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PLATINUM BLONDIE

Riding the Crest of
the New Wave

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNIE LEBOVITZ

P L A T I N U M B L O N D I E

A Tough Rock Group Rises above the New Wave with the Disco Beat of "Heart of Glass." So What's Wrong with This Picture? By Jamie James

Deborah Harry's mother loves to tell the story of her daughter's singing debut. It seems that Debbie's sixth-grade class in Hawthorne, New Jersey, once staged a "Tom Thumb" wedding. "One kid would be the groom, one the bride and one the bridesmaid. Debbie sang the solo at the end; she sang 'I Love You Truly' all by herself!"

Richard and Catherine Harry run a gift shop called Around the House in Cooperstown, New York, a sleepy little burg best known as the home of the Baseball Hall of Fame. The Harrys are a tightknit family. "The only Christmas she wasn't here was the time she was on tour in Australia," says Mrs. Harry of Debbie. "She was so depressed, and I was so depressed. She said, 'I'll never be away for Christmas again.' Debbie's a wonderful daughter."

When Mrs. Harry—or Cag, as she prefers to be called—is asked if Debbie was popular with the boys, she erupts with laughter. "Are you kidding?" she asks. Mama tells about the time Debbie was approached to enter the high-school beauty pageant: "She didn't particularly want to go in; they called *her* in. And she asked me, 'What do you think?' And I said, 'I think it's ridiculous.' Her remark was, 'I have no talent. All I can do is twirl a baton.'"

"She was always beautiful," Cag Harry says with pride. "When she was a baby, my friends used to tell me I should send her picture in to Gerber's, because she would be picked as one of the Gerber babies.

"But I didn't send it in," she adds solemnly. "I didn't believe in her being exploited."

DEBBIE HARRY, 34, IS THE STAR OF BLONDIE, AND she looks the part. However much it rankles the band members, however much their past press releases strived to ignore it, Blondie's initial notoriety stemmed directly from the public's response to Debbie. To put it another way, she's the only one in the hot new rock package who can't be replaced. That big, wide, angular face, with its innocent pout that somehow combines worldly glamour and naïveté, is the group's most familiar symbol. Many people think Blondie is Debbie's

nickname, a confusion that infuriates the band. There are even label buttons that announce, BLONDIE IS A GROUP. But so long as they work in a musical genre still dominated by men, she will remain the focal point.

Blondie is one of the big success stories of 1979. After releasing two well-regarded but sparse-selling albums (1976's *Blondie* and 1977's *Plastic Letters*), the band shattered the New Wave's stigma of noncommercialism with *Parallel Lines*, an epic sleeper that was released last September and spent six months inching up the charts.

The album's first two U.S. singles, "I'm Gonna Love You

Too" and "Hanging on the Telephone" (a hit in Europe), sank without a trace, but "Heart of Glass," a sexy, pulsating love lament propelled by Debbie's stark vocals, became a surprise favorite that hit Number One nationwide in late April. The record, issued as both a 45 and a twelve-inch extended-play version, pleased the fickle disco crowd as much as the band's die-hard rock devotees. As a result, the members of Blondie have become important figures, if not heroes, to the dozens of New Wave acts seeking widespread

JAMIE JAMES wrote "Houston after Dark" in RS 292.

I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be one of the great rock groups.'

acceptance in this country, and the latest overnight sensations in a diverse late-Seventies rock boom that includes Elvis Costello, the Police, the Cars, Dire Straits, Van Halen and Supertramp.

As for Debbie Harry herself, the underground "punk harlow" is not only a bright new star, but also the first rock pinup in recent memory. Since Blondie's inception in 1975, Debbie has been a fashion trend-setter as well as a sex symbol. She contributed to the vogue of the thrift-shop look as much as anyone, once appearing onstage in a tacky wedding gown and telling the audience, "It's the only dress my mother wanted me to wear." Joan Rivers goes punk.

At that time, Patti Smith was the other big female rock star in New York. Patti's bedraggled gutterpunk look was much more fashionable in those circles. There was pressure on Debbie to go dirty, but she stuck by her miniskirts and spike heels. With the passing of hard-core punk, it was Debbie's campy, Sixties nostalgia trip that came out on top, the strong visuals complemented by some of the best rock on the radio in a good long time. As Debbie warns in the band's new single: "One way or another, I'm gonna find ya/I'm gonna getcha, getcha, getcha."

BLONDIE HAS JUST FINISHED UP A DAY IN A MANHATTAN rehearsal studio preparing to record its as-yet-united fourth album. The atmosphere is chaotic; gofers and girlfriends wander around the room. Across the hall, there's a big roast beef and champagne bash for Carly Simon, who has just done a television commercial or something.

Nigel Harrison, Blondie's mop-haired English bass player, guides me to the champagne, then introduces me to keyboard player Jimmy Destri and lead singer Deborah Harry. I can tell the moment Debbie lays eyes on me that she hates my guts. Her icebreaker is: "Why didn't you do this three years ago?" I assume she means ROLLING STONE; she's another press-hater.

Back to the studio, drummer Clem Burke and guitarists Chris Stein and Frank Infante are jamming. Stein segues into "Rack Lobster," a tune by the B-52's. The New Wave group from Georgia. Mike Chapman, their producer, volunteers to round everyone up. I ask him if it's a good time for an interview; he replies with a winning smile. "Leave it to me. They do whatever I say." Before we get down to business, Chapman takes over the guitar and does a loose medley of songs. He's pleased with himself, but the guitar ultimately gets the best of him. He rips off one last power chord, announces that the interview will begin, and then bows out.

Stein, who with his owlish specs (he rarely wears them in public) and prematurely graying hair looks like a young Allen Ginsberg, starts off with a message for everyone who has criticized the group for selling out: "Fuck you!" Debbie bursts into the room, wrings her hands and gives me pale, withering looks. "Why am I here at all?" she seems to be asking. Having cast her pall over the room, she rushes out again. Stein trots after her to see what's up.

The rest of us talk about the rock press. They all hate the rock press. We talk about the difficulty New Wave artists have had in getting airplay. Destri offers the opinion that the art-oriented media are just a backdrop to sell products.

Chapman walks back into the room and says, "I think the music business is full of shit." His smile has become a leer. He looks like he's been hitting the bubbly. He says he's never going to do another interview again. "My favorite color is zitch," he adds. "My favorite people are nobody. My favorite thing to do is to go out and do nothing. I don't like anybody. I don't like anything. I don't like doing interviews. I hate everything except I love rock & roll, and the people who work for me are the greatest people in the world."

Someone pipes up with, "What about sex?" Chapman responds gravely, "I never have sex. Sex is one thing a rock & roller does not have room for in his life. They took my cock off at the age of four." I ask him if he swapped it for a Chuck Berry album. He replies with the utmost dignity, "It would not have fetched that high a price."

Debbie slouches back in, looking more tempes-tossed than ever. Her face is chalky with anxiety. Chapman tells her, "It's your turn. I've just said all the controversial things I can think of. Say something controversial, Debbie."

She sits down on the edge of the stage and emits a moose, "Yeah."

"Good," Chapman beams. "That was it. 'Yeah.'"
The problem is that she wasn't expecting an interview; all she had been told was that she was to meet this writer—me. There is a short discussion of whose fault this mess is. Debbie hates me, she hates Chris, right now she hates the world. She's just feeling rotten. I try to cheer her up, congratulate her for "Heart of Glass" being Number One.

This makes her even glummer. "Yeah. It's Number Two. It was Number One for a week. Now it's Number Two." She looks like Mimi wasting away in *La Bohème*.

"We got bumped by Peaches and Herby," says Stein, "and it's not even the real Peaches."

Now the storm breaks. Debbie hollers at me. Everyone looks down at the floor. I'm afraid she's either going to cry or pull a derring out of her raincoat and shoot me. This is a roomful of miserable people. It's like a wake for somebody no one liked.

THE SECOND TIME I SEE DEBBIE, A WEEK LATER, THE ATMOSPHERE is much more capacious, but there's hard to go downhill from a debacle. We are at Power Station Recording Studios, which is in the middle of being renovated, so there are boards and nails and hammers everywhere. The room we are in seems to have no other raison d'être than to intervene between the hallway and the bathroom (sign on the bathroom door: HIT RECORDS MADE WHILE U WAIT).

Debbie refuses to be interviewed without Stein, 29, but he keeps wandering off to fiddle with dials. The couple never seem to be separated for very long. Even those in their inner circle say they don't really understand the relationship. One insider told me, "She can't do anything without him. It's kind of spooky." Debbie is curled up in a dusty alcove. The window is boarded up rather clumsily, so a single bar of sunlight streaks across her. I ask about her image as a fashion plate.

"I don't do the campy stuff anymore," she replies. "I've eliminated all that, the secondhand store look. I've outgrown it, you know? I can afford to buy clothes and to have them made, so now it's more what I would specifically choose to wear." Her voice is very soft. "What I do now is more of an image. It sticks in people's minds." Which isn't to say that she doesn't look funky nowadays. Today she's wearing red tights, red high heels and a childish, embroidered smock that she is continually tugging on and smoothing out.

The daughter of a salesman in Manhattan's fashion district, Deborah Ann Harry was born in Miami and raised in New Jersey. She has one younger sister, Martha, and a cousin, Bill, now in college, who has lived with the family since his early teens. When Debbie left home and moved to Manhattan, her first apartment was on St. Marks Place in the East Village, down the street from poet W. H. Auden's residence. Her initial stab at a musical career, a brief and ill-starred effort, was with a Mamas-and-Papas-esque group called Wind in the Willows.

Next came a long stretch as a New York survivor. She kept her artistic credentials alive by hanging out on the periphery of the Warhol crowd, writing and painting while supporting herself with a succession of jobs—as a beautician, Playboy Bunny and barmaid at the New Kansas City, the rock-bistro where she would eventually be a headliner. There was a flirtation with heroin. Then she found her milieu with a campy guitar band called the Sirelooses. Chris Stein joined the band shortly after her first club gig with them.

The Sirelooses went down with everybody else in the Great Gritter Crash that began in the early Seventies. In time, Debbie and Chris were a team, romantically as well as musically, and together they founded Blondie.

Looking back on her career, does it fit together, or was it something more experimental, a case of trial and error? "A lot of people think that everything you do is like, pre-conceived," she offers blandly. "Yeah, it's been good, because it's been very inspired—whatever happened was it. Our biggest consideration was just to survive, so, like... all our forms are frivolous. That's what stay hungry" is all about.

"Now we're sort of at an in-between stage, commercially and artistically. We're at a stage where we are what we are, and we've been clearly defined, and there is a market for us, right? So we're taking steps in our direction, you know. We're moving on, we're doing things, but we're doing things that people can identify. We're not taking a total turn from what we've been classified as. But, like, the next things that we do, we could very well do a total turnaround."

I, for one, find her statements difficult to follow. She alights from the alcove and starts jabbering excitedly. She picks up a can of two-penny nails, takes a handful and frantically stabs them at things. I ask her about something Clem Burke told me the night before at Max's: "We want to be one of the great bands, not like the Grateful Dead." Debbie frowns thoughtfully. "The things we've done to stay together as a group and all are pretty amazing, so I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be one of the greatest rock groups. I mean, to be a rock group, to do what we do and stay

BLONDIE IS A GROUP (FROM LEFT): STEIN, HARRY, HARRISON, INFANTE, BURKE, DESTRI



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

together without any, like, real dictatorial leadership, it's pretty strong. It's very strong. It's like, if we weren't musicians, then maybe we'd be at the track every day, and we'd always be in hock, because we'd be heavy gamblers. It's the same kind of drive, I guess."

Debbie Harry is elusive; if you look at her too intently, she turns vaporous on you, like a Cheshire cat. In person, she never looks the same in any two photos. In one, she looks like none of them. She is pretty, but she doesn't look like she *feels* pretty. Rather, she looks tired, spent. "It smells like a dentist's office in here, doesn't it?" she asks. A cigarette but is smoking in the ashtray, so she fills it up with water from the tap, which doesn't do much for the room's smell. S. S. is back. Suddenly, we're talking about the Sixties. As usual, Chris is trying to work in one of his radical-alarmist conspiracy theories, while Debbie responds on a personal level. "That's like the pathetic thing," she says. "All people have really been distracted to a lot in the past couple of years, tastewise. I mean, eccentricity has been really frowned upon. Really, it's very frightening. You know, it makes you feel really endangered by being any kind of weirdo in this country."

THE MUSICAL TERM NEW WAVE SOUNDS more like the name of a laundry detergent, and if it can be applied to a song like "Heart of Glass," that makes it even more meaningless. This far, the single has sold close to a million and a half copies; *Parallel Lines* has gone platinum. The reason is simple: the hooks are irresistible—a bright, bouncy organ and a bunch of cute triplets. As New York DJ Cousin Bruce used to say, "It's in the grooves."

From the outset, Blondie's sound was built on a driving, pulsative beat and spacey keyboards, with Debbie's dreamy, almost unaffected vocals drifting over it all. Chris and Debbie found their rhythm in drummer Clem Burke and bassist Gary Valentine, who knew one another from Jersey school days. With the addition of Jimmy Destri on keyboards, the original lineup was complete.

Early in 1976, Richie Gottehrer, formerly of the Strangeloves, coauthor of the 1966 British hit "Sorrow," the man who made the McCoys ("Hang On Sloop") semihousehold words, discovered Blondie at CBGB's, the sleazy dive on the Bowery that was then in the process of becoming famous. He brought Larry Ullal, the president of the small, New York-based Private Stock label, to their show. They heard the jingling of cash registers. "I was very turned on by the sound of her voice," Larry recalls. "She had that early-Fifties sound that was becoming popular again. She reminded me of Rosie and the Originals, the Tasses."

Blondie's first record, the single "X Offender" backed with "In the Sun," was cocoproded by Gottehrer. It didn't sell very well but provoked a lot of interest, at least enough to follow it with the first album. "He was really instrumental in breaking us," says Debbie of Gottehrer. "We got a lot of airplay at a time when New Wave music was totally unnoticed, and a lot of it had to do with Richards' name on the product."

Meanwhile, Blondie hired a new manager. Gottehrer had been managing them as well as producing, but he didn't think he had time to do both. He and Larry Ullal put their heads together and nominated Peter Leeds. The band hired him. It turned out to be a perfectly symmetrical bit of irony: a year later, both Ullal and Gottehrer were out of the picture.

Blondie made its West Coast debut in February 1977 at Whisky in Los Angeles, where by all accounts the band went off like gangbusters. Rodney Bingenheimer, DJ and professional hanger-on, particularly gave them a boost. While in L.A., they were hired to support Iggy Pop on his American tour with David Bowie that spring.

When I ask Clem Burke what was the high point of Blondie's career, he replies, "Aside from all the success, I'd have to say meeting David Bowie. That was good. We are all Bowie freaks. There have been so many things that have taken us over a hump, but that was definitely the first biggie: getting to Toronto and meeting Bowie and Iggy and having them come into the dressing room and introduce themselves and say, 'We're gonna have fun on this tour.' I called myself a rock & roll virgin, which is really what we all were, because we weren't used to meeting rock stars and all that. But they didn't like to hear, 'Oh, I grew up on you.'"

On July 4th, 1977, Gary Valentine, bass player and coauthor of "X Offender," split from the group. He still cites the same reason for the split that he used then, "artistic integrity," but when you talk to him about it, that translates into resentment of the despotic concentration of power in Stein and Harry. "I would write six songs, and they would say, 'Okay, we'll do this one.'"

(Valentine moved to Los Angeles and formed the Know, a three-piece band also managed by Peter Leeds. There are rumors of a record deal, the latest involving Capitol. "But I don't think we'll be signed to Capitol," Valentine tells me. "I had a dream about that, and they didn't offer me enough money. I told them no.")

Blondie then recorded its second album, *Plastic Letters*, with bassist Frank Infante, an old Jersey chum of the group's. He subsequently joined the band, and moved over to guitar when Nigel Harrison was hired to play bass.

On Labor Day of 1977 came the Big Move, the switch from the small Private Stock label to Chrysalis, an aggres-

sive independent company. Private Stock is one of those tiny independents that seem to luck into a couple of hit records but can't translate the windfall into a coherent company policy. Private Stock had two lucrative flukes in "Fifth of Beethoven" by Walter Murphy and Samantha Sang's "Emotion," but one gets the impression that it didn't quite know how to chart Blondie's course.

When you ask Leeds of the group what was wrong with the way Private Stock handled them, the answer is: "It's all sides 'it' everything." Specifically, the problem was cash, or rather the lack of it. It seems that everyone had intimations of rock immortality for Blondie except the label. The company simply wasn't coming up with the money and commitment that Leeds felt he needed to break the act.

There were also internal group problems with the Blondie image (i.e., Debbie's image) being projected to promote the records. This culminated in the famous poster of Debbie in a black, beaded, see-through top—very trashy, flashy, very sexy. The group was afraid that it was being packaged behind an image of Debbie as a turn-on for dirty old men. Debbie detested the poster; the group was angry. Jody Ullal (Larry's daughter), director of publicity at Private Stock and the original Blondie raver, still defends the promotional campaign. "At the time, that was the only way we had to market them. We had to promote them somehow, and that was all we had."

Clearly, it was a great way to push posters, but not records.

Leeds raised \$500,000 to buy out Gottehrer and Private Stock—\$400,000 for the label and \$100,000 for Richie. Then he hired Debbie to produce the next album. "Debbie was crazy for the act. Chrysalis Records grew out of a talent agency, started in the mid-Sixties by two enterprising young Englishmen, Chris Wright and Ellis. Their first signings were Ten Years After and Jethro Tull. The sensational success of Jethro Tull in the U.K. led to the establishment of Chrysalis there. Tull's importance to Chrysalis hasn't diminished; to this day the act remains the late-'60s and early-'70s. In 1972, Ellis and Wright, their roster strengthened with the addition of Procol Harum, launched Chrysalis in America by entering into a joint distribution deal with Warner Bros. Four years later, the label went independent in the U.S."

Since then, Chrysalis has developed a reputation as one of the more adventuresome and well-managed independents, achieving limited success with such acts as the Babys and Rory Gallagher. But it wasn't until last year that they had a Number One hit record in America—Nick Gilder's "Hot Child in the City" (also produced by Mike Chapman). Blondie has been almost as important to Chrysalis as Chrysalis has been to Blondie. "We sort of stumbled together at a certain moment in time and helped each other to progress," Ellis says.

ON PAPER, LEEDS IS STILL BLONDIE'S MANAGER.

They are now engaged in the legal process of dissolving their relationship. Leeds' office on Madison Avenue is perched way up, on a corner with a terrific view. The walls are covered with Blondie's gold records, posters for European Blondie concerts, miscellaneous Blondie promotional junk. Peter is tall and thin, with floppy, shoulder-length salt-and-pepper hair styled in an off-beat sort of Italian Renaissance look. He is a very energetic fellow. When he talks to you, he flexes you with these intense, unwavering puppy-dog eyes. And when I ask Leeds about Chrysalis, he hops on the topic like a bound on a bone. "You know I made a little history when I made the Blondie deal," he says. "When in the history of rock & roll music did somebody lay down \$500,000 to buy the recording rights to a group that had sold fourteen records?"

Under Leeds' tutelage, Blondie embarked on a five-month, low-budget world tour. They had already toured England in May of 1977, and this globe-trotting trip, including Europe, Australia, Thailand and Japan, confirmed them as international artists. Thailand made the deepest impression.

Almost as important as the defection to Chrysalis was the hiring of Mike Chapman to produce *Parallel Lines*. According to Leeds, this was how it happened: "The guy who was doing Blondie's press at the time, Toby Matis, brought

Debbie reacts to questions, how the new songs, like a deer to the smell of gunmetal.

Mike Chapman to hear Blondie at the Whiskey, Mike loved them, came back every night. And I wrote him a note on a napkin. The note said, 'If I ever get out of this thing and there's a possibility of a new producer, I promise you the first shot.'

"Now I had forgotten that I had written this note. In July of 1977 I was at Mike's house in Beverly Hills, and he went to his desk drawer and showed it to me. And last week in Los Angeles, we talked about the note, and he said to me, 'I'm going to frame that note someday.'"

Chapman was Terry Ellis's first choice as well. It wasn't a question of getting Gotschere out of the picture; he and the group have continuously maintained cordial relations, but he had wanted to concentrate on his latest discovery, Robert Gordon.

The rest of the story is, as they say, history; enough gold and platinum Blondie records to tile the bathroom, the awards reflecting their popularity not only in Europe, Australia and practically everywhere else, but also, finally, in America. One big question mark for them now is their management. The group presently relies on a combination of lawyers, booking agent, publicist, business manager and, above all, Mike Chapman to provide the direction they lack.

No one seems to be too crazy about Leeds; he's about as popular with Blondie as Martin Boemann would be at a B'nai B'rith convention. Mentioning Leeds' name in the middle of a talk with Debbie and Chris and Jimmy nearly causes total meltdown. Neither side is willing to discuss the split while the ink is still in progress, but it is clearly an extremely acrimonious affair. The members of Blondie are emphatic in their belief that Leeds contributed nothing to their careers. Both sides hint at deep, dark revelations, monstrous acts on the other side that will make the blood run cold when all is laid bare.

DBLONDIE APPEARS TO SUFFER FROM AN ACUTE CASE of world-weariness. Debbie puts it succinctly: "Success is harder to handle than no success at all." Jimmy Destri offers the adage: "Money will never make you happy, and happy will never make you money."

Chris Stein is more specific: "The hard part about success is that all your friends, all these people that you like, turn against you. It's amazing. Everything in this whole fucking scene is like a Grade B novel. Here's the band: they starve, they have no money. You sign bad deals, sign your life away to various deals, right? You spend all your money getting out of bad deals, then all the people you respect turn around and say, 'You sold out. You suck. I don't like you anymore.'"

"It's horrendous. It's just like the fucking shit you see in the movies. It's like all the stuff your old grandmother told you. Shep Gordon, a friend of ours land manager of Alice Cooper I told us, 'You shouldn't spend all your money on a real expensive straightjacket,' which I think is a great truth of this business."

One gets the feeling that Stein is afraid that this is just what they have done. And to them it is the press, above all, that is this straightjacket. In both of the conversations I had with him, he was on the press within minutes; in general, how horrible it is; specifically, the effect it has had on Debbie. "Debbie used to talk very freely," he says. "Just as a result of being abused and misquoted, she cut herself off. She isn't as interested in anymore. The people that suffer are the fans and the artists. The fucking press goes to sell their newspapers, but the fans don't get to hear what the artists have to say, and the artists can't communicate to their public."

It was always Stein's avowed purpose to manipulate the press in the manner of Andy Warhol. He worked well in the beginning; Judy Ural believes that it was Blondie's close relationship with the press that contributed more than anything else to the band's initial success. They were very cozy with such New York music magazines as *Trouser Press* and *New York Rocker*, but Blondie can't seem to take the heat of the mainstream press.

If Stein is articulating about his negative feelings toward the Fourth Estate, Debbie's reaction is a muttered admission of terror. When you ask her a question, no matter how

Chris Stein: 'It's amazing. Everything in this whole scene is like a Grade B novel.'

innocuous, she reacts like a deer to the smell of gunmetal. The people around her talk in this memorized-sounding monotone about how much pressure there is on her, but when you ask if the pressure is too much for Debbie, you don't get an answer.

What has happened to the calm, good-natured beauty queen from New Jersey? When you swim with piranhas, either you become a piranha or you get chumped. Some people are born piranhas; other people are by nature so unsuited for piranhahood that they never get the hang of it. Instead of getting devoured, they end up devouring themselves.

DYNAMICALLY, BLONDIE SEEMS TO BE DIVIDED INTO two groups: Debbie and Chris on the one hand and the guys, as they are usually referred to, on the other. These two aren't necessarily adversaries, but their interests aren't always mutual.

One point that was impressed on me by various insiders was, "The money doesn't all go to Debbie. You know, that's a backward way of saying that a lot of it does. Debbie and Chris have formed a production company with Robert Tripp to do a remake of Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville*, a classic film from another New Wave. And she has just completed a film tentatively titled *Union City*, in which she plays the wife of a psychotic killer.

Stein would rather talk about his brand of radical politics than show business or, specifically, music. One senses that this is irksome to the members of the group, who regard themselves totally as musicians and are always itching to play Burke, Infante and Harrison and are for touring; Destri, Stein and Harry are against touring. But these things have a way of working themselves out: this summer, Blondie will tour America, beginning with New York's Central Park in July and concluding with the Greek Theater in L.A. in August.

According to Debbie, "We always agree on the music. If somebody doesn't want to do a song, we just don't do it, that's all."

At any rate, they work well together in the studio, and most of the credit for the proper chemistry goes to Mike Chapman, their benevolent dictator and father figure. Talking about the new LP, he says, "There's loads of hits, it's a great album, but who gives a fuck." His smile can hardly get any bigger when he says, "It's easy, you see. When we go into the studio, we go in and make hit records, and it just happens. We don't think about it. If you're going to be in the music business, you gotta make hit records. If you can't make hit records, you should fuck off and go chop meat somewhere."

BLONDIE IS BACK IN THE STUDIO AGAIN. IN TODAY'S case, it's a bright, sunny place on the West Side that resembles a very posh toolshed. Debbie flounces into the control room with a bag of pistachios. Chapman sees her, motions through the window for her to give him some. Giggling, she takes a handful of nuts and showers them against the window. Infante, a slightly scalded version of Keith Richards, comes by looking a little hungry. Destri, who is sitting this one out, announces to the room, "Will somebody give me a drink please? I'm dehydrated." Chapman tells Burke what he wants on the drums: "Make it so straight, so simple that it's *moronic*."

During a break, their road manager, Bruce Patton, brings in a stack of publicity stills to be photographed. Debbie asks him who they're for. "They're for my souvenir stand on Fourteenth Street," he says with a straight face. Then he unveils their latest trophy, the framed *Billboard* Hot 100 chart from the week "Heart of Glass" was Number One. They all crowd around to peer at it but don't seem terribly impressed.

Debbie sashays away from the rest of the band, looking like Tuesday Weld in one of her moodier roles. She gazes off vacantly into the empty studio. The next album will be out soon; it will probably outsell *Parallel Lines*. Every date on the summer tour will likely be a sellout. The boys in the front rows will idolize Debbie, lust after her, and everyone will go out the next day to buy Blondie records. There will be more money, more magazine covers... But Debbie Harry seems to greet the future with a sigh.

I am reminded of something her mother told me about her now-famous daughter. "She is shy," Gag Harry confided. "When she's not performing—and you must know this—she's quiet, with a very pious sense of humor. She's not real outgoing or loud. She's sort of retiring."

As for the strong hankering for security that I perceive in Debbie, Mrs. Harry says, "She's very family-oriented. As a matter of fact, she's more family-oriented than any of the kids. She's the one that got homesick at camp."

That was a long time ago, but as Mike Chapman plays back the band's last session tape, I consider Blondie, Debbie's extended family, and I wonder what kind of refuge it offers her now. A line from "Heart of Glass" springs to mind: "Once I had a love/And it was a gas/Soon turned out to be a pain in the ass."

Maybe Debbie Harry feels the same way about staying.