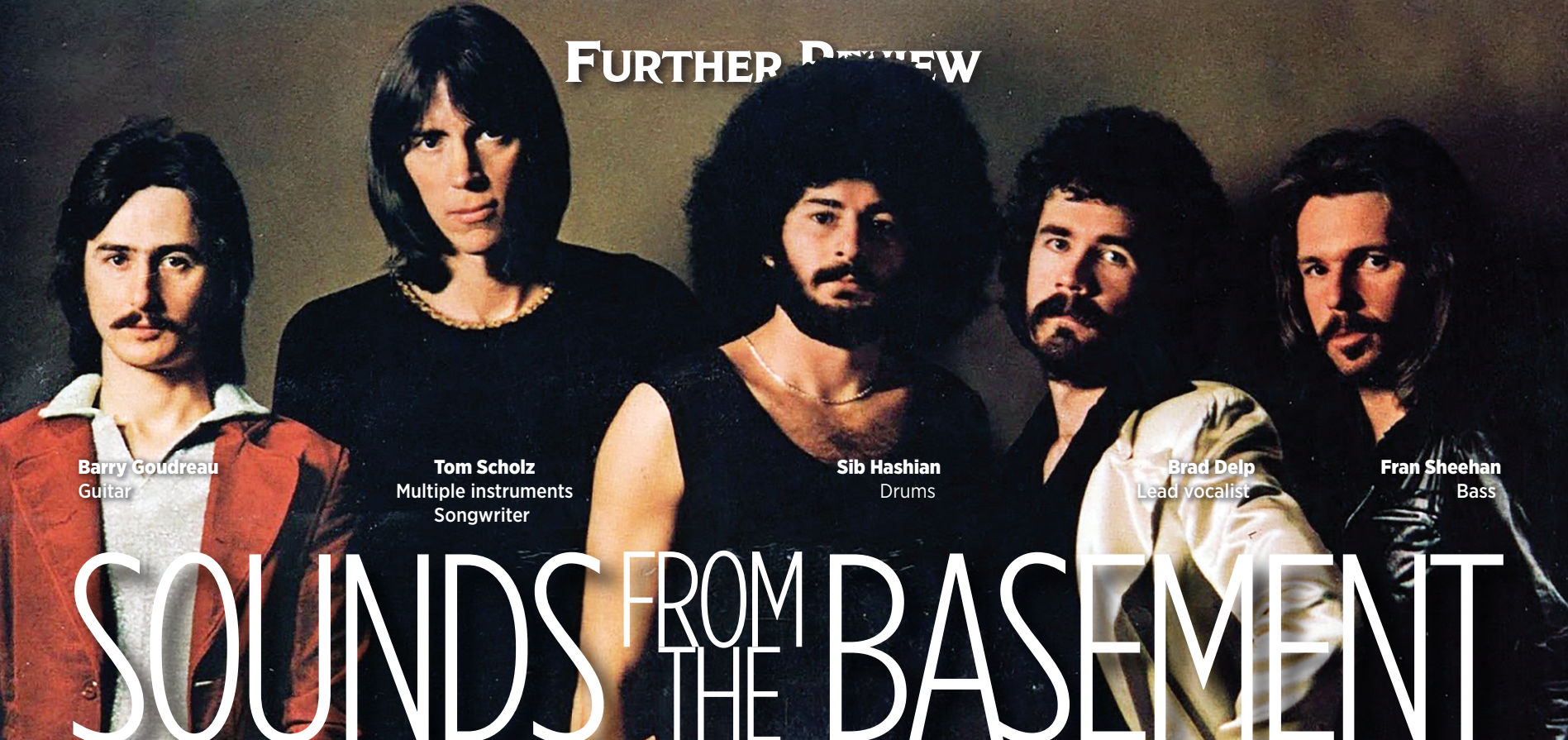




FURTHER REVIEW

Barry Goudreau
Guitar

Tom Scholz
Multiple instruments
Songwriter

Sib Hashian
Drums

Brad Delp
Lead vocalist

Fran Sheehan
Bass

SOUNDS FROM THE BASEMENT

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

It was a smash hit phenomenon of a rock album. Some considered it the epitome of album-oriented rock. Others complained it lacked heart and called it “corporate rock.”

It sold more than 17 million copies, making it the biggest-selling debut album ever, at the time. It stayed on the Billboard album chart for 132 weeks. And yet, it never hit No. 1 on that chart, peaking at No. 3.

Boston’s self-titled debut album hit record stores on Aug. 25, 1976 — a half-century ago.

A STADIUM ROCK SOUND, BUT IN A HOME RECORDING STUDIO

Born in Toledo, Ohio, in 1947, Tom Scholz was a classically trained pianist but preferred tinkering with electronics.

In 1970, he earned a master’s degree in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and went to work for Polaroid as a senior project manager. Scholz poured his paychecks into creating a studio in the basement of his apartment, where he built electronics and experimented with home recording.

Scholz began writing songs while finishing his degree at MIT and began playing local clubs with a band called Freehold, which included guitarist Barry Goudreau, drummer Jim Masdea and vocalist Brad Delp.

In 1973, the four created a new band they called Mother’s Milk. They recorded a half-dozen demos in Scholz’s studio in which Scholz combined his classical training with guitar-heavy melodic hooks inspired by the Kinks and the Yardbirds.

Scholz also used the electronic gizmos he had developed to refine their sound even further. Among the six demos were “More than a Feeling” and “Peace of Mind.”

But Mother’s Milk couldn’t interest a record label in releasing their material. The group broke up in 1974. Scholz continued to experiment and to send out tapes.

In 1975, his work paid off when music promoters Paul Ahern and Charlie McKenzie managed to get Epic Records’ attention. Epic signed a recording deal with Scholz and Delp but insisted they find a new drummer that would allow them to replicate Scholz’s richly layered recordings on stage.

Scholz and Delp recruited Goudreau, bass player Fran Sheehan and drummer Sib Hashian. The next task for the still-unnamed band was to



rerecord Delp’s demos in an actual music studio.

Not so fast, Scholz said. He wanted to continue to record in his home studio, where he felt comfortable and where he had created so

many custom-built gadgets to aid bringing his musical vision to life.

But Epic wouldn’t back down. Its agreement with the area’s electrical and broadcast union specified that any recording work it did within a 250-mile radius of Boston had to be done in a real studio and using union labor.

Scholz engineered a plan to send his colleagues to Los Angeles while he took a leave of absence from

Polaroid and his friend and co-producer John Boylan recorded backing tracks for an album. They’d then fly the tapes to L.A., where Delp could add vocals. “There was a conscious effort to deemphasize Scholz as the total mastermind behind Boston,” Cameron Crowe would later write in Rolling Stone.

By the time the album was finished, the band had selected a name — Boston — and had decided on a self-titled debut release. Scholz returned to his job at Polaroid. Disco music was big in 1975. Scholz wasn’t sure a rock album would find much of an audience.

“Boston” would spend 132 weeks on the Billboard album chart, peaking at No. 3 but selling more than 17 million copies, making it the best-selling debut album in the U.S., at the time. Boston was nominated for a Grammy Award for best new artist.

Before long, Epic began badgering Scholz for a follow up album. Scholz later called “Don’t Look Back,” released in 1978, a rushed product. It sold only half as many as “Boston,” but spent two weeks at No. 1 on the album chart.

BEHIND SOME OF THE ALBUM’S MOST NOTABLE TRACKS

More than a Feeling

Scholz based this track on a 1967 hit song, “Walk Away, Renee.” Marianne was a real person: “My older first cousin, who I had a crush on when I was 10,” he said. “I ran into her many, many years later and she was very annoyed at me for mentioning that she was my older cousin.”

Peace of Mind

This song is about finding your passion: “Now if you’re feelin’ kinda low ‘bout the dues you’ve been paying ...” Scholz sympathizes with people who feel unfulfilled working dead-end jobs. The lyrics suggest dreams can come true with a combination of talent, passion and hard work.

Foreplay

This was the first song Scholz ever wrote, back in his MIT days in 1969. He recorded it in 1971 — the first track he recorded in his basement studio — working around a riff he played on his Hammond organ. He added drums by Masdea and bass by Sheehan and tacked the song to the front of “Long Time.”

Long Time

This was another song Scholz wrote in 1969 and recorded in 1971. The addition of “Foreplay” as an instrumental intro made this track nearly eight minutes long. That’s too long for a typical single release, but in the era of album-oriented rock, many radio stations played it in its entirety.

Rock and Roll Band

Fans assumed this was an autobiographical song about Boston, but that wasn’t the case. Scholz wrote it based on stories Masdea told him before Masdea departed the band. Scholz retained Masdea’s drums on this track to make sure Masdea got a credit on the album.

Smokin’

This track had been around for a while — Scholz and the others had performed it as Mother’s Milk in the early 1970s. The lyrics include lines like “keep on tokin’” and the song’s run time on the “Boston” album was 4:20, so it was pretty clear to many fans what the song was really about.

Let Me Take You Home Tonight

This was the only track on the album recorded in Los Angeles, the only track not written by Scholz and the only song on the album recorded without Scholz. Vocalist Brad Delp wrote the track, which was released as the B-side of the band’s second single, “Long Time.”

THE GUITAR SPACECRAFT ON THE COVER

One of the things that sparked an interest in design in the heart of your Further Review guy was the awesome cover design depicting a fleet of guitar-shaped spaceships escaping an exploding Earth.

That original 1976 cover was designed by Paula Scher and illustrated by Roger Huyssen. The Boston logo was lettered by Gerard Huerta.

Boston would use that spacecraft motif on six more albums over the next four decades.



RELEASED: Aug. 15, 1978
Don’t Look Back
■ Boston’s second album spent two weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard album chart.
■ A Boston spaceship appears to be hovering in a valley on an alien world — searching, perhaps, for a place to land and rebuild a civilization.



RELEASED: Sept. 24, 1986
Third Stage
■ Spent four weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard album chart. “Amanda,” became Boston’s only No. 1 single, spending two weeks at No. 1.
■ The spaceship appears to be meeting up with a larger mother ship in orbit around a blue planet.



RELEASED: June 7, 1994
Walk On
■ Peaked at No. 7 on the Billboard album chart. Lead singer Delp and guitarist Goudreau were no longer part of the band.
■ The Boston spaceship crash lands on a planet, shattering a granite cliff.



RELEASED: June 3, 1997
Greatest Hits
■ Peaked at No. 47 on the Billboard album chart.
■ The Boston spaceship — now minus its giant nameplate out front — seems to have found another possible landing site. This one is populated with stone carvings.



RELEASED: Nov. 5, 2002
Corporate America
■ Peaked at No. 42 on the Billboard album chart.
■ The spaceship returns to an intact Earth. You can tell it’s Earth because you can see the green Mississippi River valley and the Great Lakes. Florida is below the row of clouds.



RELEASED: Dec. 3, 2013
Life, Love & Hope
■ Peaked at No. 37 on the Billboard album chart.
■ Evidently, Earth wasn’t what the travelers hoped it’d be. The Boston craft is again traversing the depths of space, passing stars, nebula and clouds of galactic dust.

Sources: “The Definitive Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock” edited by Michael Heatley, “The Encyclopedia of Pop, Rock and Soul” by Irwin Stambler, “100 Best-Selling Albums of the 70s” by Hamish Champ, “Origins of a Song: 202 True Inspirations Behind the World’s Greatest Lyrics” by Jake Grogan, SongFacts, UltimateClassicRock.com, the Atlantic

ALL PHOTOS AND ALBUM COVERS FROM EPIC, MCA, ARTEMIS AND FRONTIERS RECORDS