



David Udell, Carl Weingarten and Walter Whitney of Delay Tactics.

by Terry Perkins

It's not often that a band succeeds without one of its members assuming leadership. Most bands seem to need a central figure to focus the group's direction and make the hard decisions when nobody can seem to agree. So it's definitely out of the ordinary to find a band that makes all its decisions collectively and seems to be on the verge of achieving major recognition.

The name of the band is Delay Tactics, and they've just released their second album, *Any Questions*, on Multiphase Records. The group consists of David Udell, Carl Weingarten and Walter Whitney, three musicians who have all built solid musical reputations in the St. Louis area. Udell is the leader of Wax Theatrics, a band that's been a local fixture for the last eight years. Carl Weingarten is the founder of Multiphase Records, a label that has achieved international distribution despite being in business for only four years. Walter Whitney has issued a solo cassette on Multiphase entitled *Composer X*, and his basement studio has been the site of many of the recordings available on Multiphase.

The music created by Delay Tactics on *Any Questions* is not the typical pop fare usually heard on radio stations these days — the group creates a unique synthesis of electronic effects within a framework of rock bass and percussion. It's a blend that makes demands on the listener, but you don't have to have a degree in electronics in order to enjoy it.

I recently had the chance to talk to the members of Delay Tactics, and what was to be a short interview about their new album turned into a freewheeling discussion that lasted more than two hours and touched on a variety of musical topics. But much of their philosophy and their approaches to music can be summed up by their attitudes toward two cuts from the album, *Any Questions*.

The opening track on the LP is "Pterodactyl." Walter Whitney says, "The basic root of that song came from two drum machines that I had for a limited amount of time. I tried to create a percussion sound as random and realistic as possible by using both, and everything happened from there."

"We had three different versions of the song and finally we had Jim Mayer put a bass part on the percus-

sion," chimed in Dave Udell. "That gave things a very definite direction. Then we stripped off some rhythm tracks that seemed extraneous."

Carl Weingarten says the musical elements build into a coherent whole. "What I like about it is that I don't hear it as a guitar or a keyboard," he says. "It's just a lead *sound*. It enables you to apply a sample of any sound and, in a sense, that sound becomes a different instrument. Walter and I just finished a song in which he sampled the sound of a finger on a wine-glass. It's a high-pitched tone that ends up sounding just like a flute!"

"Under the Ice," a cut from side two, was the first thing the trio did. Udell met Weingarten while working in a record store and it just took off from there. "One day Carl asked me if I wanted to play on a record," remembers Udell. "I thought he was just another of the million weirdos you see in a record store, but the damn thing was, he actually made a record!" Still Udell played it safe — under the name Phil Neon because he wasn't sure how it would turn out. "Under the Ice" — intended as a Christmas present for Udell's mother — came out of some of their jam sessions. "I kept playing one part over and over again," says Udell, "and finally Carl said why not put the part on a tape loop?"

It was about time that they really collaborated. As Weingarten says, "We were all filling in as session men on each other's projects. Finally, we took some time to sit down and record three or four pieces together. One was 'Sahara' that came out on *Composer X*, and 'Under the Ice' was one of the others."

During the interview, it became obvious that the three members all had strong opinions concerning their music — opinions not always in agreement. But the strength of the band seems to lie in the ability of its members to put the group interest above their personal concerns. Says Whitney, "We recognize what the other members of the group do best and let them do it. But when we walk through the door to the studio, we all recognize that none of us has total control. We all envision our contributions as working together to form a whole."

That approach seems to be paying off for the band. Their new album has attracted the attention of a major record label and the record is already getting airplay on progressive radio stations on the East Coast. *Any Questions* could be the breakthrough album for one of St. Louis' most vital groups of musicians.