of times, I would even try him out. I would put the wrong one on, just to see whether or not he would hear the difference, and he would hear right away. So he had this really fine-tuned ability to tune in to frequencies and balances and all this kind of stuff. I guess I forgot the question. I'm sorry. It's about the mastering, though, right? Oh, the logs. Oh, sorry. I don't have anything ready available, without tearing through some of my moving boxes that are all stacked up. I've got tapes and things like that that Frank gave me over the years. Cassette tapes, and some of these kind of things that I've always intended to put on CD, that I never got around to, and I was always going to do it like, next year. I got tons of that stuff that I never got around to. It's mainly just, never had the time to do it.

Mix: Just bear in mind that we'll need some graphics. At some point I'd like a photo of you. And if you've got a picture of you and Frank in the studio, that'd be great.
Pinske: I probably have something on my computer, that I scanned in. And I've got a couple of different types of pictures of me, even on tour and stuff with him. There's not a whole lot. Probably two or three different - I might have a shot, maybe an old washed-out shot of the recording truck, and maybe something inside the studio.

Mix: If you come across anything that you think might look good in print, just put it aside and we'll gather it all up together when we've got the article laid out. I've got some [questions] on "Joe's Garage," which according to the information I have was released on November 19, 1979. But I guess that was Volume One.
Pinske: That was just before I got hired. I got hired in December, 1979. So I was coming in right on the tail end of it. In fact, I think Joe Chicarelli quit 'cause he got fed up with - the way Frank put it was, he would give up on a - he'd want a better snare sound, and he would just, wouldn't stick to it, or something. Kind of gave up on how much tweaking Frank liked to do.

Mix: Did you get involved in mixing Acts Two and Three, or were you involved in any of the studio work on the second part of "Joe's Garage?"
Pinske: On "Joe's Garage," no. Not really. The actual releases on that - the full releases were completed before I did. We did a mastering on one, and we redid one cut, I think on one release we did that I was involved with after that, but it was like finishing up busy work. It wasn't anything that's even worth - I wouldn't claim it as any credit at all.

Mix: Was the rehearsal space/warehouse named for the album, or was it the other way around?
Pinske: That's a tricky question here. Because you could ask me lots of things, like where Dweezil got his name, which is one Gail's toes, and that kind of stuff, but I never did quite understand which came first. The rehearsal place in Hollywood, north of Vine and Hollywood there, was always there. That's where he kept all his band equipment, and then there was a rehearsal stage there. It was called "Joe's garage" the whole time that I know. So he either named the rehearsal place after the album, or he named the album after the garage. I couldn't tell you which one came first. It's like the chicken and the egg. [Laughs.]

Mix: It contained all the stage gear between tours, plus, presumably, whatever sound and/or lights equipment that he owned. What kind of equipment was there? Did he own all the keyboards that the players .. .
Pinske: Oh, absolutely. The amount of equipment was enormous. Frank had a collection of equipment that almost wouldn't end. You'd go down there, there would be extra racks from the tour, there would be different types of microphone cases, there would be enough stuff down there to fully rehearse - guitar amps, monitor amps, mixing boards, that he had owned. Plus what we called the original dinosaur system, the sound system, and later the whole Meyer system. The Meyer system was all stored down there when we bought it. He would keep anything to do with sound. The lights would go in and out. The lights we would buy and sell, but the sound stuff he kept. And he was kind of a fanatic about keeping guitar stuff. That's what that - "blue box for bimbos" was a double rack - it was like taking two racks and bolting them together, and then putting in almost every guitar gadget you could think of. Everything from an Electro-Harmonix Big Muff to your Dyna-Mix flangers - most of this - MXR digital delays, just about anything you could think of that came out was in this rack. And then we had an elaborate preamplifier set up that David Gray did. I think this is one of the things that got David so good with noise reduction, because some of that stuff was so bad. He would build these buffer circuits, and wired up this rack elaborately, so you'd go through all these devices. There'd be chorusing, there'd be flanges, there would be various types of compressors, and third-octave equalizers. The whole gamut of things. And the whole box got it's reputation - Frank called it the "blue box for bimbos." It was blue. And we would use that rack in the studio to record. We would just put signals through it and then run them through Marshall amps. That was at Joe's garage most of the time, and it was normally used on tours.

Mix: Presumably he had a full-time equipment crew, of at least one person.
Pinske: Yeah. Marque Coy became that person. As a matter of fact, Marque Coy - you know, my nickname was "Markman," and Marque Coy's nickname was "Marque-son." And Marque-son is still working there. He's still at Joe's Garage. You can call him and talk to him, as a matter of fact. He's still at Joe's Garage out there.

Mix: And he was the monitor mixer?
Pinske: He was the monitor mixer, and now he's got the original Harrison down there, and they been doing recordings there for years. All the bands that come through, like Tom Petty, or Rod Stewart, or whoever rehearses there, Marque puts them down on tape. And

he records there, so now they've modified Joe's Garage to where it's kind of like an SIR or lead studio, you know, where you rehearse, and you have the ability to record, too. There's a full sound stage there. Marque took most of the original stuff that was in the control room where we did all the albums you and I are talking about, and built a little control room down there. That has most of that original archive stuff in it. Including the tape machine. They rebuilt and refurbished all the tape machines. So Marque Coy has got that stuff there. I'm sure he'd be glad to show you some of that. Are you out there in L.A.?
Mix: No, I'm in Emeryville. The Bay Area. I can get down there. And I might do that. This is turning into quite a project. My next set of questions is about 1980, during which no albums came out. You spent most of the time on tour.
Pinske: We were on tour throughout - it was my first European tour, as well.

Mix: How was traveling? You said earlier you were traveling with the band, rather than with the crew.
Pinske: Right. I flew with the band. The band would fly, and stayed in real nice hotels. In fact, my room was always between Ray White and Ike Willis'. I don't know why that was, but we kind of got known as the Oreos, later. Because we had two black guys, and I was the white guy between the two black guys. It was just an ongoing little joke.

Mix: Was it a big improvement over your previous touring experience?
Pinske: Oh, God. It was like stepping into heaven, man. Listen, just so you know, there's no experience like that. You can't repeat an experience like the privilege that I had, being able to record with Frank all those years. When you have the opportunity to work with a true genius, that spends his time and his money just creating, and there's nothing stopping what you're going to try. It's the ultimate for any engineer. And the touring was just as well. As a matter of fact, on tour, I felt like I had it better, because Frank worked me to death off the road. We were always in the studio. We'd sleep four hours a night on an average, and just come back and start right over. On the road, I was in a hotel, and then all we would do is go in and do our sound check. We'd come in and do a three o'clock sound check. After the sound check, we would eat a meal with the caterers, do the show, and then leave.

Mix: Before you had the truck, you had a remote recording setup. Or were you doing front-of-house for the first part of the 1980.
Pinske: I did front-of-house for all of 1980. I was the front-of-house mixer. Except for like when we did the Halloween shows at the Palladium, the traditional Halloween shows at the Palladium, I would help with the recordings. Most of the time, I would do the house mix, otherwise.

Mix: But you were recording at the same time?
Pinske: It depends on which stage you're talking about. Originally we had a guy named Claus Wiedemann, and George Douglas, who had a little 8-track Soundcraft 1-inch that we set up backstage, with a bunch of different noise gates and some remote feeds and everything. We did some what you might call pretty, relatively crude live recordings.

Mix: Did you send them submixes from front of house?
Pinske: Oh, yeah. I would send them mixes. They would take some things direct. We would track things multiple ways. The more we did it, as we went on, the more we ended up - we ended up reusing some of the tapes, because maybe the show wasn't coming out the best. And we milked--a lot of the "Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar" stuff, and that kind of stuff came off some of those. Four-tracks and 8-tracks. Some of them turned out fairly decent. We hired Mick Glossop, who came in and did a live digital 2-track with us one time. And him and I worked together. I set him up a console all of his own, and I did the

house mix, and he did the recording mix, and I'd feed him some of the sub feeds from the keyboards, and feed things like that, but he pretty much did some really nice live recordings on his own, of tapes we did later. I wanted to say one other thing. There was a number of engineers that had left behind some really brilliant recordings. I just wanted you to know that. When you pulled some of them out, you just wondered how some of these got so good, that we used on some of those collaborative things.

Mix: I've got some questions coming up about that. So if you were touring with the band, who set up the mics and your front-of-house position, and did all the line checks?
Pinske: I did all the line checks. Our crew was very, very - Jesus, I don't know how you would say it in a few words, but incredibly trained. The drum guys, like John Goode would do the drums and the percussions. Each guy - we had a guy doing the bases, whether it was Scott Thunes or Artie Barrow, we would split up - the guys on stage would all be responsible for their own little area. I would go up and check the drum mics. Like we would use AKG 414s on a figure-eight pattern between the crash cymbals, or something like this. I would sometimes check the alignment of the mics. We clamped things down, and put things, and did as much direct-pickup stuff as we could so that we could have less variances in the live sound as well as whatever we were trying to record. And in '80 it was kind of a barbaric start of why we went to the truck later. Because we could only go so far, but we learned a lot of techniques that way. Out front, I had the two Midas consoles. I would have whole racks of noise gates. We gated as much as we could. We processed as much as we could. So we would check every line every day, one at a time, and make sure that when they sound checked - Frank would use sound check as a rehearsal. He would write songs on the road. We'd come back off the road, there may be eight, ten, twelve brand-new songs that he wrote on the road. That's where most of the new stuff would come from, actually.

Mix: We're still talking about 1980, your first year. Was that when the "Crush All Boxes" project was being discussed?
Pinske: No, actually, "Crush All Boxes" came a little later. "Crush All Boxes" was done more off of the other recordings that came after '81.

Mix: I got some source that says a three-album set called "Warts and All" was planned from I think the Odeon Hammersmith tapes that wound up being used for "Tinsel Town Rebellion." Do you know anything about that?
Pinske: I didn't know anything about that title. That might have been something that Bob Stone and Frank did after I had left. Because him and Bob continued on. As a matter of fact, Bob kind of - him and I - we always got along OK, don't get me wrong, but he kind of over compressed stuff, and when he redid some of the mastering, he kind of rushed a lot of it through in a hurry. Some of the CDs that got re-released didn't sound nearly as good as the original vinyls did. They were kind of like reprocessed and redone, and just didn't quite have the imaging I felt like some of them -

Mix: That brings up the question of how come Frank didn't stop it, or notice it? There was too much going on?
Pinske: Quite honestly, it's a - that's kind of a tough call to make on that. He got pretty fatigued with all the studio work we did. His right ear was getting a little worse, for sure. He was starting to have trouble hearing high frequencies in his right ear. And Frank would pretty much let the engineer in charge kind of run with it. Bob was good. Everybody had their own kind of styles. But Bob was into a lot of over compression and stuff, and most people would notice it, but Frank sort of started letting it go, and almost in a way kind of liking it, just like another one of those phases. He'd just kind of redo stuff just to redo it,

rather than because you needed to redo it. A lot of times, we would have a lot of albums, I'm sure you know, as well as you know most of the stuff, that some of the stuff we did was in fabulous shape, and there was no reason to rerecord or re-release some of these tunes at all. We would get into re-releasing some stuff, and it was almost like kicking a dead horse. There was no reason to do it. It was almost like we were doing it just to do it. I think that's where some of that came in. He'd get fatigued. Normally he was a lot pickier.

Mix: Before we leave the road thing, tell me about John Smothers. He comes up all the time, but I have an incomplete picture of why his - mangled English -
Pinske: I just pulled this up in the computer, so let me get you the Joe's Garage number. It's 818/765-4261. Marque Coy is the one. That's in Van Nuys. I just thought I'd give you that number while I had you. John Smothers was the bodyguard, of course.

Mix: Who he hired after he got pushed off stage.
Pinske: That happened before me. When he was going into the pits, I think over in London, I think.

Mix: It was in '71. I had tickets for that show.
Pinske: Did you? Well, then you know more about that than -

Mix: Well, I didn't see it, because he did two shows, and I had tickets for the second show, and he was -
Pinske: That's when he decided - I think he thought that some guy thought he was - the Frank always told the story to me was, he thought that some guy in the audience thought that he was looking at his girlfriend, and he got all bent out of shape about it, jumped up and threw him in the pit, or something, and he didn't want that to happen anymore. That's pretty much the way he told it to me. But Smothers was an interesting fellow. He looked tougher than he was. He was a pretty nice guy. He traveled with us everywhere, of course. And Frank would make fun of him, and we would use what we would call different variations of his lingo, sometimes even in some of the songs. Frank would refer to some of that stuff. He got the laminated passes, and he had this character about him. But he was - primarily always with Frank, all the time on the road. He unpacked all his clothes, and packed it up and all that stuff.

Mix: I don't mean to pry, but I'm just curious. Did he have a speech impediment, or is he from a different linguistic culture?
Pinske: He didn't really have a speech impediment. Frank would always - and John actually didn't speak all that bad. He would just say things sometimes that were kind of stupidly funny. Like, "I just sold my house and I got myself a notary republican and everything." But Frank would always take it and put that extra added thing on it, like you know he would. He would make the accent sound more drastic. Like we did with "Thing-Fish," with Ike Willis. When we did Barry - we called it "Barely White," when he did his Barry White imitation - we'd actually tape his tongue with a piece of grey tape to the outside of his mouth, so it would sound more ridiculous. With Smothers, I think he kind of - Smothers almost got a not-quite fair deal on that. He didn't talk that bad.

Mix: I'm just curious, because I never met the guy, and I've never seen him. And he figures large in the folklore.
Pinske: I'm kind of wondering if he's even alive now. I don't know.

Mix: We're coming up to "Tinsel Town Rebellion." "Fine Girl," which sounds fabulous, is a studio track, while the rest of the album is live, with some overdubs on first part of "Easy

Meat."
Pinske: Yeah. We did overdubs on vocals throughout that album, too. That was like Bob Harris' original audition was on "Fine Girl," off that album.

Mix: Doing the high - boy soprano part.
Pinske: Mm-hmm. Bob was a guy that I used to know, actually played in a band with me in the past, and Ray and Ike were having trouble with falsettos, so I suggested to Frank that we try this guy out. And that was actually his audition, that went on, that whole ad-lib thing through "Fine Girl" was actually Bob's audition.

Mix: I was going to ask about recording the voices, but now, you'd been working with Ray and Ike for a year already by the time you came to mix that - work on that album, right?
Pinske: I did all the tracking and all the mixing on that one.

Mix: I only know Ray and Ike from the records. How would you characterize their voices? Were they working as twin leads, or did they take alternate leads?
Pinske: Oh, they were absolutely fabulous. First off, they were incredibly funny to be around, and they got along good. Ike's voice, of course - both of them were in the group primarily for their singing. Neither one of them actually read music, you know. And that was very unusual for Frank to have somebody, but Frank liked to surround himself with good singers, because he always called himself a low-grade vocalist. [Laughs.] So he would surround himself with better singers. And Ike and Ray had a blend, along with Frank, and they knew how to blend with Frank. But no, they would take alternate leads. You would have - Ray would sing the bluesy-er stuff, or the ad-lib stuff, "Doreen," and Ike would sing another whole style. Ike would say like "Outside Now." Unfortunately, Ike lost a lot of his voice - his voice was real clear at one time. And him and Ray were in very prime shape in those days. All through the '80s, the live shows had most of their power as a result of a lot of their vocals. Then we had Bobby Martin, of course, and/or Bob Harris singing along with them. And the live vocals were actually quite a treat.

Mix: They come off very well on the stage series.
Pinske: Incredible. As a matter of fact, that was one of the most fun things about doing the recordings, later, when I got the recording track going, because you could solo these guys up, and they would pour every ounce of their soul into every performance. They didn't save it. They were real, true pros. They put everything they could into everything they did. It was a real pleasure to work with them. The vocals in the studio, however, were like the most fun thing. Unfortunately, the public, or Frank's fans, never got to hear our outtakes. I used to run a 2-track machine, and ATR-102 Ampex. I would just let it run when we did the sessions. Because what was coming through the board would go on there. And these guys would joke with each other, and Frank would make up harmony parts and stuff, and change lyrics. And he would sit on the - he would hit the talkback, and talk to them, and say, "Try doing this," and "try doing that." And those guys would joke with each other, and it was just a cutup. It was just so original, and so unique, the kind of things that would happen. And then they would - especially when you had Ike Willis, Ray White, and Bob Harris, all three of them together out there in the studio. We would track all three of them at a time, all on their own microphone, singing most of their parts all three together at once. And sometimes we'd lay three of them on one track, we'd lay them on separate tracks, sometimes we'd double, we'd triple 'em. That kind of thing. Those outtakes were just - we would have so much fun. Frank would tell jokes, and Ray would say something like, "Ike, you gotta move over, you're lip's too big. There's no room in here." There would be this kind of fun time, which to me, as an engineer, was the most enjoyable recordings of my life. Those vocal sessions were just awesome. And I think some of that attitude, and

some of that fun, came out on the tape. I think that's a lot of what made it so good. And of course, Frank's producing. Sometimes he would put together an absolutely fabulous harmony, and then we would erase it. It was painful.

Mix: The live tapes that went into "Tinsel Town Rebellion," as far as I can make out, came from the '78 and '79 bands.
Pinske: Oh, God. They came from - you ever seen the list of engineers on that album?

Mix: That's the trouble. I've got the CD, and there are no engineers listed, apart from Bob Stone for the additional remastering. Sorry to tell you this.
Pinske: I got them on my wall here. The actual real album credits, which unfortunately are only on the albums themselves, "produced by Frank Zappa; engineers: Mark Pinske, George Douglas, Joe Chicarelli, Allen Sides, Tommy Fly; remix engineer: Bob Stone; disc mastering: Joe Hansch from K-Disc. So the tracks that we used were tracks that I did. There was a couple of tracks that George Douglas did on a 4-track from live. There were tracks left over from Joe Chicarelli, and then Allen Sides and I did a lot of recording together, even after this, on "You Are What You Is," I think Allen did some recording with me, too, in the studio and out of the studio, and also, Allen did some of the live tapes at the New York Palladium. Before we had the truck, we rented the Record Plant truck. And Allen had done that. So the actual credits on the real album are myself first, George Douglas, Joe Chicarelli, Allen Sides. The albums had all the original credits, and little notes by Frank, according to how things were done originally. Later on, just so you know, I had a little bit of a mini fallout with Gail, after I had left Frank. And because of that, she started striking my name off a number of things. She was kind of mad at me over another issue. Really what it was about is, she tried to order me to do some things, and Frank told her that I worked for him. And pretty much told her off. That put a little bit of a bad nail between the two of us. So later on, when they did all this repackaging stuff, she just decided to skimp on the artwork and everything else. And think some of them was to save money, of course.

Mix: It seems that the CD repackaging has gone through a couple of generations, of early issues with skimpy packaging, and then they got Cal Schenkel involved, and came back and redid them, supposedly with much improved artwork.
Pinske: I'll tell you what, if you listen - you take the "Thing-Fish" lacquer, for instance, and put in on and listen to it, just the original - even one of the original pressings, and then you put on the CD, you almost have to take the CD and throw it in the trash, it just sounds lousy. It doesn't have any of the ambience of the stuff we did off the walls or anything. It was all crushed and over compressed. It's a shame. It's a darn shame. Because we used to do - you realize, we started doing a lot of mastering over at Sheffield, where we did what they called "groove sculpturing." And some of those lacquers sounded immaculate. Absolutely immaculate. I couldn't understand why, when they redid - and of course, we would do, with John Matousek, when I started getting into doing all the really good quality albums, we did a lot of EQ'ing, and a lot of work in the room itself when we actually cut the lacquers. So none of that stuff would have been on the original 2-track. [End of tape.]

Here's the deal. We cut a deal with Ampex to drop hundreds of rolls of tapes at different cities, like Chicago, New York, whatever, well Agfa started bidding against us, and we started using Agfa 468. Now, when we got off the tour, we switched in the middle of the tour on - I think this was about the '83 tour, maybe even the '84 - we started razor-blade editing a lot of the songs together from different shows. And you couldn't even tell the difference in the cymbals across the edits. That's what Frank liked about the consistency we did in the recording. Well, some of the tapes that we meant to mix for an album, after

we'd edit them together, we'd usually mix them down to the Sony digital, the 3/4-inch digital 1510 system. Some of them we didn't get to mix, because we edited way more songs than we were able to have time to mix, we put in the tape vault. And a number of these tapes ended up in the vault for over a year. When we pulled them out a year later, the edits didn't work. The cymbals would drop as much as three or four dB at the high frequencies, when they went to the Ampex 456, and then when we went back to the Agfa tape, it would get bright again. This was very frustrating from an engineering standpoint, because you realize, this is analog tape. The longer analog tape sits, the duller it gets. It isn't like the digital medium. So this is one of the main reasons why I thought remastering a lot of the stuff was stupid. Because we had better original tapes a lot, and even remixing some of it. We had better-sounding mixes and better-sounding tapes that were archived on digital from earlier. There was not really a reason to remix some of it. Anyway, without getting into a long story about it, the frustration about all that is, when we did - Terry Bozzio, when I remixed the whole "Baby Snakes" movie, we would have tapes that maybe the first 20 seconds would sound right, and then all of a sudden it would get dull, and everything would change. We'd have to strike the board, re-cue and reset everything, just to make the edit work. And you might strike the board maybe 8, 10, 12 times through one song, just to try to make the sonics match, on edits that originally ran across like butter. So this is the kind of thing that was so frustrating. Same thing happened to me on the "Freak Out" masters, when we got it back. Frank wanted me to do an edit on them, the original "Freak Out" masters, and I went to where the edit was, and there was about ten inches of clear plastic. The oxide had completely fallen off. And it was such a shame. The original 2-track was gone. Never to be heard again. So that's why we tried to recreate that stuff. And by the way, I did totally recreate those original masters with the original tracks on them. There were mixes done of them. And then we later overdubbed Chad Wackerman and some bass and some of this other things, when the old box set got redone, but there was actual mixes. And there was actual transfers of the original tracks that were preserved in immaculate shape. That was one of my whole projects. I did that for - over three months of my time was doing nothing but transferring over the old archives. In my mind, I too, and I imagine a lot of the original Frank fans, would have loved to hear the original stuff redone, instead of the overdubbed drum stuff.

Mix: Going back to "Tinsel Town Rebellion," was there much difference in the quality of the tapes recorded by Mick Glossop at the Odeon, and -
Pinske: Oh, Mick Glossop was one of my idols, then. I gotta tell you, I could take out a tape from Mick Glossop, a 16-track, and put it on, and it just sounded great. Sounded great. The guy did some really good work.

Mix: I don't mean to downgrade the other guys, but I was just wondering what the diff -
Pinske: . . .so many of the tapes sucked, then when you get somebody that did a good job, you just really appreciate it.

Mix: "Tinsel Town Rebellion" was originally released as a double LP. Did you get involved in the mastering process for Frank's albums? I think you answered that.
Pinske: That was Joe Hansch at K-Disc. Joe and I did the mastering together on that. He's on a number of albums. Let me get the spelling correct for you on that. At that time, he was at K Disc. Before that he was at KenDun Recorders. And then we moved from KenDun to K-Disc.

Mix: One thing I noticed that Frank Zappa commonly put between 15 and 19 minutes on a side. Presumably that's because anything longer than that would require mastering at a lower level. Was that your experience?

Pinske: Absolutely. We never tried to squeeze 22 minutes or more on a side, because of the fact that we wanted to cut a hotter lever and deeper groove. A lot of that came from Joe Hansch. A lot of the different engineers we used along the way. But when we later got with John Matousek, he was able to get us better-sounding lacquers - oh, Lord, which album was it? "Man From Utopia," or one of the albums I mixed, Joe Hansch thought was a nightmare. He thought it was one of the worse mixes in the world. Later on, whenever I tried out a new mastering room, like when we went from K-Disc over to Capitol Records, because we changed deals quite a bit, Frank would say, "Well, just take - go ahead and take 'Man From Utopia' with you." Or no, it was "Them Or Us," or - and I would take the tape over with me, because there would be a lot of out-of-phase, low-frequency stuff intentionally, you know, on floor tom-toms, or something like that. And when we got to Hitsville, John Matousek ran us a lacquer that was 2 dB hotter than any of the lacquers we released. And it sounded great. And he looked at me and said, "Man, this is a really well-mixed album." And I about died. Because everybody else had told me how many problems it was. Then I realized, I started learning right then and there, that a lot of it had to do with how good of a mastering engineer you have. How well they can set up a lathe or whatever. And what kind of equipment was in the actual room itself, as far as electronics and the signal path, and everything like that. Because John took some of our albums that earlier we had trouble with, "Tinsel Town Rebellion" was one of them, and cut us some actual lacquers that sounded fabulous. The other thing I just want to say real quickly about that, all the original liner notes on Frank's albums and, unfortunately, all the little notes he made like, crediting the people in the crew, like on "Tinsel Town Rebellion" he credits Thomas Nordegg for everything remote, and he gives special assistance - he talks about the AKG microphones we used on something, or he would make notes about how we recorded something and what we did differently. He talks about how the Santa Monica civic Auditorium concert is what we used for the guitar solo on "Fine Girl" and "Easy Meat," and where we took certain things from, Berkeley Community Theater, and how we went back and forth to certain live recordings and in and out of studio recordings and stuff. Those kind of notes, unfortunately, a lot of them just got lost on the CDs.

Mix: There's a striking lack of credit to Mark Pinske on most of the albums.
Pinske: That's because later on, Gail struck a lot of them out of it. But that really didn't matter to me. I did the original work, and it was on the original albums, and most of the people that were fans knew this, or whoever has the album. I got, like, Jesus, a huge amount out - all of that credit stuff, later on - originally, like I said, I wanted to get some credits in the business. But later on, once I started doing that stuff, they mean a whole lot less. You'd like to take your name off some of the bad work you did. As you get older, it's not such a big deal.

Mix: "Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar," I have to tell you that the CD version of the three albums in one box doesn't have any credits for you.
Pinske: I did not do that album. "Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar" was a collection of stuff that was done off of 2-track and 4-track recordings that were--most of them I think were remixed by Bob Stone, but they were not tapes the I had recorded. They were instrumental stuff from previously old stuff, anywhere from 1970 on up.

Mix: They're all pretty old. They're from the Odeon, Berkeley, Santa Monica.
Pinske: It was before I even was working with Frank. But the albums came out while I was with Frank, but remember how I said Bob and I did a tag team? What Frank was doing is, he was running--we started doing two eight- to ten-hour shifts each. And what we had gotten into for a while was, Bob refused to work more than eight hours. I would work 10 to 12, 13 hours without a problem. Frank kind of got to the conclusion that any engineer's

ears wear out, to the point where you just can't get any creative mixing done after a certain point. So we started doing tag teams. I would be mixing one project, and Bob would be mixing another. And what we'd do was, I would finish a mix with Frank, and normally, whenever we finished a mix, we struck the whole board, because none of the tapes--the songs were all different. So Bob and Frank started doing a lot of the 2-track and 4-track stuff in between the sessions when I went home and slept. So those albums, really, most of those "Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar," and "The Return of the Son of Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar," most of those were all instrumental collections of whatever was in the tape vault. There's three different tape vaults, so you know that, as well.

Mix: Do you want to describe them? Were they all put in at the same time as the studio?
Pinske: No, no. There was one tape vault put in the front yard, but there was a tape vault downtown, and there was also another one that--there was two off-premises, one of them that had all the original Warner Bros. tapes in and stuff. What had happened is, after the lawsuit was over, we took most of the stuff out of that particular vault and moved them all into the main vault, which was outside of the studio in the lawn, built underneath the lawn. And there was a big generator down there, as well, too, by the way, a diesel generator so if the power went off, it would just automatically kick on, we would still have backup power.

Mix: When did Bob Stone joint the organization, and under what circumstances? He was literally hired as a second engineer?
Pinske: He was only hired as a remix engineer, and that was mainly because, like I said, when we started doing these back-to-back sessions, I was doing a lot of tracking. I tracked basically everything. Bob never tracked, as a matter of fact, he never tracked anything. He was brought in--we tried out a couple of guys, too. I'm trying to remember if we brought Davey Moire back. We tried out a couple of guys, and Frank--Bob Stone came recommended to Frank, and he tried him out, and they got along fine, and he seemed to do good work. And most of the time, Frank would tell you what he wanted anyway. There was a little freedom about how you could do your own mixing, but Frank would tell you want he wanted to change in a mix. He would sit there in the gray chair behind you and say, "Bring up this vocal, bring down this vocal, try to make this guitar sound a little bit better, get this keyboard to sound a little bit better, let's put a little stereo spread on this." Frank was a fanatic about having things sound a certain way that he wanted. Because of that, to a certain degree, whether I was sitting in the chair or Bob, a lot of it would come out sounding the same. But however, Bob was a little different. He would over compress a little bit more, and stuff like that with me. At first I think Frank was being a little more careful, and that's why he was doing 2-track, 4-track, and 8-track stuff with Bob a lot. And I was doing the heavier multitrack stuff. And that's where the difference came in a lot of the albums. Then as Bob got progressively better, I actually learned some things from Bob, and Bob learned some things from me, and we kind of started really getting along really good, so we would actually sometimes mix portions of the same song. Which was kind of neat, from an engineering standpoint. It made things a whole lot more creative, and it made things a whole lot better. And it also made things a whole lot more efficient, because Frank wouldn't have to stop working on a particular song or part of an album, just because we were changing shifts or something like that. He could actually keep going. Sometimes Frank would actually go up and sleep while I would tweak something or Bob might tweak something. We might spend two or three hours tweaking the mix, and then call Frank up. Frank had an anechoic chamber that slept in, and we would call him down when we were ready for him. That way Frank could keep his ears fresh, too. It wasn't always sitting there all the time. That's why it's real hard to explain the collaborative-ness. The main difference was, Bob never did any tracking. He just didn't--he was mainly a remix guy. And that's why

they're always so careful about saying "remix." Which is kind of a stupid credit, if you think about it. All of that stuff was kind of malarkey.

Mix: If I've got these dates right, "You Are What You Is," which was released in September '81, I guess it was recorded during the summer of '81, and that was the first studio album--that was a studio album, or was that again live tracks with overdubs?
Pinske: It was all studio. As a matter of fact, it's David Logeman on that. I actually did some vocals on that. That was one that was pretty much all my baby. I think Allen Sides helped--you know what's so strange about that one? I think Bob Stone had kind of decided at that point that he was going to take a break a little bit. So he was kind of getting real fatigued from all the live, leftover 2-tracks, so I pretty much was left on my own on that. So we brought in Allen Sides to do some tracking with us. Allen tracked with me, oh, one or two songs, and Frank for some reason just didn't hit it off with Alan. I don't know, they just--I think Allen maybe was a little too opinionated or something like that. But nonetheless, you know Allen always did pretty good work. So on that particular album it was primarily me and Allen Sides did some tracks. And then Bob did some remixing on--oh, gee, that was probably only about four or five of the tunes on that album. This is when he started crossing over and getting a little more involved with the better quality remixing. The full multitrack stuff. The stuff that just wasn't sparse. That's when Bob started becoming part of the overall team. That was in '81. But that whole album was a studio album. We tracked the whole thing in there. We had Motorhead, I think, played a little tenor sax on that one, and David Ocker played a little clarinet. Came in in the overdubbing stuff. And Steve Vai, that was one of the first albums Steve Vai actually did some studio dubs on.

Mix: The Steve Vai audition story is quite well known--not so much audition, as he was familiar because he'd been doing transcriptions on a contract basis, is that right?
Pinske: He was doing transcriptions for, believe it or not, for $10 a page. Some people took $15 a page. And Steve made me always promise to never tell Frank how much time he spent on one page, because his transcriptions looked immaculate. The real true story on Steve is kind of interesting, because you'll hear variations. You'll even hear Steve's own version of it, which isn't even totally accurate. Steve was a young kid. I was in the studio setting up some vocal mics one day, and Frank had gotten back a transcription of a live cassette that he had sent Steve called "Persona Non Grata." And Frank came out there with the sheet, and held it up to me, and he said, "Look at this, Mark. You gotta see this. Look at the way he transcribed my guitar solo here. He makes me look like a genius." He did some triple-dotted eighth notes, or some darn thing that just looked immaculate. And Frank said he was just screwing around, but Steve made it look really like it was some elaborate thing. And Frank got a kick out of it. He said, "Yeah, he sent me his tapes. Come on in the control room." I was setting up a mic out in what we called "the yard," out there, where I was telling you about in the studio. I came in, and Frank put in the cassette, and Steve had a band called Morning Thunder, which was a garage band. And I heard all this Jimi Hendrix-type of whammy guitar stuff going on, and Frank said, "I'm flying Steve out here tomorrow." I thought, "What the heck would he fly another guitar player out?" the whole idea was, Frank decided--he'd lost a little confidence in his guitar playing. You knew about that, right?

Mix: No, I didn't.
Pinske: There's about a three-year period in there where he almost didn't play at all. And we did a lot of tours where he just sang, and Steve played guitar. Steve and Ray and Ike. Frank didn't do a lot of solos. And then later on, the fans got kind of picky about it. But his mind already, he was just trying to bring in another guitar player, and he was just going to do more ad-libbing and singing, and just kind of directing. So Steve showed up, and he

had this old beat-up Stratocaster. Jesus, I think he just turned 19 years old, he was nervous as heck. Came in the studio, and we went out there and Steve said to me, I was out in the studio with Steve, and he said, "You gotta help me get a guitar sound. And we didn't have any real elaborate guitar amps out there at the time. For some reason I thought he'd bring his own, or something. But we had a little Roland Jazzmaster, as a matter of fact. We cranked the thing up, and kind of got it swinging and feeding back. And Steve, "Yeah, I think this'll be OK, don't worry about it. I'll just play this." Because he wasn't being picky. We took this--I went in the control room, and Frank said, "Take the tracks from 'Persona Non Grata,'" is about an eight-minute piece. It's a pretty long piece. And he said, "Feed him all the tracks except my guitar, and we're going to have him play my guitar part." Which he had transcribed. And I kind of thought wasn't fair. So I looked at Frank, and I fed him the best mix I could--I gave him a pretty elaborate stereo headphone mix, as a matter of fact. And I said, "Steve, OK, just play along with it. Don't worry about it. Just play for however long you can. And then, whenever you want to, drop out." So I rolled the tape, I put it in Record. Steve started playing, and he played all the way through the piece. And Frank said, "My God, bring the kid in." So I told him to come in, and Steve came through the side door, and at the side door we have a little coffee maker, next to a little restroom there. And the door shut, and I was in between the two doors from the control room and where the coffee maker was, and I caught Steve there, and Steve said, "Man, I really screwed up, didn't I?" He was nervous. And I said, "No, man. Gee, I thought it sounded pretty good, Steve." So we brought him in the control room, and then Frank said to me, "Now put my guitar back on, and pan his guitar to one side, and my guitar to the other." And I remember distinctly panning Steve's guitar to the left side, panning Frank's guitar to the right side, or vice versa. I'm pretty sure that's the way it was, and we rolled the tape, and you couldn't hardly tell the difference of the two guitars. I swear to God. The bends, and the articulation, which pretty much told you how much time he spent on it, were--and Frank--probably the only time in my life I actually saw Frank's mouth just drop open. I turned around and his mouth was just dropped open. We listened to probably no more than about a minute and 20 seconds more of it, and Frank just said, "Stop the tape." I stopped the tape, he looked over at Steve and said, "Do you want to go on the road?" Honest to God. He looked over at him and said, "Do you want to go on the road?" So here was a guy that came from probably, I don't know, what? Making $120 a week, to $1,800, $2,000 a week. All of a sudden, he had a livelihood. Before he was 20 years old. And that was something I'll never forget. It really wasn't fair, I didn't think, but the kid held up pretty well.

Mix: So you're saying that around the time "Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar" albums came out, Frank had actually more or less cut back on his soloing?
Pinske: That was an inherent part of the fact that we were doing so much studio work. He bought a $3.5 million studio, we're listening to all these tapes, and he's producing albums. So he's not practicing his guitar every day, and he's not playing. Then we even went one step further, and I redid the whole "Baby Snakes" movie, which I remixed. And by the way, there's no credit on me on that, either. We never changed the film credits. But I did do the remix on all the whole darn film. We were doing some of this stuff from Baltimore, with George Duke and Napoleon Murphy Brock and Ruth Underwood. Some television show. We were redoing the sound on these videotapes. Because we were putting together a little thing called "The Dub Room Special." And we did a bunch of little video things. And Frank was playing unbelievable guitar on this stuff. And I remember him making a comment to me, saying, "Man, I'll never play guitar that good again." And he was serious. You know how you make a statement? But you kind of take it like, "Gee, he's kind of serious about this." And I think what happened is, it wasn't so much that he'd never play that good again; he just didn't have his chops up. He didn't have the desire to play quite as much, and

maybe the need to play quite as much. And he maybe kind of saw himself in a different role. So, what we did a couple of those tours and he wasn't really playing solos, some of the audience started writing in to the record company and stuff, and to Bennett Glotzer, his personal manager. I made a deal with Frank then. I said, "Look, Frank, if you want to start playing again, I'll take the Jimi Hendrix guitar down, and Seymour Duncan and I will put some new pickups in that thing, and we'll spice that guitar up." So he could play that, and one of his favorite SG guitars that he loved so much. I said, "Man, I'll make that sucker sing for you, man." You know, the next day I came in, and he was practicing guitar. And that's kind of what ended that thing.

Mix: And in fact, the guitar album is all later recordings, which you recorded, and is playing through those guitars, in fact, isn't it?
Pinske: Oh, yeah. There's a lot of stuff then. Later. We built a little equalizer in there. Midget came up with the circuit, that had a little parametric +/- 18dB 3-band parametric equalizer that we built into that Hendrix Strat. [Laughs.] And Seymour, I don't know, we went through all kinds of different pickup designs. That thing was really soaring, it was really singing. It was beautiful. It was kind of like, you know, I told you before, used to hang over the fireplace in the basement. He would walk down through the stairs, walk through the basement to get into the studio. So whenever he went back to the house, he would go through there. It was kind of like the mascot of the studio. It really meant a lot to him. It was just a burned-up Strat. But when we refurbished it, it was kind of just the aura of it all. There's two things I saw that meant a lot to Frank. The Hendrix guitar that was given to him, and then, unfortunately, the sad death of John Lennon. Which had a profound effect on him.

Mix: Which was in 1980, wasn't it?
Pinske: Yeah. We were in Berkeley. He almost didn't go on stage that night. We almost cancelled the show, I think. One of those things on the road, you know?
Mix: Yeah. I haven't got any more questions about YAWYI. As far as I can see, the bass is all by Arthur Barrow, right, and drums by David Logeman?
Pinske: Yeah. That was David Logeman, Artie Barrow. It was probably a pretty crude--my recording level skills weren't as good in those days, in '81, as they got later. It was a pretty bare album.

Mix: There's a lot on it.
Pinske: A lot of good songs. A lot of good vocals. We had Denny Walley come back in. We had Craig "Twister" Steward, as Frank called him. Matter of fact, I think I got an email from Craig "Twister" Steward the other day.

Mix: I've got a question about that, because on the YCDTOSA series, there's quite a bit of harmonica playing, which is never credited as far as I can tell. Was that Bobby Martin playing, or Ike Willis?
Pinske: Bobby Martin played a little bit, but a lot of that was Craig "Twister" Steward as well. We tracked a lot of stuff with Craig that we never thought we were going to use later.

Mix: On the studio albums. But the live playing must have been what, Bobby Martin?
Pinske: Yeah. Most of it, yeah.

Mix: I was just curious, because it's never credited.
Pinske: Yeah. It's kind of sad how--Frank's liner notes, from the original albums and stuff, were one of the treats.

Mix: Yeah. The first album I really had, I guess, was "Uncle Meat--"
Pinske: They were always funny.

Mix: And also he was the first person to really explain recording technology to the public.
Pinske: You know all those notes are on the Internet. They're all over the place. You can get all the original liner notes everywhere. I got links to some of them on my Web site, on my CD page. As a matter of fact, there's a link when you just click on one of my albums that I did for him, one of them takes you to a link that has a chronological credits of every album. Tells you exactly everything you want to know about every album. That can help you fill in some of the cracks as far as who did what. It's all been documented a million times.

Mix: I've got about 20 or 30 links, but I haven't actually stumbled across that one yet. But I will.
Pinske: Yeah, Valzemar or whatever his name is. One of my albums on the CD shelf on my home page has a link right to him.

Mix: I should have bookmarked you, and I haven't. You're. . .
Pinske: Markpinske.com. Or just pinske.com. WWW.markpinske.com. And mine'll come up. The home page is real plain. It just has my address on. Then there's a "CD Shelf 1." I always had an intention of putting a whole bunch of the albums I did on there. And just never kept up--

[Setting up next time.]

Mix: I've got questions for the later albums, but I haven't spent as much time listening to them. I don't have "Baby Snakes," for instance.
Pinske: "Baby Snakes" was kind of a--we did a picture disc on that.

Mix: "Thing-Fish" I've only listened to once, but I'll--
Pinske: Yeah. That CD, I almost threw it away. It's so sad. I've got the original lacquers, but . . . You get the gist of it all, but it's a lot of overproduced stuff. The "Them Or Us" came out real good. "Man From Utopia" is kind of an interesting album. That's one that Bob and I did together. I think they even spelled my name wrong on that one. That one's kind of cool. It had a combination of some--that was some of the higher-quality studio stuff.

Mix: Quite a bit of "The Man From Utopia" is live, though, isn't it?
Pinske: Oh, yeah. Frank did that on every album. We would do something from the studio, and then we'd turn around and do something live. And we would mix all the stuff together. He would have the habit of always going back and trying to grab something. He always seemed to think we needed to make a double album, instead of just a single album.

Mix: That's what kind of killed me, as a record buyer. I gave up around "Sheik Yerbouti." I had everything up to that point, but then I--
Pinske: Unfortunately, some of the albums would be fine as a two-sided album. They would have been just fine. You kind of wear out the--and then always segueing every song. Always segueing. It's like you're a prisoner from the time you drop the needle. And we spent so much time segueing. In some ways, the first cut of an album would sound better than what we did later.

[Setting up next time.]

When we did all those recordings, remember I told you we had something like 932 tapes after the first three months? Well, when you take a truck on the road for five years, you can imagine how many reels of tape there are. We used to have this joke that, we couldn't even listen to them all, and Frank would say, well, we're going to make albums until he dies, and then I'll still be making albums until I die. It was just kind of a little thing we did, because that is how long it would take to get through all of the tapes. A lot of it was just rehack. You don't want to listen to the same song 450 times.

Mix: But then, on the other hand, all the tapes were different, in the sense that the shows very rarely had the same set lists.
Pinske: Oh, no. He would do the set list about 15 or 20 minutes before the show. He used to look out at the audience, and he would call us all in the dressing room, and we would write the set list right then, before the show. He would decide by the mood of the crowd, and stuff, what he was going to play. And the band had to know 125 songs.

Mix: But were there suites? There is one section where they play four tracks in a row from "Them Or Us." "Charlie's Enormous Mouth. . ."
Pinske: We would segue that stuff all together. The hardest thing about the musicians--it was much harder being a musician than it was for me being an engineer, because the musicians would practice 125 different songs, in the soundstage, for weeks. We would go on the road, and then all of a sudden, a month and a half into the tour, two months into the tour, he would call one of the songs that they hadn't played the whole tour, yet. And he would write it down. They'd go, "Man, I hope I can remember this thing." I remember the musicians always telling me that. And I recorded cassettes every night. Even when I was in the truck, or in the house. We would take the cassettes back to the hotel rooms, and the musicians and I would listen to a lot of the shows. And then I would take comments from a lot of the guys like Tommy Mars, or Ray and Ike, or whoever wanted to come to the room and listen. And they would give me comments about how they might want to change their guitar sound, or their keyboard sound. We would work on--my whole goal was to work on trying to get it to sound the way they wanted it to sound themselves. And then working it in, of course, to what Frank wanted. We taped every night. We made cassettes every night. Frank would take the tapes a lot, and then when he didn't take the tapes, he would give them to me, or he'd say give them to one of the musicians. That's why there's so many live cassettes floating around.

Mix: And presumably you've tried you best not to let them fall into the hands of bootleggers.
Pinske: I did have a Halliburton stolen from me. This is one of the other things that kind of happened when I was in France. We stayed in downtown in Paris, and I had a little Halliburton briefcase. And I set it down to check in, and I turned around, it was gone. And I had like eight live shows in that thing. They were all just cassettes. But every one of them came out on a bootleg later.

Mix: So that's why some of the bootlegs really do sound like board tapes, because that's exactly what they are.
Pinske: That's what they were. Some of them were my board tapes. I didn't have anything to do with it, of course, but nonetheless, it couldn't be stopped. Some of them actually sounded pretty decent. Every once in a while you get one that was really good. It wasn't easy to make great-sounding cassettes, because you were really trying to mix for the house, mainly. And the house would sound a little bit different. But we got a couple of them in there that were nothing to be ashamed of.

DAY THREE – PART ONE

[Pleasantries.]
Pinske: Unfortunately, what Zappa got in the habit of doing is mix-and-matching so many things on a record. He would do a record of some old stuff, and then he would just all of a sudden throw a couple new songs on there. He never had--like I told you about "Thing-Fish." "Thing-Fish" was actually a really neat, slick, and trim kind of a show when we first did it. And then he kind of got into stretching it out by throwing in all those new versions of--different lyrics to some of the songs that were on YAWYI. Just making up stuff to kind of stretch it out. And I found that kind of being--not just as I look back on it, but as we were doing a lot of the projects, sometimes we would have like a really, really good two-sided album. And we'd end up making a double album out of it. And this is what Bennett Glotzer, which is his personal manager, always accused us of. We were always making double albums. And Frank, a lot of times, wanted to give his fans their money's worth. But like in the case of "Drowning Witch," for instance, it ended up being a lot better single album.

Mix: Did he assemble it as a double album, and then cut it back?
Pinske: No. Not on "Drowning Witch." As a matter of fact, we were doing "Crush All Boxes," that one album I was telling you about, [as] a double album, and then his manager said the record company only wanted a single album. So we kind of just shifted over and did "Ship Arriving Too Late" then.

Mix: Now I'm confused, because I thought "Crush All Boxes" was somehow connected to "Tinsel Town Rebellion."
Pinske: No, not at all. "Tinsel Town Rebellion" was a collection of all kinds of recordings from pretty much--a lot of them were before my time. We took recordings like--see, I overdubbed on a lot of them. I overdubbed all these vocals on top of them, like "Fine Girl" and a lot of pieces like that. We had backstage tapes from George Douglas, which was basically just the machine in the dressing room. I noticed when I was looking through all the albums that they credited George like on some of the original guitar albums. The guitar album that came out later, I did. But all the original "Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar" albums were collaborations of different tapes, just like "Tinsel Town Rebellion" sort of was. Which was really just a tape recorder in a dressing room that we rolled in every time during the show. And that was a whole different setup than the UMRK remote. So, when they say "UMRK remote," it wasn't really the UMRK remote then.

Mix: Zappa makes references to the guitar solos on "Joe's Garage," which he says were recorded on a 2-track Nagra, which only had guitar on it, and somebody would just turn it on for solos and then turn it off again.
Pinske: I think Claus Wiedemann had something to do with that. That was before my time, as well, when they were doing a lot of the Nagra stuff.

Mix: Then you had a 4-track out of the console, and then an 8-track out of console.
Pinske: Not necessarily out of the console. We did do some 4-tracks out of the console, but we ended up getting them away from the console, and putting some of them backstage. Claus Wiedemann originally took an 8-track, and then George Douglas kind of took over the 8-track.

Mix: And they were doing separate mixes, or they were taking submixes from you?
Pinske: It was a little bit of a combination of both. It was kind of like the baby--like the birth

of how we ended up doing things on a much more elaborate scale later. In the experimental stage, we were experimenting how to do it. The problem we had was, number one, we didn't have a remote truck, so we were really in a machine, so we were splitting off the signals in multiple ways. They might take a mix, for instance, a left and right mix of all the drums, and then they would take their own kick drum, and their own snare, and their own hi-hat. And I would give them a stereo pair of tom-toms, all the tom-toms, and a stereo pair of overhead cymbals. For a while, we even had the hi-hat in the stereo pair of cymbals. And then they would combine those down to just one stereo pair on the 8-track. So we were at the mercy at however well the blend was. What happened is, the monitoring conditions kind of got out of hand. We would stick a tape machine--say for instance we would be in a civic center or something--and there'd be a tape machine back in the dressing room. And then you set up a couple of portable speakers. Well, the monitoring conditions obviously weren't very controlled. So you would get variables between show to show, because there was not really a consistency of even where we were listening, into the stuff. But we would do the best we can. A lot of the times, Frank mainly wanted to get the solos and stuff like that. That's what he started out with with the Nagra. The Nagra kind of started out, in "Baby Snakes" movie--I don't know if you've ever seen the "Baby Snakes" movie . . .

Mix: I never have, no.
Pinske: Well, Adrian Belew's wearing a wax suit on it, and he goes backstage. And he talks through a mic that's on a portable Nagra, that was running this SMPTE time code on it, and he talks right in and goes something like, "I don't know why I'm doing this. I don't know how I ever got talked into doing this." And it was really kind of interesting, because you had to take the audience mics, you had to go backstage and take the Nagra recording of him talking into it and kind of have the audience sound in the background, like you're going backstage in an auditorium. So it was quite interesting. Frank got into that kind of stuff a lot. Like we did the airport tapes, and things like that. He'd have me record at an airport. I would record in motel rooms. We would set up a little portable--sometimes even a cassette.

Mix: Just any tape machine with a stereo mic, and you kind of wander around with it?
Pinske: Yeah. As a matter of fact, the first time I did the girl that we used on "The Torture Never Stops," I think we did it in mono, and then he had me rig his motel room in stereo, to do a better job the second time. [Laughs.] It was pretty funny. We got into some funny stuff. But what I'm basically getting at is, a lot of the recording techniques, and the amount of money we were spending and everything else, kind of evolved into saying, "Look, we just gotta do a better job at all this. We want better quality recordings, because we're missing some really good live performances here." And Frank's whole theory was, the band's never as psyched-up--what he didn't like is going out and doing a tour, then bringing the musicians into the studio. He claimed they were never as psyched-up as they were when they were on tour in front of an audience. And they would play these songs for three months on the road, and they come back and they just wouldn't have the pizzazz they did. They wouldn't play it as well.

Mix: As far as I can tell, "Tinsel Town Rebellion" and other stuff is done from tapes made out specifically, like a four-night stand at the Hammersmith Odeon, and a night at the Berkeley theater, and a night at Santa Monica.
Pinske: The Santa Monica Civic, we took a 24-track in on that one.

Mix: Right. So there's a lot of tracks that turn up with those recording dates on them.
Pinske: Tower Theater in Philadelphia, Santa Monica Civic, if I remember correctly. And

those tapes were done, actually pretty darn good, because we had a more elaborate miking setup on stage.

Mix: That was a real live-recording date, like "Live at the Roxy" or in New York. You had a remote truck and splits and all that, right?
Pinske: No, we didn't have the remote truck. No, not on those gigs. They were done in the Santa Monica dressing room, the auditorium concert in 1980. We didn't have our own truck until 1981. At the Roxy in New York, and at one of the other shows in New York, we did rent a truck. We had the Record Plant truck one year. I'm trying to remember what other truck we used. We used the Record Plant mobile one year, that Allen Sides helped out with. And there was a couple of times in there where we had the truck. But when we did the Santa Monica Civic, we didn't have the truck. We had a 24-track back in the dressing room. You'll see reference to that. There's kind of a mistake on a couple of the credits that were done later, I noticed when I looked on the Internet. Where they just said "George Douglas, UMRK mobile." It was no UMRK mobile. If you search deeper, you find it was on mobile equipment, but we moved it around and put it where we wanted. It was no actual facility. And they were pretty good recordings, some of those. They came out rather well. But keep in mind now, that "Tinsel Town" was the first real album that came out of the studio, so we took the live albums and then we sweetened some of them up, like in "Fine Girl," we added the vocals. We did one whole studio cut there, too, on that. In my opinion, "Tinsel Town" was kind of a conglomerate. It was a great album. It was kind of a potpourri of things. Kind of like what the cover looked like.

Mix: You said he spent 3.5 million on building the studio, which brings up the question, "how did he finance it?" As far as I know, Warners pretty much had him tied up. He must have had some of his royalties tied up.
Pinske: Most of that was all paid for before I got there. As you know, Frank was like a record machine. He put out products, one way or the other, whether it was through the companies. He had two bad experiences that he talked to me about a number of times, and I won't get into a whole lot of detail about them, with Bizarre and DiscReet Records. By the way, some of that harmonica playing you asked me about last time was actually Captain Beefheart. When I thought about it later, I realized what it was you were talking about. He started those those companies, and did a certain amount of investment in some other artists as well, Captain Beefheart being one of them, and both those companies pretty much went under.

Mix: Or disappeared along with Herb Cohen.
Pinske: Right. So by the time I got there, he had already made up his mind that he was going to do it differently. He was going to pay for his records, but cut deals with record labels to where the record labels would buy the product. And most of the deals we did, we were with Phonogram/Mercury when I started out with him, and we'd gone through Capitol Records and MCA. We did a big long stint with a number of different labels. CBS, obviously. CBS was so weird, because we did CBS--it was like two separate companies when you talk about internationally and when you talk about domestically. We weren't treated the same at all. But he would do a deal to where we would pay for the record, they'd reimburse him for all the recording expenses, but they basically would do distribution, and then he would give the record company 15 percent. So Frank ended up making, in those days, like $2.25 off each record sold. And that's unheard of. It was unheard of compared to what somebody like Dylan--we talked about him last time--would make 18 cents a copy. And Frank would always say, "You know how many albums you gotta sell to make the same amount of money? I could sell 400,000 albums, and you'd have to sell 3 million to make the same amount of money." That kind of thing. The logic

was that Frank knew business really well. So what I'm saying is, he kind of set a precedent in a way. He kind of started something that almost set an example to original artists all around the world. By having that kind control, he was able to take more money in, and not have to have all Platinum albums. Because he knew his music was off-the-wall enough, and wouldn't be played on radios and stuff like that, that he couldn't get that kind of volume. So he set up his business accordingly. He was very clever about it. He also--don't get me wrong--he made a lot of the money from a lot of the first albums, even before the lawsuits ever started. How he collected all his money, and how he saved it all up, and how he finally got enough money together to finance the studio, I don't know all the details of that, but I know is was just about paid for when it was built. And then when we got the settlement, of course, everything was paid for.

Mix: Three-and-a-half million for a studio, you'd have to make 35 albums at $100,000 in cost an album, to amortize that off.
Pinske: Well, the bulk of his money still came from live performances. He got paid well for performing, and also, he sold a heck of a lot of memorabilia. That whole Barfko Swill stuff, and Barking Pumpkin Records. Joe's Garage warehouse out there was just a regular--whatever you could put in the mail. T-shirts, you name it.

Mix: That came a little later, though, didn't it?
Pinske: Well, it came later in a bigger swing, but they were doing it all along in kind of a smaller scale. Most all the stuff was at a smaller scale, and we just got better at it as we went.

Mix: Do you know what led to him ending his relationship with Bennett Glotzer, who I think had had something to do with helping him out of his Warners troubles? Or maybe he was just a hired gun.
Pinske: That part I don't know. Bennett was pretty much his personal manager most of the time I was with him. Frank pretty much controlled the business. Let's be straight about that. But I know that Frank also had a big change of heart near the end, when he started getting a lot more sick. He cut a deal with Rhino Records, I think he got $22.2 million, or something like that, for the whole library. On top of the other money he had. Because he wanted to take care of the family and everything. And I think there was fall-outs as far as just the way they wanted to do business. Bennett, a lot of the times, got into things, and a lot of it really wasn't my business, but I would be there sometimes when they talked about it. Like I know Bennett got his percentage right off the gross. And the exception to that was, when we--the recording costs, and money we would spend recording--so when I built the recording truck, Bennett was quite upset. Because that money came off the gross, and then his 15 percent was lower because we were spending the money on the recording. I know for instance--like he would call me up--because it was just me and Frank a lot of the time, in the control room. A lot of times there was nobody else there--and Bennett would go--I think we had like $125- or $130,000 budget we set aside to do the "Drowning Witch" album, for instance, right? And I remember Bennett called me up, and we were over budget when we decided to do that extra song, "Valley Girl," which I told you about last time. He says, "You gotta hold Frank down. We're over budget. You guys already spent $130,000. You're on you're way to 140,000," when he looked at the money we were spending for the extra musicians singing, the union scales and all that kind of stuff. And I told Bennett, I said, "What do you suggest that I do? You got a guy that owns his own studio." It wasn't really me in control, he was just venting. So even though he vented that, he never vented about the $2.5 million that "Valley Girl" made. You know what I'm saying? I never heard about that. So, what I'm saying is, when you had a windfall like that, with

something that was that big of a hit, all of a sudden, his percentage turned into a larger-than-life deal.

Mix: You said you actually had a budget for "Drowning Witch."
Pinske: We tried to budget, yeah.

Mix: Is that all real expenditure, or was there a paper cost of studio time that you charged against--
Pinske: It was everything. I would keep, try to keep track, of accurate logs. Like for instance, if I went down to KenDun Recorders or Capitol Records or anywhere, we would have bills for all the mastering, all the time. I would have to sign off the receipts because I was the one there. Frank sent me on his behalf. So I had to keep track of all that. Sometimes we would get the bill, even though I would sign at the end of every session, sometimes we would get the bill, and the bill would be larger than the ones I signed off. So I kept track of all that stuff, and we added it all up. The price of the tape, the price of hours, how many hours everybody put in, the union scales, the basic things all had to--we kind of had to keep our hands on just to approximate where we were at there. It wasn't like it was a life-or-death thing, it was just that we would say, look, we don't want to spend any more than this on making this album. And that was always hard to keep down, because we would be working on multiple projects at the same time.

Mix: And then you would deliver acetates, or production master tapes to the record company, which would then actually give you--
Pinske: No, no, no. We never gave them the tapes. No. I would go cut, in the case of--depending on what era you're talking about, but I would go cut 27 sets of lacquers, is what we would do. Twenty-six or 27 sets of lacquers, and we would mail them all out to the different pressing plants. Like Belgium, we'd mail them to Belgium. We mailed them to South America. Whichever pressing plants we were doing.

Mix: And part of this is keeping control, and part of this is because you'd do the job better than they would?
Pinske: Well, he would never let anybody have his tapes. As a matter of fact, we would air freight the lacquers because, if the lacquers--you probably know that after 24 hours they start expanding and contracting. So you wanted to get them nickel plated as soon as you possibly could. Which was a problem when you're sending them around the world. And if they took too long getting there, they would expand and contract, and then you would have all this pre-echo, where the song starts before it actually starts. That kind of stuff would all come from the expansion and contraction of the lacquers. Later on, we moved into doing things at Sheffield, because we could just cut the metal masters right there ourselves, and we did all the metal parts ourselves. We'd send out mothers for stampers. And that way we had better control. And I think we--London Symphony was like--the better albums were pretty much like that. "Them Or Us," I think, was one of them. I'm pretty sure "Them Or Us" was somewhere around that time. When we started doing John Matousek. Isn't he the one who mastered that? Anything we did with John Matousek at Hitsville, we would take the masters, and I would go cut the metal parts over at Sheffield. And they would do what's called "groove sculpturing." When you had dust particles and things like that, that set up on there, they would shave them off, instead of just scrubbing them off with a brush. And you would have a lot less rumble and stuff. We took a lot of care, a lot of tender loving care to how we made the metal parts. And he paid for all that himself.

Mix: That was how he was able to go to the companies and just literally give them a distribution deal. Say, "Look, I've got a complete master, right down to the mothers."

Pinske: Right. And they basically had no expense in it. All they had to do was take 15 percent for distributing it, and they would get their money out of it. Providing it would sell enough. In a way, he kind of invented some of the ways of dealing with some of these companies, as a result of all the business things he had through. He learned a lot.

Mix: It seems there's always a good reason for what he did, and there's also some story as to what happened to him in the past that made him decide he needed a better way of doing it.
Pinske: One of the short stories he told me about DiscReet and Bizarre, which is like why people like the Grateful Dead and everybody else were struggling with these kind of things, was he would send records out. He tried to do his own distribution when you had your own record company. Let's say you send records out to, oh what, 2,000 record stores across the United States, and they take ten of your albums or twenty of your albums and they sell them, but they don't pay your bill. They pay Warner Bros. first because they want to get the next Doobie Brothers album, or whatever. His story was basically along the lines, Do you realize how many different laws there are, and how many different states, and how much it'd cost to get lawyers in every different state to just try to collect your money? It's a nightmare. So he learned from Bizarre and DiscReet that being your independent label isn't cool. It's insane. You don't get the proper distribution, really. There's mainly only three or five main distributors. In Belgium, the same pressing plant's used by Warner Bros. and CBS. Phonogram/Mercury, of course, is one of the big boys, so what he started doing is, he started playing cards with the big boys. And decided that he would go ahead and take his production so far, but when it came to distribution, he needed to get one of the big companies to do a distribution deal. And that all evolved off the lessons of the past that happened--a lot of them well before I came there, but he kind of talked to me about them sometimes when we were sitting around having pizza or something. And he would just give me why he does things a certain way. And it was kind of just teaching me a lesson. Which I found fascinating. Fascinating.

Mix: I'm curious about the old masters. I know there were three sets, and you worked on all of them.
Pinske: I transferred all of them originally.

Mix: This is all very confusing history, because the first question is, I take it that the stuff on Verve and MGM had gone out of print, but how come he didn't have those masters? Were they tied up in the Warner's suit?
Pinske: Yes. They were all tied up in the Warner's suit. Every one of them. There was, I don't know, some--the first 13 albums or something. I can't remember. Sixteen or so. All of them were tied up. "Ruben and the Jets," "Freak Out!" All of those were all tied up in the Warner Bros.' suit.

Mix: So until that was settled, he didn't get them back.
Pinske: He didn't have access to them.

Mix: And then you finally got them back, and discovered that, whether or not they were original stereo masters, many of them were unplayable, right?
Pinske: Well, "Freak Out!" was.

Mix: "Freak Out!" was . . . ?
Pinske: "Freak Out!" was stored where some air conditioner blew on it, and the oxide fell off. I used to keep logs of the different types of tape from 3M and whoever. Just about everybody, you always heard that Agfa or somebody had a bad brand of tape. Almost all

the companies had tape of one sort or another that wouldn't store very long. And if it's stored with air conditioning blowing right on it or something like that, it would dry out too much and the particles would just kind of fall off. That was one of the cases with the "Freak Out!" album, which led us to getting the 12-track--most of them were 12-track, 1-inch masters.

Mix: So you had to reconstruct "Freak Out!" from the masters?
Pinske: I took all the original masters, as a matter of fact, for all the box-set stuff. Even though we had 2-track masters, I took the multitracks and striped them across onto the digital machines.

Mix: So this was after 1984.
Pinske: It was a very long process. And I was doing this--the whole time, when we got the stuff back, Frank was just--he really wanted to preserve the stuff the best way we could. And the best way we could preserve it was to put it into a medium, and preferably a digital storage medium, that wouldn't go south and wouldn't spoil. So my main first chore was to archive everything, and transfer it onto digital, take the original tapes, of course, and put them away, and play them as few times as I could. And then we would mix from the stuff we transferred. And then I did digital backups. This is another thing a lot of people don't know. Chris Stone down at Record Plant had some of the Sony 3324 machines as well. And we used to do each other favors and stuff like that. I took his machine, I would let him use our machine. What we did was, we put together--he had a pair of them, so I would use his machine, sometimes I would let him use our machine, so he could just put a digital ribbon from one to the other, and make an exact digital backup. So when I striped the original, the 1/2-inch tape, on 14-inch reels, that runs at 30 ips on the Sony, when I striped the original ones, instead of us editing and rerecording and punching in and doing things on the originals, I made digital-to-digital backups of the originals, and the originals just got put away in the vault and they were never played. And then the backup of the original, which is basically a digital clone, so there was no generation loss, is what we would use to do all our work on. We did the same thing with the London Symphony Orchestra. It pretty much became the standard. We would take literally 200 reels, and I would digitally backup the original masters.

Mix: So you were working in digital on this restoration project long before you took digital on the road? Because in '82 you were still doing 24-track analog live recordings.
Pinske: Oh, yeah. All analog in '82. The digital machine didn't come along 'til '83.

Mix: And that's when this whole old-masters project started, more or less?
Pinske: Well, we had played with different versions of it. I had put some of it across on the Studer, I'd put some of it across on analog. But once we did the London Symphony, which was really what broke us into the digital, and once we compared the simultaneous analog recordings along with the digital recordings, we pretty much were ready to just throw analog out. As a matter of fact, you know what Frank said? He made us take the two Ampex machines out of the control room, and he said, "Out with the Dark Ages." [Laughs.] That's exactly what he said. "Out with the Dark Ages." So when he made the decision to switch over, that's the way he was. He always was wanting to move forward. Once he decided it was good enough.

Mix: From that period on, anything that was on an analog source was copied over to digital, and then you'd work from there?
Pinske: Right. And a lot of times what I did is I tried to spice it up. Like I would noise gate it. We had 85 different noise gates in the truck, and we'd move some of the gates in the

studio. I would gate out the noise, I would try to make the balance cleaner, so that we didn't have to deal with a whole bunch of junk after the balance was done. Because I figured, well, if I'm going to bounce this anyway, like a vocal, for instance, there's no reason for me to track across the hiss the whole time the vocal's not singing. So I would put everything through gates, and do a real, real careful, careful bounce to 'em. I would also match--do optimum levels, and things like that, because a lot of times the tracks wouldn't be at optimum levels. And I would try to balance things out so that what we'd end up with is basically a master tape that was a lot easier to work with.

Mix: The masters you were working from, were they more or less assembled in terms of were there lots of edits in the multitrack, or were they discrete pieces that then Frank would assemble into the resulting albums?
Pinske: No. Depending which we're talking about now. If you're talking about the old archive stuff, those were mostly all continuous reels. The live stuff, however, we razor-blade edited over to 2-inches.

Mix: No, I'm still thinking about the first three or four album reconstruction projects, like "Freak Out!" through "Lumpy Gravy."
Pinske: For me, you must realize, that's a lot later in my career, because I'd already had three or four years under my belt with Frank. So we kind of went back in time, and by that time we had had so many more recording techniques down, and we had improved so much in everything we were doing, that it was almost a good thing. But when we did get those tapes back from Warner Bros., they were all continuous reels. We didn't razor-blade edit those. We didn't dare screw around with those. We tried a couple 2-tracks, but they were too delicate.

Mix: Once you had the multitrack on digital and you could mix it any way you wanted, did you then reference the original albums and try and recreate the original mixes, or did you just mix it the best way that you thought?
Pinske: We did both. We would do both. As an example, I always liked the Mothers live at Fillmore. Remember, with Howie, and Flo and Eddie. Frank couldn't even remember where he got all the edits from to put that together. He had edited that thing silly. So when we tried to reconstruct that album, it was damn near impossible, because he couldn't even remember where he got what cut from. He edited together at the time, but when we played the different shows, it wasn't--it didn't fit. Certain parts and certain things they said didn't fit. So we'd have to hunt around and say, "Jesus, where's this next section?" [Laughs.] You're kind of right. In a way, we did get into a puzzle sometimes trying to find some of the missing elements when we tried to recreate stuff. And sometimes we just didn't find them. We were on the hunt for that thing in "Baby Snakes" for years. I think we finally found it at random, some little white tape in a box that was a Nagra tape. And sometimes the missing elements wouldn't just always be there, and Frank had to a lot of times go by memory.

Mix: It's "Fillmore East" and "Just Another Band From L.A." that's basically the same band a few months apart. Were they multitracks, 16-track recordings, or were they 4-tracks?
Pinske: Let me see. I don't remember that one.

Mix: They're generally considered to be not that great in terms of technical recordings.
Pinske: A lot of that older stuff, some of the stuff we only had 2-tracks. And some of them we only had 4-track. Because it was a conglomerate of stuff. The whole thing about it is, I'd almost have to go back a reconstruct each album, which would take way too much time. But I'd almost have to go back a re-live it because, like I told you, there was one album that was a 10-track 1-inch. Which is the only 10-track 1-inch that was ever existed. And the

12-track 1-inches were fine, but we would have some stuff on 8-track, some stuff on 12-track, one of the albums was a 10-track 1-inch, "From Cucamonga." And then there was a variety of stuff that would be on a 4-track and/or 2-track tapes. And sometimes the 2-track tapes were all we had. If that was the case, then I would bounce the songs across the best that I could. And I even did, even the "Freak Out!" one that was falling apart, I bounced whatever was good on it. We did everything from bake tapes in the oven that were sticking together, to--it was a stressful, painful amount of work. I did everything I could the best I could, with what you had to work with.

Mix: Which of these albums did you know from growing up? Were you a teenager when Frank's stuff started coming out?
Pinske: I knew the "Mothers Live at The Fillmore," because I laughed at that album a lot. But in general, I wasn't actually a Frank fan. When I auditioned, I wasn't all that familiar with so much of his work. And I think, in a way, that's what really helped me, because he didn't want a fan. He wanted an objective opinion, and it helped me. You can't help but become a fan of his once you work with him. But I wasn't a fan when I auditioned and when I first got the job. I liked that one album, but I always thought his stuff was really bizarre and off-the-wall. Looking at it from a musician's standpoint or whatever.

Mix: So when you came to reassemble "Lumpy Gravy" or "Cruising With Ruben and the Jets," it wasn't like this was your favorite album from high school or anything.
Pinske: No, not at all. In fact, that got me in trouble on the "Mothers Live at the Fillmore," because I knew that album word for word, and when it wasn't right, it bothered me. Nonetheless, we got around to most of it. Frank got a kick out of the fact that I actually at least knew one of this albums that well. But then, I went back and listened, of course, the whole time I was working with him, so that I could do my job better, and I referenced to the stuff. It's your job. You want to pay respect to it. And of course the fans know every damn bit of it.

Mix: There's a whole section of the Web devoted to the differences between the vinyl and the CDs.
Pinske: It was a drastic difference, unfortunately.

Mix: Presumably there are differences between the original vinyl releases and the "Old Masters" final releases.
Pinske: I know. And as a matter of fact, some of the bootlegs of like "Freak Out!" and stuff that we got from Italy, some of those sounded really good. Frank and I spent one day trying to find this one company, not so much to chew them out, but to figure out where the hell they got their artwork, and how they got the record to sound so good. Because some of those bootlegs were done very well.

Mix: In this case, these bootlegs were just pirated versions of existing catalog albums?
Pinske: That was one of Frank's pet peeves. All the time the lawsuit was going on, the only thing the fans could buy were bootleg versions. And of course, everybody in Europe jumped on the bandwagon and made bootlegs all over the place. There were bootlegs coming out of the woodwork. And some people would think that, when they bought the record, that Frank was getting money for it, but he never got a penny of any of it. And it was a shame. We tried to estimate, one time, just how much money he'd lost over that whole period of time, and there was no way of saying. It was all just an educated guess. And I think that had a lot to do with why he got the size settlement he did. Even though Warner Bros. didn't necessarily collect the money, but some bootleggers did. Unfortunately Frank didn't.

Mix: On tour, Ike and Ray were the two lead singers, right?
Pinske: Yeah. They both played rhythm guitar and sang.

Mix: Can you talk a little bit about their voices, the differences?
Pinske: Sure. They had very, very obvious differences in their voice. Ray was like a power singer. Could sing that real high voice, high-range stuff. And he'd belt it out. He could belt out anything, like a good, traditional blues, or "Illinois Enema Bandit," the kind of things that he would do. Ike was more like a character voice. I like to think of Ike more like when he was doing "Outside Now," or--his voice had kind of a character to it. Not just the funny stuff that he did like with "Thing-Fish," but the songs that he would sing. Unfortunately, Ike pushed his voice real hard, and his would be the first one to go kind of hoarse, and get a little bit rasp. So a lot of our recordings would have his voice a little bit on the hoarse side. And Ray was always the power singer that always held up. But when it came to being harmony-wise, it's really kind of magical, because they kind of knew right where to fall in around Frank. And when the three of them sang together, it was just a blend of it's own that was just terrific.

Mix: For a while you had Bobby Martin also singing vocals, right?
Pinske: Right. Well, there was Bob Harris, who was a friend that I got in at "Fine Girl," and then Bobby Martin came in after Bob Harris. And Bob Harris did all these high falsetto things. We used to call--remember, he had Roy Estrada in the original Mothers, who did all the falsetto stuff, and Frank used to say he ate clothespins for breakfast, because his high falsetto was so nasal. He used to just make a comment like, "he at clothespins for breakfast." [Laughs.] Bob came in with a real pure falsetto, and a real pure high range, and when Bob came in and started mixing with Ike and Ray, it was just a wonderful three-way combo. And that's where we built almost all these vocal harmony blends that we did on YAWYI and a lot of albums after that. Napoleon Murphy Brock came in and out of there for a short spell, too. And he had an even different kind of blend with those guys. But then when we auditioned for Bobby Martin, we went through a whole bunch of people. Once Bob Harris decided not to do the European tour, we had to find somebody that could take his place. Now, Bob played trumpet, keyboards, and sang. So when we ended up getting Bobby Martin, he played saxophone, keyboards, and sang. And Bobby Martin pretty much became a permanent fixture after that.

Mix: I think he played right up to the end, didn't he?
Pinske: He did. And he was very loyal. Plus, he did things like, he was the band director for Bette Midler, whenever he was off the road with us. He did other things on the side. He was a health freak, he was always very healthy, so his voice was always there, you could always count on him. He was a good keyboard player, and a pretty accomplished sax player as well, so he filled a lot of roles, and added a lot of interesting aspects to the live sound. And of course, he sang a mean "Whippin' Post" from the Allman Brothers. [Laughs.] But I think the audition, originally he sang something like, oh, some American ballad or something. It was always based off of, though--getting back to what you were talking about--the vocal blend. And Ike and Ray were almost always a part, a key part of that element. Because they fit with Frank's voice. Frank had a real low voice, and kind of a different voice, and not everybody's voice would blend well with his. A lot of times he would take the baritone parts, when they were singing four- and five-part harmonies.

Mix: On "Tinsel Town Rebellion", there are five guitarists listed. I guess that's 'cause there's two bands. For a while he had three other guitar players in the band with him. Steve Vai, Ray, and Ike. I wondered how you would mix for four guitars, or whether they arranged their parts so they weren't all playing on top of each other.

Pinske: Ray and Ike were always rhythm players. Ike was really a sparse type player. And Ray was kind of like the main rhythm player. You know how when you have a good rhythm guitarist, that holds the kind of body together. Ray a lot of times was responsible for playing the basic rhythm. The would give him an occasional solo, like in "Illinois Bandit" or something, I think he'd take a solo. Ike didn't usually solo. So Frank would normally solo, and then when we had Steve Vai, of course, he would normally solo, most of the time. So they weren't really conflicting with each other too much. The two rhythms were a little bit more sparse. We actually had a little bit more trouble with the multiple keyboards at some times. When we had Tommy Mars and Bobby Martin, for instance. And two rhythm guitars. Let's face it, a lot of this stuff would get real thick. That was one of the challenges about mixing any of Frank's stuff, is how do you keep the stuff separate? We tried to, a lot of the time, and you can notice this a lot on the vinyls. I'm not sure what Bob started doing on a lot of his remixing, but I know that on the original mixes that Frank and I did, we tried to create a more live feel. We would usually give a view of like the audience looking at the stage. Frank, for instance, would light the hi-hat on the right side because the audience looked at it from the stage. I had played drums in my life, younger, I always liked the hi-hat on the left side, like Chad Wackerman and most of the drummers would want it. But we would do our panorama, pretty much obviously the way Frank would want it. So we would build a panoramic view. Like the guitars may be on your left and the right, not all the way out, but somewhat panned in. The keyboards, of course, we would try to get as much of a stereo mix as we could on something like a string sound, fake brass or whatever, but we would do the keyboards in a kind of a pseudo-stereo. We got into doing this stereo-ising of just about everything. In other words, for instance, the bass guitar. We would use an 11-millisecond delay, or a 12-millisecond delay, a 9-millisecond delay, depending what key it was in. Then we would split the guitar--the bass up, so that it wouldn't pile up into the center. And that would keep the kick drum and stuff a lot clearer. So Frank would know--it was really ironic because--like if you were in the key of E, for instance, you may do 11 milliseconds, and some notes would cancel, because of the length of the sine wave. So you do one millisecond shorter, one millisecond less, it's have to be--depending what key you're in, you would set up the delay so that when they monitored them out, they wouldn't cancel each other out. So I would constantly do stereo referencing. And we would hit the Mono button--every time we did stereo separation like that, we would watch for two things. We would try not to be too far out of phase, because if you're too far out of phase, especially on low frequencies, the stylus would go nuts when you start cutting lacquers or whatever, and it would chew up the stylus, and you also didn't want to lose anything that would be in the mono image. Especially if you broadcast of FM radio, for instance. The multiplexes had a way of grabbing a hold of stuff, and what would happen is, the stereo multiplexes would take something that's too out of phase, and they would overreact, and you might listen to a song on the record and hear it on the radio and go, "Well, gee, what happened to the guitars?" The guitar levels would just about disappear. So we were constantly monitoring the phase correlation, and, of course, the relationship of delayed times. By doing this--say we would have a mono keyboard part. We could split the mono keyboard, with just a little bit of delay, put it at say, a panoramic view, like if you want to look at it at a clock, like nine o'clock to three o'clock, maybe put him at ten o'clock or two o'clock, and be able to get things out of the way, so that the lead vocal and the kick drum, and a few things that were total center image, would stay clear all the time. This is one of the tricks that we used with Frank all the time. Because he wanted his main voice to always be understood. We spent a lot of time trying to take--like what you said, a very thick sound--two rhythm guitars, two keyboards, almost always too much instrumentation, almost always very busy parts going on. A lot of clutter. And it was a real challenge. It was real frustrating from any engineering standpoint to try to keep all of that clear, and still have definition all that to survive. Especially considering the type of equipment and the

[end of side.] . . . listen to him. He was kind of a percussionist at heart, you know. [End of side.]

Mix: I guess Aynsley Dunbar's possibly my favorite, and the stuff on "Waka Jawaka" and "Grand Wazoo" just sound brilliantly balanced to me. It's almost unlike most of his later work, in that it isn't very "in your face" in terms of the drums.
Pinske: No. In fact, we got a little too carried away with that. We got a little too "in your face," and I didn't argue with him about it. I just did what he wanted. We both did that. Both myself and Bob, depending who was doing the mixes.

Mix: There seems to be some reference in the newsgroups to the possibility that the kick drum on the Helsinki concerts was kind of sampled in or something.
Pinske: It was. It's called a Disco Boombox. It was made by dbx. It's a little thing called Disco Boombox. That's what the name of it was. You could spit into it and a kick drum would come out. [Laughs.] You could basically send anything you wanted into it and a kick drum would come out.

We did do some triggering with Synclavier and some stuff like that, try to do that. It kind of got a little bit overdone in some ways. But we did manufacture drums out of--what I did was, I would take the original drums on the Helsinki stuff--I sectioned off what was originally just a stereo pair, and then I would take a graphic equalizer, for instance, and find the snare. And EQ everything else out. And then we would use that ridiculously sounding EQ that would spit every time the snare played, and I would externally trigger, using a gate and an external trigger, we'd externally trigger maybe a sample of a good snare that we recorded in the studio. And we tried to make it sound a little bit more real. Because a lot of them sounded just horrible. A lot of them didn't have any drums on at all. They were just a ring-y room. And we tried to give them some definition. And it was real easy sometimes to get a little bit too carried away, and get the proportions a little too up front, or too far back. I think the ultimate drum sound that we ever had was on the "Man From Utopia" album.

Mix: Which is part live, part studio?
Pinske: No, that's all studio drums, pretty much, on that one. Like "Cocaine Decision's" an all-studio track.

Mix: And that's all Chad?
Pinske: Chad Wackerman, oh, yeah. That was when John Goode--we spent three days tuning the drums. And it was just wonderful. Just wonderful. We did get good drum sounds live, like on the "Them Or Us" album and stuff like that. One of the reasons why I like talking about some of the newer albums is because we made breakthroughs. We got better and better at the recording once we put the microphones inside the drums, and we had John Goode tuning them, the live recordings got tremendously better. After '81, '82 got better than '81. And '83 was better than '82. Every time we went out, we did some improvement.

Mix: Whose mics were you using inside the drums?
Pinske: All of our own. We had--depending which ones you want to talk about, but we used AKG 451s inside of the tom toms. We originally developed a Randy May system, which he made, that had SM57 capsules. But what I did is, I made a deal with Randy to mount them into a different location so we could put the longer condenser mics in there. And we had an endorsement with AKG, and I got like $38,000 worth of AKG microphones, that they gave them all--they supplied all those. We put an SM57 Shure inside the snare,

on the top head and the bottom head. We had two capsules in that. All the other toms, we put AKG 451s and 452s, which had the roll-off and the 10- and 20dB capsules built in them, about three quarters of an inch underneath the top head, so we could get a good stick sound. But the head itself would filter out the leakage of the cymbals. And this allowed us to get a real nice percussive tone. And being as how it was in the drums, you would get the shell sound surrounding it automatically. And depending where you ended up placing it. We ended up placing it about two inches, two or three inches from the side of the shell, so that it wouldn't ring too much. And we experimented with the placement. This is what I'm saying. We experimented with the placement and the capsules, and the types of heads we used, even, over long periods of time, until we just got this really wonderful, kind of out-of-the-can tom sound, that sounded like something you might have miked up in the studio and spent two days tuning. So we ended up getting real good tom tom sounds that way. I would use AKG 414s on the overheads. Later on we went to the PZM--the Plexiglas--we had these Plexiglas dome mics that Ken Wahrenbrock made for us that we used on overheads. A variety of different hi-hat mics we went through. Normally we would use an AKG 452 on that. The 452's a really interesting capsule mic. It was one of the only mics in the world where you had the preamp in the canister, and you could unscrew the cartridge. And you could put different cartridges, different types of capsules on it. But the neatest thing about it is, you could put an elbow, a flexible elbow in there, and you could also put 10-, 20-, or 30dB pads, and because of this, you could pad the capsule, between the capsule and the preamp, so the preamp wasn't overloaded. As you know, most condenser mics have their pad after the preamp, which doesn't do you any good if the capsule's overloading the preamp. And in the case of something like a drum, that's real loud, you really kind of need to pad it between the capsule and the preamp. So this is one of the reasons why we were able to get away with an actual condenser mic in the toms. And then of course the benefits of it were--kind of speak for themselves, because you have that hi-fidelity tone that only a condenser mic can give you.

Mix: What did you do with the kick?
Pinske: The kick drum we would use two mics. In fact, it was a double-miking technique that we actually developed with Jonathan Moffatt, that John Goode and I experimented with when--oh, geez, I don't know if it was when he was first getting ready with Madonna, or if it was the "Thriller" tour. We tried these combinations of a AKG, a D-112, and an SM57. And you put them out of phase from each other. The SM57 would get the center beater noise, so it was more centered. And the D-112 would be aimed toward the side of the shell, so that we would get the low frequencies off the shell.

Mix: Are they both inside the drum?
Pinske: Yeah. Both inside the drum. Mounted inside the drum. And what we would do is, you'd blend them together, to where, if the 57 cartridge out of phase with the AKG, you could blend them together to a certain point, where you would have a nice, solid low end and a real punchy high end at the same time, without cancellation. And you kind of lock it into that kind of position, and you almost had--it really worked well as far as gating and everything else was concerned, because it had--when you gated it, it would have the full low end and the full high end that you wanted. And it kind of started out already with such a good sound, that all you had to do was fine-tune the EQ a little bit. And we developed that system. I think Randy May started using it later. I think he sold his systems that way. I think he still does today, as a matter of fact. I think he still uses the--you know, when you buy a Randy May, if you have Randy May outfit your kick drum, he'll outfit it the same way that John and I did. So we fine-tuned. We started it off with Jonathon Moffatt, but we fine-tuned it with Chad Wackerman. And this gave us a real consistent kick-drum sound.

Mix: Going back again to YAWYI, which was the next album after "Tinsel Town Rebellion", right?
Pinske: That's the first studio album, mm-hmm. All studio album.

Mix: Even third movement from "Sinister Footwear?"
Pinske: We played all that in the studio. "Sinister Footwear" was put together on a thing we called "Squidget," which was a nickname for Midget, which was a big E-mu thing that we did. And we performed it all, yeah, we performed "Sinister Footwear" all in there.

Mix: Then the band went out and did bits of the album on stage live, because I know on one of the live YCDTOSA, there's "Society Pages," "I'm A Beautiful Guy," "Beauty Knows No Pain," "Charlie's Enormous Mouth," all in sequence.
Pinske: Oh, we did those tour after tour after tour.

Mix: Whereas Zappa made the point that they were put together with monstrous overdubs and crazy edits, and that was half the fun, was trying to get the band to do all the edits.
Pinske: Well, yeah, segues, basically. He would do that all the time. They weren't done necessarily in any of that kind of order. We did that particular tour, we paid a lot of attention to YAWYI. But after that tour, when we went into other tours, it was more like just kind of revisiting it. Like one night, one session, we would do two or three of the songs on there. We never actually did all of those songs together again, for the most part. He would have a habit sometimes of doing "Jumbo Go Away," and "Suicide Chump" or something, or "Charlie's Enormous Mouth," that he would kind of just want to stick in there in some kind of special segue.

Mix: That was the last album Arthur Barrow was on, I guess. I guess he shows up later with "Tink Walks Amok." But that was an old track.
Pinske: Tink, yeah. Tink was his nickname. "Tink Walks Amok" was--he would come in the studio and overdub. Artie was the one who overdubbed a lot of the forward bass parts on "Ya Hozna" and "Won Ton On." He would come in every so often and play a little bit in the studio for us. Him and--we even got Patrick O'Hearn coming in there and playing stand-up bass one time, which was a real thrill for me. It was a real thrill for me to get together with, when we got Jimmy Carl Black back in, and Motorhead. Just being able to record with those guys, that I hadn't recorded with before. When they came back in to do something, it was just a real thrill for me to be able to be a part of that.

Mix: I guess the three albums that Warners put out, after "Live in New York," "Sleep Dirt," "Studio Tan," "Orchestral Favorites," they only came back to you after the Warners suit was settled, right?
Pinske: No. I'm trying to remember those.

Mix: Because "Studio Tan," which was an instrumental album, wound up with Thana Harris, Bob Harris's wife, she's overdubbed on "Spider of Destiny,"--
Pinske: I know what you're talking about now. That was on "Sleep Dirt." What had happened is, Frank had never--we worked quite a bit with Lisa Popeil, tried to sing those songs. And Lisa kind of almost got it. Frank would always say, "Almost, but not quite Boy George." But he just never was totally sold on her voice. And he was really frustrated, because every once in a while, when we tried to work those recordings, because he always wanted to finish them, so we'd pull them out from time to time and get somebody to sing on them. Well, I made a suggestion to him that Bob Harris's wife sang really well. So Bob and Thana came up to the studio. I called them up and they came up and they sang a little duet for Frank, a cappella, and he recognized something in Thana's voice that he

really liked. So we gave Thana a chance to sing on that stuff. And she was--Bob, of course read music perfectly, but Thana wasn't necessarily a music reader, so we let her take some of the tapes home, and then had Bob work with her on--because you know they were not exactly easy things to sing. And she came back in and we tracked them, and Frank just loved her voice. So we got her singing all that stuff. "Spider of Destiny." "Flambé." She did a great job on "Flambé." And I tracked her voice on all of that stuff, but we didn't necessarily mix it at that time, but we did have it in the can, so to speak. We had the tracks done. I think Bob did a lot of the remixing on that stuff, if I remember correctly. I mainly just tracked all the vocals and got a lot of it in the can. We did rough mixes and stuff.

Mix: Looking at the album cover, it says, "Copyright 1979 and 1991, Barking Pumpkin," so that kind of implies that it was--'79 was obviously the original release, and so it didn't come out again until '91.
Pinske: It didn't come out until '91, but we finished all that stuff in about, oh, that must have been '83, '84. When they got tired of Lisa, we tracked Thana. In fact, we did some mixes then, and put them in the vault along with the "Crush All Boxes" stuff that I never saw again. And I know that Chris, what's his name? Skip Clouseau? The engineer that they hired after both Bob and I were gone?
Mix: Spencer Chrislu?
Pinske: Spencer, yeah. His job was to take a lot of that stuff that we had in the vault and recompile a lot of that stuff. He would just take stuff that we had done with Frank over all these periods of time, and try to take a lot of the stuff that we meant to be released. Like they did that John Lennon tape on one of the albums. And Frank always said he was never going to release that. Because he always felt it was taking advantage of John. But I remember doing three or four mixes of the 16-tracks of "Baby, Please Don't Go." It was a great live moment. Except when Yoko would squawk in the background. We'd always joke about that. But John Lennon sitting in at the Fillmore, man. It was unbelievable.

Mix: There's also a note on some of the Web sites to the effect that "Orchestral Favorites" wound up with the stereo image reversed between the LP and the CD. Do you know anything about that?
Pinske: There was some serious mistakes made on some of the mastering. I don't know if somebody just got too tired, or what happened on that. But I know when Bob ended up redoing some of those CDs, see he wasn't aware, because I had left, Chad and I had left, oh, what was it, in '87, and went to work with Men at Work. We went on tour with Men at Work, Chad Wackerman and myself. So Bob was kind of left to do a lot of that stuff for Rhino, and he wasn't really there when we did a lot of the original stuff, so he was just kind of flying by the seat of his pants, and just doing it whatever way he felt like doing it. Unfortunately, what they did do, I think, is I think--in his defense--I think they put him under a lot of pressure, and he had to come up with a big library really quick. And as you know, when you've got a library as big as Frank's, and you're just supposed to all of a sudden take all these masters and make CDs out of them, they probably ran a lot of them through what's kind of a normal compression setting, or something like that, and just kind of passed a lot of them through real quick. And that's what a lot of them sound like, too. They got mastered too quick, basically, with not necessarily all the best interests at heart. Which we had when we were doing each project originally. It was only that album we were thinking about. So I think when they started doing those CD releases, they kind of got--I think Frank used to use the term "homogenized." Or "cheese food." They ended up kind of sounding all too--thrown together in a way. Not to mention that, when we did have 2-track analog masters, we did so many different varieties, whether we had Telefunken C4D on some of them, not too many of them, and then we had Dolby encoded. And then we had

half track masters that had no noise reduction, well all of those analog tape ones that weren't done on digital suffered from being stored so long. So I imagine that the original dynamic range, and the tone of the cymbals and everything else all suffered by the time he ended up trying to remaster some of it. Which is kind of a shame. Because some of that stuff should have been archived that wasn't, after I left, which is stuff I hadn't gotten to. Should have probably been put into a digital medium immediately, in its original shape. See, my theory was this: If you take the original tape, and you put it into a digital medium, as close as you can, as well preserved as you can, you can always crew with it later. But at least you have the original recording, the way it was. Preserved in the truest sense of the fashion of the way it was done originally. Because there's always something there that comes out. And if you screw with it too much when you do these transfers, you end up losing al lot of the essence of the original recording. So I always tried to transfer stuff in its purest form, and then just screw with it later when you mix it.

Mix: Got any stories about how Scott Thunes and Chad Wackerman wound up in the band?
Pinske: Chad auditioned. And we actually auditioned 31 drummers. We had auditioned him twice. We couldn't find a drummer to replace Vinnie Colaiuta. Scott, however, when we auditioned for him, Artie Barrow had left--actually, he came in, too, at the same time, we had Jeff Berlin in there for a short time. We never made it on tour with Jeff Berlin, but Jeff Berlin was in there playing with Vinnie Colaiuta. Both of them decided they wanted an enormous amount of money, and special treatment, and all this kind of stuff, which didn't kind of fit in to the book. And I think Vinnie, to Vinnie's defense, he also got a lot of contracts in town, playing on television shows, and film soundtracks, and that kind of thing. He was pretty much a hired gun around L.A. so he had some very good paying jobs with lots of royalties and stuff.

Mix: Did the band make money when they were working for Frank? They were paid sensibly, presumably, but were they paid--
Pinske: They were paid very well. They made money when we went on tour very well, and they made money when we did session work. But keep in mind, I was the only one on salary, so when we came off the road, a lot of the musicians'd have to go on unemployment or something. They didn't get salaried around the year. They only got salaried when we traveled, or when they did studio work, they got paid. So a lot of them really wanted to do studio work. Well, unfortunately, more of the live recordings we did meant that there would be less studio work. Because we would use a lot of the live tapes, and we might bring somebody like Chad in, or somebody to do some overdubbing, like Ed Mann, or Artie Barrow. But for the most part, most of the overdubbing was done for vocals with Ray and Ike and Bob Harris, or whoever. And of course, Steve Vai was the master of overdubs. He would just sit right next to me at the board, and we would invent guitar parts. [Laughs.] And he could play anything. It was unbelievable. That was a really joyous time on that. But the musicians got paid pretty well. Not millions of dollars, but thousands of dollars a week. Plus they got their per diem and their expenses all covered. It wasn't like they weren't paid well. But as you know, if you're making $2- or 3,000 a week on the road, and then all of a sudden you come off and you're getting nothing, it doesn't take long for that to just dissipate. And with guys like Bobby Martin, he would have another gig lined up. We'd come back, and he'd go out with Bette Midler. And some of the other guys. And Bob Harris went and did Warren Zevon, and some of these other people. So the real smart guys would go out and do some other tours. And of course, Chad Wackerman would play with Allan Holdsworth, I did one Alan Holdsworth album, "Road Games," with him. He would go out and play with Allan Holdsworth all the time. Not to mention different jazz gigs and stuff like that. So most of those musicians would keep themselves busy.

Mix: Scott Thunes, was his first thing doing the bass overdub on "Valley Girl?" Oh, no, you said already, it was Artie Barrow who did that, wasn't it?
Pinske: No, no, no. I think "Valley Girl," I think was Artie, wasn't it? Yeah, that was Artie Barrow. Yeah. Arthur Barrow played the bass on that album. No, Scott's first thing wasn't overdubbing. He came in about the same time Chad Wackerman came in, to do live bass, to do live gigs.

Mix: So in '81, it looks like.
Pinske: No. Scott would have been later than that. We went to the European leg, maybe. Let's see, when did Vinnie leave? I'm trying to remember, because--

Mix: Vinnie left and came back again, right? Because David Logeman started the tour in--
Pinske: Actually, as a matter of fact, you may be right, because what had happened is, '82 is more I think when Scott came in, because Scott did play on the "Drowning Witch" album, and that's where Artie Barrow kind of phased out. See, Artie went and worked with Giorgio Moroder, and Artie and I did a couple things together, too, by the way, on the side. When he was doing the "Flashdance" movie and that kind of stuff. And Artie went and played keyboards for Giorgio Moroder down at his studio, and he kind of got pulled away to do film soundtracks and stuff. He wasn't like quitting the band, or anything, he just had other stuff he was doing. So Scott kind of came in at the end of '81 and then '82. Right. That's when he came in. He came in pretty much right around when Chad did. Because I know we were making this joke about having three 21-year-olds in the band. Three 20-year-old and 21-year-old. Both Scott--you had Scott Thunes, you had Chad Wackerman, and you had Steve Vai, and they're all young guys.

Mix: How old were Ray and Ike? 20s?
Pinske: Now you got me. I think Ray was pretty much my age, and Ike was--Ike was young, too. Ike was young when he started with Frank, but Ike was a few years older. Like when I did the first tours with Ike, we were always kidding him, because he always wore a hat, and he was like the kid of the band. And then, of course, once Chad and--that was when we had Vinnie and Tommy Mars and everybody, and Ed Mann, but once we got off that European tour, and the other guys came in, well, Ike wasn't the kid anymore. So he was three or four years older than them. And then Ray, I think, was another three or four years older than Ike. Kind of between Frank and Ike. He didn't show his age, though. He wore his age very well.

Mix: How old are you?
Pinske: I was born in 1949.

Mix: So you're older than me.
Pinske: I'm older than you are, probably. And probably ten or twelve years younger than Frank. At that time, anyway, I was pretty much in my prime, but 51-year-old.

Mix: I know, it creeps up on you, doesn't it?
Pinske: Yeah. [Laughs.] I remember this stuff like it was yesterday, though. Because it was such--it was such a joyous job. I enjoy what I'm doing now. Now I'm general manager of two divisions here at Peavey. They're both professional divisions that do professional core products, and also professional digital DSP products.

Mix: When did you start at Peavey?
Pinske: I started at Peavey two years ago. Just a little over two years ago. I came up here and interviewed for a job. I had built a studio down in Florida, with some of the money I'd

made with Frank and whatnot. The studio's still there, Skylab Studios. There's a link to it from my site. My ex-partner there is running the place now. I still have some equipment in it, but I'm pretty much not involved with the studio at all. I got soured out on doing all the studio stuff. Especially doing more amateur recording, you know what I mean? Building a studio out of the way in Florida was not the greatest idea I had. I went back out and did a lot of touring. I went out and toured even in 1995, with Terence Trent D'Arby. And I'd go out and do some tours every so often, just for fun. Steve brought me back out with David Lee Roth in between on one tour, the "Eat 'Em and Smile" tour. So every once in a while I'd go out and do some tours, but I was mainly doing studio work, and I just, to tell you the honest truth, I got so beaten up by recording so much. I lost track of how many albums I did. The last time I counted was somewhere around like 160, 184 albums. Not that I wouldn't want to take my name off the first 20. But I had done a lot of death-metal albums, a lot of rap albums, stuff like this that came through. Every so often some good stuff would come through. Like with Tico Torres from Bon Jovi came and recorded down there, on Al DiMeola's percussionist Gumby Ortiz's album. And every once in a while we'd do a good project. I got to do River Phoenix, before he died. I did all his recording for him. And I had spurts in there that were a lot of fun. But for the most part, I just got saturated with it. I started listening to talk radio, and I got real tired of the music business, and I decided I'm just not going to do any of this sound stuff any more. So at that point, I kind of went back to my other roots, that I talked to you before, when I worked at Quad-8 electronics out in California. And I ended up running a manufacturing line there, and I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed working with audio product, because audio products is what I been around all my life. The touring gear, speakers, amplifiers, processors, and of course being with somebody like Frank, you were always trying to stay on top of the latest, newest digital processors and stuff. So my knowledge of always working with the latest, greatest gizmos, that kind of started very seriously, and having a chance to experiment with the most expensive stuff, kind of brought me in to where I wanted to be able to help design some products, use my background, and see if I could help manufacturers bring some stuff out that's a little bit more hip. And a little bit better quality that the real, true engineer, or consultant, if you will, or contractor, would really appreciate. Being able to have stuff that might have a little bit better quality, a little bit finer tuning increments, things for doing time aligning, whatever. So I was able to get involved with Peavey because they had a couple new divisions that they were developing. Architectural Acoustics, and Mediamatrix. Well, Mediamatrix is pretty much well on its way. It does all the main stadiums, and the Olympics, and House of Representatives, and this kind of stuff. It's all digitally controlled routing systems. And it's got a pretty good reputation. But Architectural Acoustics needed some help, so I came in and helped them design some speakers to go after EAW. I designed some things, some different amplifiers, some new amplifiers that were very good amplifiers that would give you a lot more power for lower price. Things that would be competitive in the marketplace. I really kind of got my teeth into it, and things went well the first year and a half, so they kind of promoted me up. To where I was general manager of the whole architectural acoustics division, and then just recently, about two months ago, they put me in charge of the media matrix division as well, so now I'm over all the DSP development, as well as the regular analog core products. And this is really kind of a fun challenge for me. You could tell by talking to me that I'm able to use a lot of the chops that I did in the past and put it into a product that some other young engineer that's like me ten, twenty years ago that could probably blow my socks out of the water, may get some piece of equipment that I helped design or helped bring to them, and really appreciate it. I do little things, like, we got a DSP device we call the Digitool now, that's only going to start shipping in about another month, where you'll hear about it, you'll see it, we advertise it in all the magazines starting now, but it's a DSP device that isn't like a lot of them you buy. You know how you buy a multiprocessor, and it doesn't have the increments you want.

You might have a reverb setting maybe 1.2-second delay or 800, you go, "I want something between this." And you go the lesser of two evils. The setting you want isn't really there. So I put out a device that does all of this stuff, where the equalization you can adjust one Hertz at a time. So if you have a ring at 1627 Hertz. No screwing around. And it isn't until somebody gets their hands on it and say, "Wow, somebody really thought of this. Somebody's giving me a tool now that I can use, that wasn't like this other thing I've always had to put up with. I can go to the exact settings on my compressor, on my noise gate, on my equalizer, on my delay." Delay, for instance, on this device, goes up to 5 seconds, increments of 1 millisecond at a time, and fine tuning at 999 milliseconds--microseconds. So if you want to time align a pair speakers, you can get right down to the exact microsecond. Now somebody won't appreciate that until they're actually doing it, and they'll say, "Oh, man, I don't have to jump 10ms up or 10ms down, I can actually set it exactly where it needs to be, to where the phase matches up." So I kind of was able to get those kind of things kind of off my chest. You know how you have that chip on your shoulder all those years, and now I'm able to put some of the things I learned into a device. And I find it very rewarding. They're giving me good support. Allowing me to do some things. You may say it's an overkill, or an off-the-wall, but when you're a professional, such as yourself, you know we have special needs, right? [Laughs.]

Mix: Now you're back in a management role--two divisions, and you're working with designers and manufacturing, marketing, and pricing.
Pinske: The whole cigar. Being the general manager, I'm over all of it. But I kind of get to go around assembly lines if I want to, and sit down with the engineers and knock out everything from the looks to the--this whole new device I'm telling you about, this Digitool is 8 in and 8 out, it's a device that had everything from noise gates to parametric EQs to compressors, and the whole thing's going to sell for 800 bucks. So we're talking about something that's revolutionary.

Mix: Are you going to debut it at NSCA, or before then?
Pinske: Oh, NSCA we're going to demonstrate four of them, in a big demo room. We're going to have it, and we have our own, I also developed a thing called the Freak Out, which is a feedback eliminator. But it's way more sophisticated than your typical Sabine product. If you put a whole bunch of filters in on Sabine product, and then you talk through it, your voice'll sound one way, and you hit the filters in and it sounds like somebody put a hand over it. What we did is we came up with some real sophisticated algorithms with 16 separate filters that only filter out the necessary marginal part. It's only 3 dB needs to be filtered out. Once you program it, you hit the filters, and you don't actually hear a difference in tone, and it works so fast you don't every really get a squeal. You get nothing more than a chirp, just sticking a microphone right in the speaker. So we had some of our best algorithm designers spend, oh, Lord, eight months alone just tweaking the algorithms on this thing. So we're real proud of it. It'll be a device you get for a couple hundred bucks. Some of those kind of things are going to be, hopefully become used a lot, and make a difference.

Mix: You stopped working for Frank in '87, because you moved on, or you got bored, or do you want to talk about it?
Pinske: A couple of different things. He wasn't really planning on doing any more touring, even though he ended up going and doing the '88 tour, he wasn't really--he started to get a little bit ill, but the main thing is that we just kept recycling a lot of the old tapes, which as you know went on for years even after I left, and releasing the same old songs, and the same old things. And I had a chance to make a considerable bit of more money, is what

happened. I went and worked with Men at Work, and then I went and hooked up with Bobby Brown and Bel Biv Devoe.

Mix: As engineer, or live sound?
Pinske: I went and did live sound with those guys.

Mix: And you could make more money?
Pinske: It was great. They paid me a huge amount of money, and I just flew out and did the Budweiser fest with them. A friend of mine called me up and said they needed a paratrooper, they'd gone through something like five or six sound men. And the New Edition was having trouble, and they needed somebody that could go to these different shows and work different systems. Like I would go into a fair and there would be a Showco system, or Audio Analysts or Clair Bros. They didn't travel with their own sound--the systems were all waiting there for them.

Mix: This was for New Edition?
Pinske: Yeah. The first thing I did was, Chad and I went off on a little tour, we went down to Australia and worked with Men At Work. We did that for quite a while. And then right when I got off of that tour, I was down there like 12, 13, 14 weeks or something, we were down there, and then this production manager that I used to know on the road called me up and said that New Edition needed somebody to come out and do some stuff with them, and I went and did them off and on for the next two-and-a-half, three years. And I also went in the studio with them. I did some recording with them. And then I did--Bobby Brown was pretty much asked to leave the band, and then he did his own "King of Stage" album, so I went and did a "King of Stage" tour with Bobby Brown. And got to know those guys pretty well. Then what I did was, we were down in Florida, and I went back to Gainesville, Florida, which is where I went to college, originally, and I built a studio there out of some of the money I'd saved up, and kind of overspent building a studio, which is now called Skylab Studios down there in Florida.

Day Three – part Two

Mix: How much did it cost?
Pinske: $880,000 we put into the studio. It has a Sony digital 24-track, of course. A lot of the stuff that I had used with Frank and all that.

Mix: Going back to Frank, how do you spend $3.5 million?
Pinske: That was a number that came out of the air that I was told that the studio cost. I think the bulk of the cost was Rudy Brewer, who designed the studio, he'd just done a studio for Captain and Tennille, or somebody like that. That was a real popular thing. And then George Augspurger also got hired to do some redesign in it. But he had all the most expensive mics, the most expensive equipment, the most expensive foundation, a floating piston underneath the control room. The whole building was done "spare no expense." So it was really quite elaborate. In fact, the studio was unbelievably elaborate for a privately owned studio. It was more like something you would see at the brand-new opening commercial studio.

Mix: It's kind of puzzling, because he'd had that Studio Z in Cucamonga that he got from Paul Buff, and then he lost that--
Pinske: Down on Cucamonga Boulevard? That wasn't really his studio. Paul Buff and Les Paul, I think, were in that. Frank did a lot of recording, and was directly involved with that.

Mix: It would seem the last thing he wanted to do was be a studio owner again. But at some point he must have figured that rather than paying Village Recorders and KenDun all this money--
Pinske: That was a lot of it. The bills were enormous. I see what you're getting at. Basically, he wanted to have complete control, and he wanted to have freedom of how much time it took for him to do something the way he wanted to do it, and do it right. Instead of always having to do it under the gun because he's getting the charge of this enormous amount of money, on a per-hour basis. Like when we remixed the "Baby Snakes" album, we did that at Complete Post Productions out there, on Burbank. We were paying 430 bucks an hour. And I basically told those guys, I engineered that whole thing by myself, while a lot of these guys played ping-pong. And I just told them, "It isn't that I don't think you have a really great facility here, it's just no place is worth 430 bucks an hour because you can't get that much done in one hour." And that's really a lot of what it was. The bills turned out to be enormous from that endeavor. But it wasn't as though Frank wasn't making money now. Like I said, the royalties that he got on an album were far above what anybody else got. And he cut some very good deals, and his manager did a good job on these tours. We played a lot of small places in America, but when we went overseas, they were all huge venues. Really very large venues.

Mix: One of the musicians on a Web site said that on one of the European tours they were basically going around the same circuit as the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead and outselling them.
Pinske: Absolutely. We would play an 18,000-seat place and it'd be sold out. When I first went over there, on the first European trip, I think it was before we got the truck, in the fall of 1980, I think we did one European leg, when I got over there, it was like opening up a door. It really was strange, for me, because we had come from America, where we had done these little Tower Theaters, these little 3,000-seat places. And then all of a sudden we're over there playing these huge venues. As a matter of fact, the first time I walked up the plane--this is no kidding, I think YAWYI had just come out then, I think--and I walked up the plane and somebody came up to me and asked me for my autograph, and I told the person, "No, I'm not in the band, I just travel with the band." And the guy said, "Well, you're Mark Pinske, right?" And I said, "Well, yeah, I'm Mark Pinske." And he said, "Well, what kind of mic did you use on the third cut of YAWYI on Ray White's guitar?" Which happened to be "Doreen." And I thought, what the heck is this? These people had listened to the album, and they knew what they were talking about. It was kind of scary. I think that was the first time I ever signed an autograph on my life. I told him he could probably get a burger at McDonald's for it. I told him it really wasn't worth anything. But nonetheless, it was a shocker for me, because what had happened is, I realized I was in a different room all of a sudden. It's like opening up these doors and watching all these people freak out, and then when you get back to America, it was like closing the doors again. So Frank, worldwide, or in Europe in particular, was a whole other experience. The fans knew what they were talking about. They knew what they were listening to. In a lot of way it inspired me. I can't even tell you how much it inspired me, because if somebody knew the work you did, and then heard some of the stuff you did, and knew the difference, it gave you the feeling, you get this enormous feeling that it was all worth it. Every little thing you could do was worth it.

Mix: When you went to Europe, did you take your own P.A. equipment over, or did you rent it all there?
Pinske: No, no. We took our own P.A. with us. We bought lights. Frank usually didn't rent anything. We bought LSD lighting. Simon, over there in London, with LSD Lighting, we'd

buy a lighting system from him, use it for the tour, and then sell it back to him at the end of the tour. So we'd buy light sets, but we took our own P.A. system.

Mix: Which was the Meyer system?
Pinske: Yeah. We bought the very first Meyer system, and took it all around Europe, I think, gee whiz, on two or three tours around Europe.

Mix: How many cabinets? These are the MSL3s, right?
Pinske: MSL3s, and four subs a side. We'd usually fly about, depending on the size of the venue--the bigger venues we would use backup, so we'd travel like 18 MSL3s per side, normally, with about four of the dual 18 subs. Then we had a center cluster as well. And we had racks and racks and racks of A and B amplifiers. But what we would do in big venues--even in the States, when we'd do something like Madison Square Garden, we would hire somebody like Clair Bros. to give us a backup, where we'd put delay towers. And then we would sync up the delay towers along with it. Now, over there, I think the first year we did Santana did a couple shows with us, we did I think Turbosound we used as backup. And they would come in, we'd have our Meyer P.A., and then we would delay lock in some backup systems on the real, real big places.

Mix: Did you have any problems getting 18 cabinets a side to combine properly? Sounds like a lot.
Pinske: No. We usually had two or three tiers. Like I said, it would vary, depending on how much backup we would use, how many we would hang. We had a special hanging grid. It is a lot. But normally we would try to arc three layers of six, or something like that. Sometimes we would just hang maybe 12 of them, depending on how wide the venue was. Sometimes we'd play in a tent, or something, obviously we wouldn't fly then, we would just stack. So it would change from venue to venue sometimes. But normally we had an elaborate flying grid that was really nice. And the Meyer stuff dispersed really well. The general setup, I think, over average, would be two banks, on bank aiming out and another bank aimed somewhat down, in a full arc, which I think was six a bank, normally, arched six at a time. And then sometimes we would hang three more off to the side, aiming sideways, depending on how far the seats would wrap around the venue. We always tried to keep it so it would screw up the stage.

Mix: What console were you using in about '81, '82.
Pinske: On the front of house? We continued to use the Midas consoles. We had a good thing going with Midas. We used the Midas consoles in the house. We even had a custom Midas, and gee whiz, there was another one we had made up for the monitors now, I'm trying to remember. It had 18 outs on it. And I had one custom Midas that was in that dumb Polaroid that I sent you. You couldn't see it very well, I apologize for those pictures, they're just Polaroids, but they made us some real nice, custom stuff, that had LEDs right next to the faders, so you could see the signal path coming in. We used a lot of Midas consoles for the house.

Mix: How was the monitor setup? Was there conventional wedges and sidefills?
Pinske: Monitoring got to be somewhat elaborate. Pretty much conventional wedges and sidefills, but Frank, like I said, would use 2 MSL3s on each side for his sidefills. [Laughs.] Not many people were using Meyers just for sidefills. But normally, wedges, and then what we did with--we got smarter as we went along. We took a lot of the system that used to be what we called the original dinosaur system that Frank owned, which is the JBL stuff, like your typical two 15s and a cabinet with a horn and a bullet tweeter, and we would lay them underneath the stage. Like for the keyboard players, they might have two of those

cabinets, and they would actually have a metal grid that they stood on, and the cabinets would be underneath them, so it would fire straight up on them. And that way it wasn't always deafening everybody else that was walking around in front of them. Or the old try to [end of side.]

Mix: How did you cope with the vocal mics? Because if you had three or four of them on the front line, that must have been hard to keep the drums out of them.
Pinske: Especially with as loud as Frank liked his sidefills. It was not a picnic. The guys were real good, Ray and Ike and everybody was real good at staying on their mic. We gated them, of course, as much as we could. I used the Quad-Eight NS120 noise gates, which is film gate, by the way. And the reason I used those was because I could go down 110 dB dynamically, but they didn't work like a conventional gate, like a Valley gate, like a Keypex 2. What they did was they had an FET transistor that just turned on. So they turned on instantly at full volume. And this way they didn't ramp up. You didn't have the rise time of the ramp. You had variable capacitors, so you had kind of a curvature to the slope, so you would have a release time and a curvature, a little bit like what a Drawmer would do, but better than a Drawmer, because say you had a tom-tom, and you were gating it, there would be a contour by a selection of five different types of capacitors, and the contour would follow the decay of the sound of the drum, for instance. So you would have a release time, and even after the release time was up, the contour would follow the decay. Because of this, the leakage of something like cymbals would decay with the sound. So say you'd have a hit on the drum it goes "doooooom." Well, the gate would follow the "doom" perfectly, and the leakage would go down with it. And it would sound like there was basically no leakage there at all. And there were no gates, really, in the world that would do that. Most gates would just hold for a release, and then they would either be a steep slope that would cut off, you know like on a kick drum or something, or they would stay open too long and you would get a lot of leakage. So what I did is I bought five racks of these Quad-Eight gates, because you had the FET transistor, which gave you instant full on, and you had variable decay that was really--really catered to the instrument, or the voice, in the case of--especially, the voice could say something, it wouldn't miss the enunciation of the vowel sounds of any of the--on the microphone like you might on certain types of gates. So this was a lot of the trick to how we got such good, isolated live mics.

Mix: Were you using 57s on the front line, mainly?
Pinske: Frank would use a 57, but we ended up using some AKG mics as well, because we had an AKG endorsement. As a matter of fact, I don't know if you read about this or not, but we actually put an SM57 cartridge inside one of the AKG condenser mics. Because we tried all these condenser mics out on Frank, and then the batteries would start dead, and he didn't like the way they sounded. He said, "Man, can't I just use a 57? My voice sounds good on a 57." So we kind of stuck a 57 capsule inside of an AKG mic, so there was a couple of pictures that were in some of the magazines where he's holding the AKG mic, but he actually had a 57 element inside.

Mix: What about Ray and Ike, and whoever else was singing? They were on the AKGs?
Pinske: We using on AKGs. AKG had made a lot of really good microphones, and it wasn't hard for us to find a family of them that worked very well. With Ray and Ike, it was quite easy, because normally they didn't--they didn't usually take the mics off the stand. Like Frank was always walking around with his mic. Those guys, the mics would stay pretty stationary. We had them going on their own track of the multitrack, anyway. So when it came right down to it, later on, you could just mute the track.

Mix: There's a fairly significant different between the mix of the band on the guitar album, say, and the live albums where there's people singing all the time, not surprisingly. There's much more isolation.
Pinske: Yeah. That whole guitar album that they put together, that I did all the live recordings on, that guitar release was put together after I left. That was kind of a diff--it's kind of strange for me to listen to some of these things that were put together after I left, off of recordings that I made.

Mix: Because they're mixed very differently from how you heard them at time?
Pinske: Yeah, mixed differently, plus you don't know how much anything might have deteriorated. We still had a lot of live analog tapes. We didn't get the digital machine into the truck, I think, until the '84 tour. And the '84 tour, by the way, that's one of the reasons why the recordings from that album were significantly better than anything else we did, ever, ever in history. So if you go to--you know that one link I gave you that says, "Venues?" If you check the '84 tour on that, you'll find some interesting stuff. There's actually a link in there, too, that talks about that song I told you about that was written about me called, "Carrie, You Fool." A notation on there about when Frank was telling the audience about--I think it was August in '84, when he was telling the audience about what the song was about. He was giving them the story. It was kind of funny. He explains that the song was about Mark Pinske in there. I found that kind of funny.

Mix: It's about a girl who wants to follow the band to the next gig, and Frank sings, "You'll find another engineer?"
Pinske: Yeah. "You'll find another engineer someday." Actually, the girl named Carrie Mellon in Pittsburg. Carol Mellon was her name, and Frank introduced me to her--actually, we were at this hotel in Pittsburgh, and Frank called me down to have a drink with him, and I went down there and he was talking to the manager. So we couldn't go up to Frank's suite because the manager working the hotel couldn't go there, so he asked the girl if there might be somebody that she knew that we could just go out and have a drink with her, have a date with, you know. So she called up Carrie and said, "Oh, yeah, Frank Zappa and me and his sound man are coming over to pick you up," and Carrie just said, "Oh, yeah, sure, right. Frank Zappa, right." So we pulled up in front of her house with a limo. [Laughing.] Which was pretty funny. And we just went out and did a few things, and then Frank kind of wrote a song about this girl. [Laughs.] And the events that happened that night. Later on, she bought me a cashmere sweater. And she wanted to steal some money from this Mexican guy. She got to be kind of a little problem, later. Nonetheless--I realized then for the first time in my life that a lot of Frank's songs were actually true stories about--

Mix: Seems that way. I was going to ask you about "Luigi and the Wise Guys," which sounds like a really quite vicious attack on somebody in the crew that nobody particularly liked.
Pinske: It was, actually. He had this little--well, Tony was his name. They liked him, but the wise guys was kind of--the guys that hung around got to be known and "the wise guys," Luigi and the wise guys at the table. And Frank was always--and the same thing, he did the same thing with "Marque-son's Chicken," because he used to fly a rubber chicken over the monitor mixer. So he wrote this song called "Marque-son's Chicken." You know, when you go through all this stuff and you realize that a lot of it--to me one of the most interesting things he wrote was when he did "The Mudd Club," or the Coneheads, from "Saturday Night Live." He would write these songs about these skits, and he would get into this unbelievable descriptions of the people that were there that night or something. We even went back and played the Mudd Club. [Laughs.] There was no way to record it, it was just a little three-foot stage.

Mix: I think he's actually got some sort of 2-track recording on one of the live tracks from one of the live albums from the Mud Club.
Pinske: I remember running something through a cassette, or something. But it was just a little mixer in a bar that you had no control of. Pretty much just a live mic hanging in the room. But it wasn't anything you could do to get quality. [Laughs.] But nonetheless it wasn't always about quality. It was about the incident, right?
Mix: Mike Kenneally relates an incident in which somebody managed to pour a glass of beer from a balcony onto the front-of-house console. This is in New York, on the '88 tour. Anything like happen to you?
Pinske: I think in that article he talks about somebody yelling, "Bring back Pinske."

Mix: It does. That's exactly what he says.
Pinske: I know which one you're talking. On the original Halloween tours, there was a group of people that hung around me. I had some really good live mixes going on, in those days, with those shows. I was really dedicated, and we really had it down to a science. So there were some people that really were spoiled as far as getting some really top-quality shows as far as our sound quality was at these shows. Frank was real picky about them. That was one of the benefits of working with him so long. When you know the song so well, for instance, there was one show we did in New York, I think it was at Madison Square Garden, where we decided to not use the recording truck. Because they wanted to charge us--they wanted us to pay $5,000 per show--the union wanted us to pay $5,000 per show for the privilege of recording our own material. That was the term they used. And Frank was totally mad about it. He said, "Mark," he said, "you're going to mix the house tonight, because no way am I going to give these guys the money just because of the principle of it." He said we record every minute that he's onstage, every show that we did. We didn't necessarily need to have that show on tape, because we had plenty of other shows on tape, so he decided "you're going to mix the house" that night. And of course, for me, when I would have a chance to go back out and mix the house, it was really a gas, because I was in the truck all the time, after that. So I would get the chance to go out and mix on the Meyer system, which was like heaven on Earth for me, because originally when I started, we had this dinosaur system that really sucked. So when I had a chance to go out and do a mix on the Meyer system, I would just go out there and jazz it all up. I might do a little more pizzazz-y mix, with more effects and stuff, because I just knew where every little nuance of the songs were. And I must admit, probably the best--I had the best mixing chops in those days than I had in my whole career. So those shows were a treat, got to be kind of a treat with some of the audiences, and little local reviews would come out about them and stuff like that. So what had happened is, these people started this little thing about wanted Pinske to mix all the shows. And Frank was getting kind of tired of this whole routine, and I think Kenneally was just kind of referring back to the fact that some of those guys were still around. Get a gun and shoot 'em, or something. [Laughs.]

Mix: You didn't have any disasters like that? You never lost a mixing console in the middle of a show?
Pinske: No. We had one guy fall out of a balcony one time, but he was OK. And I also did have some disasters in the recording truck, power supply went out right before we were going to go on live on satellite one time. Or the power supply blow up on one of the multitrack machines. I had things like that happen in the recording truck, but live-wise, the biggest problem we usually had there was just--people keeping away from the console. People would set drinks on it and stuff like that. But I didn't have one actually pour into the console. That must have been Harry--was Harry doing that show?
Mix: I don't know. Was he a mixer who was doing--
Pinske: He was a friend of Marque Coy's. I think he brought him on board to do that '88

tour, because I wasn't available then. I was tied up then, at that time. I didn't go back because actually I was just--you get into moving on.

Mix: We were talking about that. After you went off with New Edition, you struck out on your own as a front-of-house guy? No, you went back to Florida and built a studio.
Pinske: Yeah. I built a studio, but I still did some front-of-house--I did all those front-of-house shows. I've always enjoyed front-of-house mixing. That's originally where I started in the first place. We had talked about that briefly the first time I talked to you. And I always enjoyed front-of-house because there's nothing like the excitement of the front of the house, especially when you think you can make a difference. So, I always felt I was a good front-of-house mixer, and it was a lot of fun for me to do, so every once in a while--it's like a musician trying to stop playing, I guess.

Mix: You play something, right?
Pinske: I played bass guitar, and a little drums. I played when I was going to college, I played in bands.

Mix: And out of that, you wound up as the guy doing the P.A. and the recording and the mixing?
Pinske: Right. Kind of the guy around town that did the recording and mixing. To put it quite bluntly, I just happened to be a lot better engineer than I ever was a musician. [Laughs.] I think somebody told me that at one time. "You really ought to just stick to--" you know how Frank put it me? I don't know if I told you this, but you know how if you're a musician, and you feel like you're getting too old to be a musician or you give it up and you feel like you're giving up some creative essence or something, you know, you've heard this a lot. And then Frank told me, he said, "Mark, look at it this way. There are far less creative engineers than there are creative musicians." So he kind of looked at me as a creative engineer, is the way he put it. I asked him if he was just trying to make me feel better. [Laughs.] But it was a kind of interesting way of putting it. He was really true. It's really true. And engineering in itself is kind of--you have a chance to be very creative, as well, if you really apply yourself. And that's what I was trying to do.

Mix: Can you read music?
Pinske: Yes. I can read. I'm not a fast reader.

Mix: But you can follow a score?
Pinske: Yeah. And I had to. You had to with Frank.

Mix: It's been reported fairly widely that "Ship Arriving Too Late to Save a Drowning Witch" was supposedly made up of 15 different performances.
Pinske: As a matter of fact, he did that a lot, on a lot of stuff. We would have the actual sheet music out, especially with Steve Vai and a lot of those guys, and Tommy Mars, and we would go by bars, and he would say, "At Bar 128, bring in some reverb effects," or something like that. So I had to pay attention. But I'm not a--he always said that there were two best readers that ever worked for him, was Vinnie Colaiuta and Tommy Mars. Tommy Mars was pretty much known as "Hawkeye," and Vinnie, he said, could read anything you put in front of him. He would just chicken scratch something on a piece of paper, and Vinnie could just play it immediately. When he tried musicians out--there's no way I could keep up with any of those kind of guys, but I knew where we were in the pieces, and I could tell what the melody lines were, and the bass lines. Enough to know what I needed to know. Especially when we started doing a lot of the orchestration stuff, because we would go back and cut certain sections.

Mix: I was going to ask you about the assembly of the LSO sessions from the multitracks. You came back to Los Angeles with your multitracks from the LSO, right? And you recorded 24-track digital, or was it 32-track?
Pinske: No, no. We did 24-track digital. There were two 24-track digital machines waiting for us over there. And there was two analog machines, as well. They were 3M 79 machines. And what I did, is, I had them, the guys--we rented the Island mobile truck, and I had the crew put together an extra snake so we could run both the machines, in a little room, simultaneously with the digital machines, because I had never used the digital machines before, and I wasn't totally trusting them. So the deal was, we recorded on both mediums simultaneously. In other words, we rolled both tapes all the time. And in a way I kind of liked doing the two, because I had an automatic backup, in case something went wrong. So when we got back to the States, machine number 3 that Sony made--those were machines 1 and 2, and machine number 3 we rented from Sony, I think for like a grand a day or something, so we could evaluate the tapes. And after about a month or two of working with machine, we bought one. We just bought one because we fell in love with it. And that's when--up until that point, we didn't have a lot of good experiences with a lot of the digital stuff. A lot of the first digital stuff was really bad.

Mix: You had been recording some digital stuff before that?
Pinske: Oh, sure. Mick Glossop, as a matter of fact--you talked about him before--he had done a live digital recording for us, off of one of those--I forget where it was--Hammersmith, or somewhere--you see notes to of Mick Glossop's live recordings? We did some digital recording and when he came back it was on a 1510 system, which later became 1520, and then 1530, Sony. The first ones had some really--they had American converters in there. But you listen to 10 or 15 minutes of them, and Frank made the comment, saying, "It's like 8k darts in your forehead." It just had this real brittle sound, that your ears felt very fatigued after a very short time of listening to it. So we were very let down by it, so to speak. It just didn't have the warmth that most of the analog recordings had. So we had a number of experiences along the way that didn't convince us that digital was the way to go.

Mix: But this new generation of Sony machines made it?
Pinske: Yeah. The new generation Dr. Doi, they spent $2.5 million developing their own converter. The way Dr. Doi put it me was it was 400 times the resolution in these converters that they had previously in any converters. And the Sony 3324 was the introduction of those converters. Later, they took those converters and put them into the 1630 systems, and the better mastering systems that Bernie Grundman and everybody else started using. But at that point, the 3324 was the first machine they were in. And I asked Dr. Doi, who invented pulse code modulation, by the way, I asked him, I said, "If I'm looking at a TV picture,"--I was looking at a screen--I said, "how much better is this picture?" In these converters than say the converters they had previously. And he looked at me and he pointed at the TV screen, and he said, "See blade of grass growing," he said. I said, "See blade of grass growing?" He said, "Yeah, see blade of grass growing." He was just trying to tell me that there would be so much better focus, and so much better definition, that you could actually see the blade of grass growing. And I thought to myself, "If you put it that way, it's got to be a lot better." And then I realized, honestly, I realized that for the first time in my life I was dealing with a converter that basically had no side effects. You could record up to +24 dB on those machines, you know. It wasn't like a 0 dB, like the Mitsubishis. It had all the headroom in the world. You could track your drums at +18 on an average. And then you could pad down your console, and it was just unbelievable. I actually even remember telling them that at point, they should call it something other than digital, because digital already had a bad name. [Laughs.] It really is

the most analog-sounding machine, digital machine, even to this day, I think. Of course a lot of people like Bob Clearmountain and everybody else are all using the 48-track now. And Barbra Streisand even. But originally, there wasn't very many people that were on board. But it really was a phenomenal breakthrough in the digital medium.

Mix: So when you came back with LSO tapes, first of all, you decided which ones you were going to mix, or did you just mix everything and see which ones were usable?
Pinske: Oh, no. We didn't mix anything. The first thing we needed to do was listen and edit. First we listened to the digital tapes, then we pulled out some of the analog tapes to compare them. It didn't take us very long, just a matter of hours, to where we just decided to put the analog tapes back in the vault because the tape hiss was driving us nuts. When you didn't have the tape hiss, there was no way that we wanted to hear some real light violin, or harp or something playing, and listen to the noise that we didn't need to listen to. And it accumulated over all 24 tracks. So then what we did, is I made a digital backup of all the tapes, like I talked to you about that I did later on as a regular, and then we took the digital backup and we razor-blade edited it. And Frank would go through the movements, and we might have 12 takes of one section, and he was looking for which piece they performed the best. And when they performed it the best, we would edit out that piece, and then tape it together to the one previous to it. And sometimes we'd go bar by bar, and sometimes we'd got movement by movement. There was a lot of edits. And we basically just assembled what Frank thought was the closest to the best performance of what he had in his head, as far as when he wrote it. But of course, you know as well as I do the nightmare there is, a true composer can almost not ever have it perfect. There's always somebody not playing. But what Frank got into is the character of the people, too. He let a viola player take a solo, for instance, and rather than play it like he wrote it, he told him to come up with his own solo, and he let him ad lib. And he loved it. That's the way Frank was. He would always use the talents of the musicians around him, and kind of somehow make them fit into the picture. That's where his true genius was, was being able to assemble things from not only the talents of the people, but the talents of the musicians and everything that was involved. He was able to assemble pieces out of the people that were all part of the puzzle. And I think that's what made some of his stuff so collectively unique.

Mix: I've got a release date here that says the first LSO album came out in June of '83. What was the reception like? Do you remember whether it got good reviews?
Pinske: It was a sad thing, because we couldn't sell it in the United States.

Mix: Why not?
Pinske: We had the contract with CBS Records. With CBS National Account--International Account--we had two different contracts with CBS, with CBS internationally and CBS domestically. And CBS International was suing CBS domestic, believe it or not. The two companies were suing each other. And they were the same company. And Frank's contract was one of them that was affected by it. So we couldn't release that album in the States when it came out. We only could release it overseas. Which dramatically affected the release of it. However, the reception of it was good. So, getting back to that, that's where Pierre Boulez heard the record, and liked it, and contacted Frank and asked him to do a piece for him or something. And that was I think one of Frank's happiest moments. We had Kent Nagano conducting that thing. The darn thing turned out pretty good. All in all. But as you know, Frank's classical taste was somewhat strange. [Laughs.] If you could have heard him explain what "Mo 'n' Herb's Vacation" was about, you would have died laughing. When he told the story--there's nobody like him telling the story. When he was trying to explain it to the orchestra that he was mad at both of them, so he did a gay scene

where they're walking down the beach with one of them had their hand on the other guy's rear and stuff, and he was really trying to rub it in, so they did this kind of island feel. But it was like him explaining a cartoon. And he was trying to make it really out there, right? And when he explained it, and then you listen to the way they played it, it all kind of made sense to you. But the average person listening to it wouldn't have any idea what the hell they're doing there, you know. He just got into characterizations like that. He would characterize something. He would always go for a little bit off the left wing. You know from just the way he is. But on the other hand, he was dead serious about it. There was a difference in his--there was a whole difference in his attitude about the classical stuff, so to speak, than there was about his normal stuff. And I found that was kind of a--it's like Chapter 300, or whatever. The whole time I was with him was just fascinating. It was absolutely fascinating.

Mix: You mentioned Pierre Boulez. A year later, in January '84, the Boulez pieces were recorded. Did you have anything to do with them?
Pinske: No. There was an engineer that worked with Boulez that he wanted to do those recordings. There was no reason to fight that. It was the kind of thing where Frank was just overwhelmed to be able to do some work with him. So it wasn't something that we were going to get involved with from the technical aspects like we would normally, and make a big deal about it. So they pretty much went with what they knew.

Mix: But the album that came out had four Synclavier pieces on it, which were presumably recorded at UMRK.
Pinske: Right. Most all of the Synclavier stuff I would have recorded. I'm not so sure that wasn't a mistake.

Mix: Mixing the Synclavier--
Pinske: Mixing--yeah. You know what I mean. If you look at a lot of those albums, Frank would do that. He would throw stuff in on an album that he didn't need to throw in on an album, and it would make the album a total different kludge of things.

Mix: I actually like the Boulez album a lot. But I see your point.
Pinske: The Synclavier stuff--like "Francesco Zappa," I must admit, was fun doing. Because it was interesting. First off, it was a minstrel that played kind of happy, what do you call it? In the medieval-century type, 100 years before Frank, happy minstrel music that was totally unlike Frank's music completely. But it was kind of unique, and it was kind of fun to do, when we programmed all that stuff in the Synclavier. And then when we played it, we all had fun doing it. Even Frank got a joy out of it. But I don't think a lot of people really understood why he did it. And in fact, David Ocker, I think, brought us a piece one day on that. He said, "I got this piece from a guy named Francesco Zappa." And we thought he was pulling our leg, you know? He got it from--I think it was, the what? The Mormon library or something. They were revering it in college, and then we noticed that it wasn't copyrighted. There was no--none of it was published. It was an unpublished piece. So Frank said, "Go fine out about this guy and see what else they had." Well, they found a whole bunch of stuff in the Mormon records, but there was a lot of pieces by this guy, and none of them were published. So Frank decided that he would publish them. So we had the publishing rights on them. Well, once we had the publishing rights on them, it only made sense to try to do something with it. And then it was kind of ironic that there was this musician that lived 100 years before Frank that had a traveling group in minstrels that traveled around Italy and Germany playing music. [Laughs.] It was just too ironic, or too much of a coincidence, so we decided that we would take these pieces and program them

into the Synclavier and try to do the instrumentation as true as we could to what we thought we saw there that was written.

Mix: In Frank's lifetime, a Synclavier was still viable, but it's a white elephant now, isn't it? In that NED has gone away.
Pinske: I don't know if it's a white elephant. I thing Dweezil still screws around with the one they had a little bit. But it probably is a white elephant now. It was archaic as far as how efficient sampling is now. But we really did take it to the extreme once we moved it up to the 100kHz sampling rate. We sampled every note of the Bosendorfer into the thing. And I think the low note was like 8 seconds long. Just so we could have the real piano sound on it. And we did some kind of elaborate things like that with it, that kind of made it more useful for us. Because you're right, the converters and everything else are far outdated now. It's just like talking about an old Fairlight or something.

Mix: I was just making the point that the parent company's disappeared, so there's no--
Pinske: New England Digital? Yeah, that's who it was. Yeah.

Mix: But he didn't take that on tour in the '84 tour, did he?
Pinske: No. As a matter of fact, he always thought that we could program everything into that and it would just make everything on tour a lot easier, but . . .

Mix: It didn't work out that way.
Pinske: Not really. I tried to do that with Jermaine Jackson. I went and did some sampling for Jermaine Jackson--I sampled all Jermaine Jackson's album after I left Frank, and we tried to put together all these Emulator 2s that were going to use live of all these parts of the album that somebody is supposed to be playing, but you just hold down one note. And we had this main data bank of stuff, and I did this elaborate sampling. It just--it didn't seem real. It seemed like a bunch of fake junk. Somebody just holding down a bunch of samples. So that was a short-lived thing, too, but nonetheless, the idea--the idea's been used. Let's face it. People have used samples to death since then. But Frank always wanted to stay ahead--he always had these ideas--when we originally had a semi-Broadway play put together for this "Thing-Fish," he wanted to have all the scenery done on a hologram, so the set changes would all be done with holograms. Of course, we couldn't do it. [Laughs.] In his mind, that's what he wanted.

Mix: It's interesting that he kept trying to do things that, I won't say failed, but had not really come to fruition in the past. Like he wrote several musicals "Hunchentoot" and "Thing-Fish." And he also made several films, or started. And for every one of them he must have started at least two others.
Pinske: You're right.

Mix: He didn't give up, did he?
Pinske: No, and I'm telling you, it was amazing when you were a part of that at all, if he would sit down and write some lyrics, and then 10 minutes, he would write a whole--he could write almost a whole song. It would just flow out of him. And that was one of the most genius amazing parts about it. When it came to being creative, he was never short of ideas. He always just had so many ideas. And he really was pretty much a pioneer from every way. Every aspect of it, from the way we recorded to the way he wrote songs, to the way he wanted to display something. Or the way he might want to do something, like you said, whether it's doing a musical. He always wanted to try to do something new and different and innovative. That was really the part that didn't sink in 'til a number of years later. I knew I was in the middle of all this, but I didn't know that I would look back later in

my life and go, "Man. You're a really lucky person to have even been a part of this." There's very few situations in the world where you could be around somebody that has pretty much all the money he needs, and he spends all his money experimenting. And doing new things every day. And just trying things. Isn't that kind of like the ultimate? Especially for like an engineer, or a musician, to where you can just kind of experiment and write and do things, just try new things all the time. Like an artists being able to paint what he wants to paint, and write a book that he wants to write. It's kind of the ultimate from the engineering aspect. The down side of it is, of course, we had 10 racks of effects on both sides of the control room, so you had all the equipment there was in the world, you had every microphone that's ever made, the whole collection of mics from RCA DX-77s on up, so the down side of it was, if you didn't get the right sound, you'd be gone. [Laughs.] It was a little bit of pressure there. I felt like I was dancing on ice the first three years. I always felt like, gee, I got to earn my rank. You were never really totally comfortable with the fact that you could always be replaced. But somehow, I felt there was a little angel on my shoulders in some ways, because of little things that happened. Like that little incident I told you about when I was auditioning. With the noise in the mic preamp. It's ridiculous. I had some lucky breaks. Like somebody was watching over me. I made some good decisions, and fortunately, Frank tolerated me enough as a person to where we got to be good friends, and was able to last in there long enough to feel that I made a significant difference to what it was he was doing. You can't replace that. It's not like those things are available every day of your life. And I realize now how unique and how special that was. And basically, how unique and how special he was. Because it took him to make it happen. If you get in an environment like that, and you have a guy that can totally control the environment, to where you're not interrupted, you could finish your train of thought, right in the middle of creating a whole masterpiece, and nobody's going to interrupt you. The phone isn't going to ring. Nobody can get to you. You have your environment controlled. I always envied Frank for that. He was able to control the environment so that we were able to finish what it was we were doing. And there's very few artists that can do that. Right there tells you the reason why he built that studio. So he would have that controlled environment, to where he could go in there, and for the first time in his life, finish his train of thought. Go in and just not come out 'til he's damn well done with it. And once you've worked with him like that on a daily basis, you realize, gee, isn't this really a necessity for anybody that's creative? Doesn't anybody really need to have the chance to be able to be uninterrupted, and be able to be funded? And all of that. I'm afraid that the average artist doesn't really have the pleasure of that. Like you were talking about how he went and recorded at different studios. This is the exact reason why you don't. Because you run out of money, you're on a schedule. You gotta be in at 10 o'clock in the morning even though you may be sick that day. There's all these things that can make for a bad project. And all those things kind of go away when you have total--when you have the luxury, I guess, is what it is.

Mix: You recorded vocals for Johnny Guitar Watson, right?
Pinske: He did the "In France" song. And he came up a couple of times. Him and his gold teeth. He had gold plating on the dashboard of this '55 Chevy. [Laughs.] But Johnny Guitar Watson, Frank introduced me to him originally, said--he would bring this kind of people up, and he just totally admired these people, because he developed--according to Frank he developed a certain style of guitar playing, that Johnny did. And I don't know if you've ever hear any recordings or anything about when he came in and sat in live when we played down in Hollywood, at one of the theaters down there. Trying to remember the name of that theater. Johnny Guitar Watson came in, and George Duke came in. Everybody kind of came in and did a little--sat in and played some songs with the band. And Johnny just leaned over the top of the front of the stage and did this guitar, and basically stole the

show. But he came up to the studio, and we recorded him. And he did these really ridiculously strange vocals on "In France" and a couple of other things.

Mix: He did "I Don't Even Care," on "Frank Zappa Meets the Mothers of Prevention."
Pinske: Yeah. We put him down on a couple of things. Frank had the habit of that, too. When we had somebody like that there, we would record him on one or two or maybe three pieces. This is a lot of what happened with some of the stuff like "Sleep Dirt" and "Hunchentoot" and things like that, too. We would take these artists and put them on a number of tapes, and maybe only one of the songs we recorded him on would get on an album. And then later on, Frank would peel this other tape off and use it somewhere else. And that's kind of what happened with Johnny. Johnny actually came up for a number of sessions, and the also Frank had a big listening party when we did "Thing-Fish." He invited up everybody that was on it to come and listen to the album. And we played back out into the studio, and had a little get together. Which was kind of unique, because we had everybody from Terry and Dale Bozzio, to--that album was loaded with all kinds of star collections. Unfortunately, I really wish we still had an original version of that, because it was cleaner, it had less swear words in it, and just moved along a lot nicer. There's always those kinds of things, right? I do have a whole set of lacquers, different lacquers of original mixes we did, by the way. I got some original mixes we did of the London Symphony Orchestra, even that were never released. We must have mixed that album two or three times. I have one version of I mixed the whole thing on. And there are unique mixes like that. I always felt somehow would always get out that never did. It's almost too late, now. I appreciate your taking the time and doing this interview with me, and being so patient with my rambling.

Mix: It's a thrill for me, honestly.
Pinske: Some of the best people I had, I think I gave you a link to Bob Harris, or if you type "Mark Pinske" in at Alta Vista in quotations you'll get some interesting articles. Sometimes you do, sometimes you don't. Some of them fall off. If I put my name in at Yahoo, or at Hotbox, I get totally different links than I do if I put it in--all the search links are different. It's kind of nuts. You'll get different links, and you'll find somebody talking in articles about some of the stuff that we had done. But a lot of my good friends that I've know like that, the musicians over the years, Tommy Mars, some of those guys, they keep telling me I really need to write a book. I almost don't know where to start or where to finish.

Mix: I've been reading some of the books. There's definitely a need for a good one.
Pinske: That's the thing. The reason why I never did is because I thought, "You don't need anymore half-assed books about Zappa." You would need to nail it down to the incidents that were really unique, that made a difference. I think the behind-the-scene things that happened when certain artists came in and recorded, maybe some of the methods we used, things that were talked about, and some of the real creative genius that Frank did. There was always things that we were experimenting on a daily basis, and when you ask me, for instance, about like say "Ya Hozna," my mind goes back and starts thinking about the session, and I would have never thought of that.

Mix: While you're thinking about it, a large part of the vocal is from some version of "Sofa--
"
Pinske: "Sofa," uh-huh. 16-track. Right--

Mix: with George Duke singing. Did you take that 16-track and copy certain tracks off it, and then have the drums dubbed forward, or did you just fly it into some pre-existing

rhythm track?
Pinske: No, no, no. We took the 16-track recording--actually, I think we bounced the whole thing over on a 24-track, and then turned it over. So we wouldn't ruin the original master. And like I said, we did that a lot. When we experimented, we would just take a backup tape. And we turned it over, and then we actually flew other vocals in. I thought about that later, after I talked to you about it. We did take some other vocals from some other songs, and put them backwards. And flew some of them in on some other tracks. And then did all kinds of different instrumentation around it.

Mix: The reason I ask is because "Sofa" is a waltz time, so that's 3/4, but the forward track that was dubbed on, is it 5/4?
Pinske: There was a totally ridiculous thing. That's why a lot of the stuff--we probably worked with two or three different multitracks at different times, and 2-tracks. And we may just take backward vocals off something, and lay it in. [Sings.] "Yaaaaa Hoooooznaaa," the stuff that came in backwards. And it had nothing to do with the rhythm so much as the way it sounded. And then we would fly stuff in.

Mix: I got the impression that the tempo for the forward track was derived from the backward track.
Pinske: No, no. Not the tempo of the track. Every other vocal, or every other chorus, or every other--the sections of the vocals that we used, were laid out. And when we tracked something forward over to it, we kind of stumbled across something, much like the way we did on "Tink Walks Amok."

Mix: That has triple-tracked basses on it.
Pinske: That was a Hofner bass by the way. It was pretty interesting how we--unique sound on that thing, too. I think it was--we did this kind of stuff all the time. And the rhythm would come out as almost some kind of a mistake. And this is where Chad Wackerman came in. Chad told us, this is a statement that Chad made to me one time, he said, "You know if you make the same mistake twice, you have a groove." [Laughs.] You don't think about it. He's right. So some of this stuff would just kind of happen, and Frank would build off of a mistake that happened. And then we would try to make it make sense. You kind of derived a rhythm based off a lot of the things that you pieced together. And the things that were pieced together, which wasn't necessarily just that vocal, but it was other vocals as well. Like we might have used the first chorus of "Ya Hozna," of "Mein Sofa," and then nothing in between. And then another chorus later. Then we'd put a forward beat on there, and then drop some other vocals in there, and something forward, some things backwards, and it was kind of like we're just sitting there putting together a collage.

Mix: I was just trying to figure out whether the tempo for "Ya Hozna," which is not in 4/4, it's in 7/8 or 5/4 or something.
Pinske: I could tell you--I tell you, if I sat down and listened to it, it was the second piece we did, "Won Ton On" was actually the first experiment, and it all derived from this "No Not Now" thing. And then we kind of got carried away with it for a while, we spent a couple of days doing it, then we got away from it, then we came back to it again. And then, when we got into doing "Ya Hozna," it was a whole different thing than "Won Ton On," but if I sat down and listened to it, because we were doing two--I started wondering if we were going to live the rest of our life doing backwards pieces there for a while, because for a couple of weeks you're working in this backwards mode, you're mind kind of gets weirded out, and I got a little bit confused on "Won Ton On," and "Ya Hozna." As a matter of fact, I probably have rough mixes of it that have different pieces that got erased and got taken out. Because we would try something, and maybe not like it, and remove it and put something

else in there. But if I sat down and listened to--is that on one of the YCDTOSA albums, which one is "Ya Hozna" on?
Mix: It's on "Them Or Us." It's the third track on "Them Or Us." It's right after "In France." It goes "Closer You Are," "In France," "Ya Hozna," "Sharleena," "Sinister Footwear 2," "Truck Driver Divorce," "Stevie's Spanking," "Baby Take Your Teeth Out," "Marque-son's Chicken."
Pinske: Those were, originally, now that you mention it, it was George Duke and Napoleon Murphy Brock that did the original "Sofa" piece on there. But there was something else off of those same recordings. I think they were from the Baltimore tape
[end of side]

. . .since then, she just kind of started treating me different, and then things king of got sour. What was originally quite friendly turned into just an uncomfortable situation. But there was no major, huge fallout, so to speak. Except that she didn't like that. She pretty much didn't like a lot of people around Frank, and always thought that everybody was trying to rip Frank off. She had a pretty deep paranoia over a lot to things. That's why Marque's so paranoid. If you talk to Marque Coy. He can't do anything with her approval. Well, I don't need her approval. I have my own life. That's one of the reasons why I left, to tell you the truth. It was just uncomfortable. And not creative at all. Honestly. I got along with her, and I love Dweezil and Ahmet and Moon, and all of them. But I think since I left, she soured the grapes, quite a bit. She put the--she kind of stained . . . what she believed I was doing and what I wasn't doing. But when it comes right down to it, there was Frank and me in the control room. For 13 hours a day. And Bob would come in and then there was Bob and Frank. None of those people were there. They weren't there. So how can they know anything about what went on? They don't. They don't know anything. How can you explain that? You can't explain that. Or what would that have to do with any of them? It has nothing to do with any of them. They weren't a part of the creative process. All she did is try to control the marketing, try to control the sales, try to get in and take over everything, and try to be--I've heard all kinds of things about her screwing up a lot of Dweezil's stuff that Dweezil was trying to do. But Marque still works for her. And Marque and I go way back. I'm sure he told you that part.

Mix: No, he didn't. Well, he gave me the name of your band. What was is, Helix. He did say you went way back. Did he come into the picture through you, or the other way around?
Pinske: Marque-son? No, I hired him for Frank. He was a roadie in the band I played in, in Colorado. Then when I got the job for Frank, I brought him in from Colorado, and I brought Tom Ehle in, and I brought George Douglas in. They were all people that I knew from before. And I got them guys all a job. Now, George only lasted a year and left. Tom Ehle stayed with us for a long time, and Marque-son's still there, Marque Coy is still there. I brought him in to mix monitors, originally, because we needed a monitor mixer. And I thought he could handle it because he had done some road work in the past. He's quite a good engineer, Marque is. He got to be pretty good. He went out and did Cheap Trick, and some other people there for a while, but he's just kind of stayed close to the womb. He kind of had his own little world out there at Joe's Garage.

Mix: That's why I called him, and he said, "Yep. This is what I do."
Pinske: But if you want him to say anything about Frank, Gail's got him so scared, he won't--he's not going to give you a whole lot of useful stuff because he's going to have to bring her in, and if he brings her in, she'll want to control the whole article. Like she does with everything else she does. I don't know why she does that. It's stupid. It's kind of a sad thing, because in my opinion, the more publicity she--anything good that could be said at

all about Frank, the more would help the archives and everything else. I don't know why she got that way, at all. I really don't. I honestly don't understand, even why she got so upset over that one little incident that we had, because there really wasn't much more to it than that. I wasn't directly involved with her on a daily basis. She was up in the house, and I was in studio. I'd lock up the studio and go home, and I'd come back and Frank and I would record. Outside of the fact that, let's face it, the studio took Frank pretty much away from the family, and so did all the touring. Which I imagine all the family members have probably have some regret for that, a little bit. Because he was doing what he wanted to do all the time. But if you built a $3.5 million studio, you'd probably use it, too. And I was just one of the engineers he had to have in order to keep it cranking all day long. And on the road, of course, she wasn't with us, ever. She never went on the road with us. So I don't know why she still wants to go back--like Jimmy Carl Black, I talked to him, and I talked to Denny Walley, the guys that did The Grandmothers? They were going to go out doing some tours, and they said that Gail had pretty much stopped them from performing and using that name, The Grandmothers. I don't know how she could even stop them from using that name, 'cause it's not the same name as the Mothers of Invention. Or why would you bother? Because anything that would help keep the legend alive, in my opinion, would be a good thing, wouldn't you think?
Mix: I think so. There's actually a band coming to San Francisco next month called "Project Object," which has, I think Ike Willis is in it, and Don Preston and some other--not that they're in it full time, but I think they're appearing with this Project Object. As you know, there's a bunch of bands out there that do Zappa material.
Pinske: Sure. I talked to Ike a couple times since then. None of us were able to find Ray White. I have a little folder I keep called the "Ex-Zappa People," and I talked to Craig, I got the note from Craig "Twister" Steward out of the blue, too. But everybody's all doing different things, now.

Mix: Yeah. It's almost ten years.
Pinske: Yeah. It's a long time done.

Mix: You said earlier that by the time you left, Frank was getting ill. But I thought his cancer wasn't diagnosed until 1990.
Pinske: No, but he did go through a case of shingles before that. I don't know if you knew about that.

Mix: I didn't, no.
Pinske: He had a case of shingles, and he got kind of ill and slowed down a little bit there. But he was going still full strong when I went and did Men at Work.

Mix: I know he smoked all his adult life. Did that show up in the equipment, or did you just have powerful fil--
Pinske: That was kind of a pain. We had a special filter system in the control room. At the back of the control room, there was three filter systems in the air conditioning that we pretty much left running all the time. And he sat back--he had a grey chair in the back, and he smoked continuously. Two-and-a-half, three packs a day. Pretty much all the time, cigarettes and coffee. He's pretty much anti drugs, but--

Mix: Made an exception for nicotine.
Pinske: [Laughs.] For nicotine and caffeine. Caffeine kept us going.

Mix: And I guess back then in the early '80s it wasn't a problem traveling on commercial flights, because you could still smoke on that. That became an issue later on.
Pinske: Yeah, I guess it did. We did most of our traveling in the States on commercial, and then we'd do Lear jets overseas, or private jets sometimes overseas. On one of our tours we did that. I'm curious, though, if you got a hold of Marque. Was he just not

receptive?
Mix: No, he was cheerful, but he said he'd have to talk to Gail. So I sent him an email saying, "Here's what I want to talk about." But he hasn't got back to me.
Pinske: Maybe I shouldn't have given you that number. That might be a bad thing.

Mix: I'm sure Joe's Garage is in the book.
Pinske: I don't mean that. I just mean, I should probably call Marque and talk to him about it. And see if I could loosen that up a little bit. I know that it's strange that--because he stayed on board. See, I was there, and then they brought him in. I was probably with Frank a year and a half before we brought Marque aboard. But he's now set the record, I think, for the longest employee, I think, of the whole family.

Mix: Did you ever have a situation where somebody from the crew was sent home because they weren't cutting it on tour, because their personal habits weren't in line with the corporate policy?
Pinske: Well, yeah. Ike Willis was sent home. Yeah.

Mix: Right at the beginning of a tour, right?
Pinske: That was when we were in Berkeley, I think. He wasn't even allowed to perform that night, as a matter of fact. Frank was real upset about that. He didn't like anybody doing anything, and if he caught 'em, they were gone. Pretty much immediately. But then, obviously, he was able to bury the hatchet with Ike, because he worked with Ike later. Ike went back out on an '88 tour, didn't he?

Mix: Yeah, I think he did.
Pinske: There was a time when he was never going to let Ike Willis in, or Roy Estrada. There was all those kind of times, but then again, when they got back together, they were glad as hell to see each other. So that's just nothing more than old guys working together, I guess. Pretty much what that's all about. But I saw--there wasn't too much happening as far as the crew's concerned. If somebody in the crew got fired, they're just pretty much, "window or aisle." He would just make the jokes on stage. And that would happen that way. Fortunately, I was able to take another gig, myself. But most of the people, some of the people didn't have any choice in the matter. And there was kind of a sad situation, with Thomas Nordegg, for instance. He was probably the most loyal person to Frank of all time, and Gail made Frank fire him. That was probably the saddest day of Frank's life.

Mix: For what infraction?
Pinske: She couldn't find some receipts on some grocery bills, and she was sure that he had ripped him off or something. And I remember him being very upset about it. I remember him asking, "Are you happy now?" or something. It really upset Frank. He was probably the most trustworthy person you'd ever known in your life. Anybody who knew him, if you knew him like I knew him, or anybody else, he would never do anything like that. 'Course, three months later, they found all the receipts anyway. But there was never an apology or anything.

Mix: What was his position?
Pinske: He buried Frank's parrot. He was the liaison. He did everything for Frank. For eight or ten years, he was the one who unpacked his clothes, and took care of the family, and went out and got pizzas, and kept us all going. One of the most trustworthy people you'd ever know.