

THE FACES OF  
DELAWARE FASHION

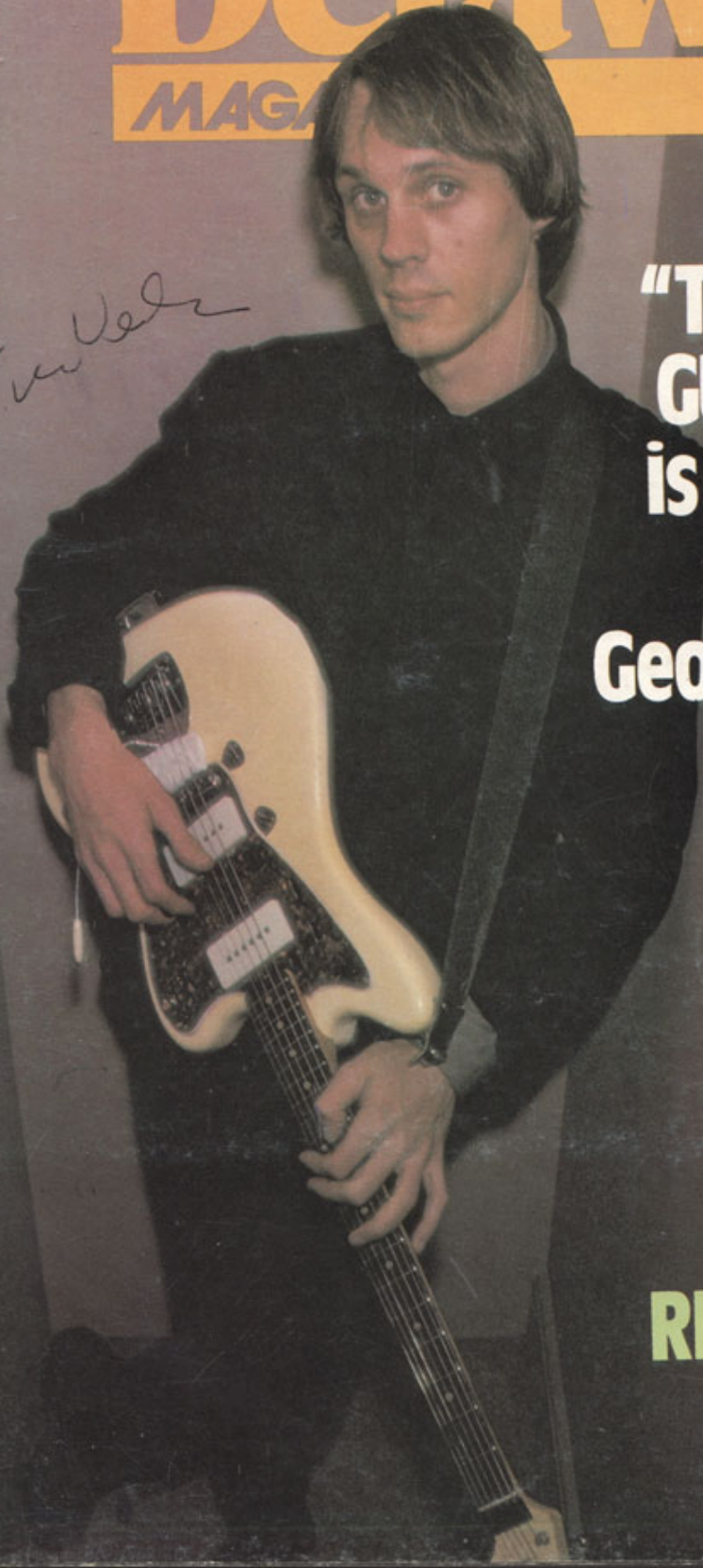
A TOWNHOUSE WITH GOOD TASTE  
CONTINUING ED • DINING OUT FOR LESS

AUGUST 1982 \$1.75

# Delaware

MAGAZINE TODAY

*Tom Verlaine*



**"THE FINEST ROCK  
GUITARIST ALIVE"  
is from Delaware,  
and it's not  
George Thorogood.**

It's **TOM  
VERLAINE**  
**TOO GOOD TO BE  
RICH AND FAMOUS  
- JUST YET**

**"EASILY THE  
MOST BRILLIANT  
AND INNOVATIVE  
AMERICAN  
GUITARIST SINCE  
HENDRIX"**

**"THE  
FINEST  
ROCK  
GUITARIST  
ALIVE"**



**"ONE OF THE MOST  
INVENTIVE AND  
RELUCTANT  
GUITAR HEROES  
IN ALL  
OF ROCK"**

By Jack Croft

*The river's so muddy,  
But it may come clear  
And I know too well,  
What's keeping me here  
I'm just a slave of the burning ray,  
Give me the night . . .  
But I'll be breaking these rocks,  
Until the Kingdom comes*

It was not the best of nights for the Guitar Hero. Indeed, he must have secretly prayed that the Kingdom would come soon. His new album was supposed to be out in time for the start of his international tour. It wasn't. His agent had neglected to tell him about the interviews he was scheduled to do within an hour of his show at the Ripley Music Hall in Philadelphia.

So now, with the droning organ of his warm-up act, The Vels, snaking through the second-floor dressing room, Tom Verlaine sat strumming his Fender electric guitar, pondering the question of whether "Words From The Front" would mark the breakthrough onto the charts that had eluded him thus far.

"I never speculate, to tell you the truth," Verlaine said. "I think if I ever had a hit, it would be just some lucky thing, some fluke."

There was no trace of bitterness in his voice. Tall, slender, bearing a striking resemblance to Keith Carradine, Verlaine likes to fend off questions with short responses and a wry sense of humor, but he hardly seemed like the

*Jack Croft, who wrote the April cover story on Ralph Moys, says he's not going to leave Dover and move to New York just so he can not be famous either.*

eccentric recluse that he is so often portrayed as being. He flashed an ironic smile as he glanced up from his guitar.

He prefers to let his music speak for itself, and it's obvious he has a distaste for the kind of self-promotion that many artists unhesitatingly submit to in their quests for success. When asked to pose for a photograph, he said, "I never go through this for magazines. I do this all the time for every record, and there's a certain limit to what I do."

Indeed, being jealous about his privacy is one reason Tom Verlaine—to quote one of his lyrics about love—"remains one of the best-kept secrets in town."

Since his days with Television, his first band, Verlaine has received the kind of critical acclaim for which many an artist would gladly sell his soul. Chip Stern, in *Musician Player and Listener* magazine, dubbed him "the finest rock guitarist alive." Robert Palmer (the *New York Times* music critic, not the rock singer) hailed him as "one of the most inventive and most reluctant guitar heroes in all of rock."

Even Linda Ronstadt, when asked by *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1978 if there were "any punk groups that you've thought made it," replied, "Well, I like Television a whole lot."

Still, it is unlikely you will hear Verlaine's latest solo work sandwiched between Styx-Journey-REO Speedwagon-Foreigner on your local radio station. "It's not formula stuff," Verlaine said of his music. "There is a certain formula that someone can make

**TOM  
VERLAINE**

a million dollars with in rock-and-roll in the United States. There's a certain kind of guitar, certain kind of amp and being on the road 300 nights a year for five years. It never fails. .38Special is an example of a band that just had that kind of success. It's like work ethic rock-and-roll."

Tom Verlaine is probably the greatest guitar player you've never heard. He views his instrument in almost mystical terms, a voice through which he can communicate thoughts, visions, emotions that he is incapable of verbalizing, or, in some cases, even understanding. He can take a single note and bend it, twist it, milk it for every shade of color, every nuance of tone.

He assumed a poet's last name, which is fitting, for many of Verlaine's lyrics can stand as poetry. But in most cases, his songs must be heard, not read, for when words fail him, he speaks through his guitar. The pain, the fear, the loneliness of the blind soldier writing home "Words From The Front" on the title track of his latest album are expressed as movingly through his breath-taking, adagio guitar solo as they are through the words themselves.

It has been said of Verlaine that he has the courage to play simply. And that is high praise indeed, in a world where frenzied bombast has replaced emotion, where the "Clapton is God" mentality still prevails. He is, as *Times* critic Palmer wrote last year, "a poet of the rock guitar."

He has been called the forefather of New Wave, a title he disdains, and with justification. For there is no posturing in Verlaine's music, as there is in that of so many of his imitators. He is a purist, viewed by most critics as an ascetic, an eccentric recluse who only comes out at night. Alone.

The roots of Tom Verlaine are to be found in Delaware, in a shy, intelligent youth named Tom Miller.

*Now Little Johnny Jewel  
He's so cool  
He had no decisions  
He's just tryin' to tell a vision*

Tom Miller and his twin brother, John, were born in December 1949 in Morristown, N.J., the only sons of Victor and Lillian Miller. When he was three-and-a-half years old, his family moved to Claymont, where, at age 8, he learned to play piano. His parents noticed that young Tom seemed to have a natural gift for music.

After moving to a fashionable, two-story house in Westgate Farms in Hockessin at age 12, Miller took saxophone lessons for about a year-and-a-half. It was during that period, while his friends were listening to the early Beatles, Stones and Kinks, that Miller began tuning in jazz shows out of Philadelphia on his radio. Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman. John Coltrane. Miller, as he recalled in an interview years later, "really fell in love with jazz."

Listening to jazz and playing the sax were to have a profound impact on the way Miller later approached the guitar. In a 1979 interview with *Musician Player and Listener* magazine, he explained:

"There's a theory about the voice, how you voice the guitar, how you bring out that note. An instrument is a voice—an extension of your inner self. There's a real voice inside the instrument that you can bring out. You know, I listen to a lot of saxophone players and cellists. If you listen to someone like Pablo Casals you realize that he knows how to breathe with the instrument, which is the necessity of the horn, and that might have something to do with the way I approach the guitar—putting something out on your breath instead of going whango and pouring out a million notes. I played saxophone for two years—not very well—and that might have something to do with the way I voice my guitar."

Miller enrolled at Sanford School, less than a mile from his home, in 9th grade, and began playing an acoustic guitar. "When he was 13, he picked up a guitar, and that was it. He taught himself to play," his mother recalled.

At Sanford, Miller met Billy Ficca, the son of Wilmington dentist James P. Ficca. Ficca played drums, and the two began jamming together, trying to form a group.

"When they first got started, nobody would let them practice," Lillian Miller recalled, sitting at the kitchen table of her home. "So I let them practice in the recreation room downstairs. Oh my God, the first day they started, I thought the roof would come off. I was not into rock-and-roll at the time. They were awful. But they got better."

Indeed they did. But not for several years.

Miller was an avid reader, but he was not a very good student. "I never liked school," he said. While at Sanford, he ran away from school several times with

an out-of-state boarder. Finally, he transferred to McKean High School for his senior year where, he once joked, he was voted "Most Unknown" by his peers.

The 1967 McKean yearbook contains no photograph of a Tom Miller in the graduating class. "He didn't want his picture taken," his mother said. "He couldn't care less about school. As long as he could play his guitar, he was happy."

Almost immediately after graduation, Miller left "the parochial backwaters of Delaware, from which he was so determined to escape," as the British publication *Melody Maker* once put it.

"The main reason (for leaving) was that I couldn't find anybody who was real serious about starting a group," he said. "There were plenty of guys who liked to play on Saturday afternoons in the garage and stuff, but nobody seemed to really want to start a band."

Bowing to his parents' wishes, Miller enrolled at Erskine College in South Carolina. He lasted three days.

"That bothered me a little bit," his mother said. "I thought he would go on to college. At that time, everybody went to college."

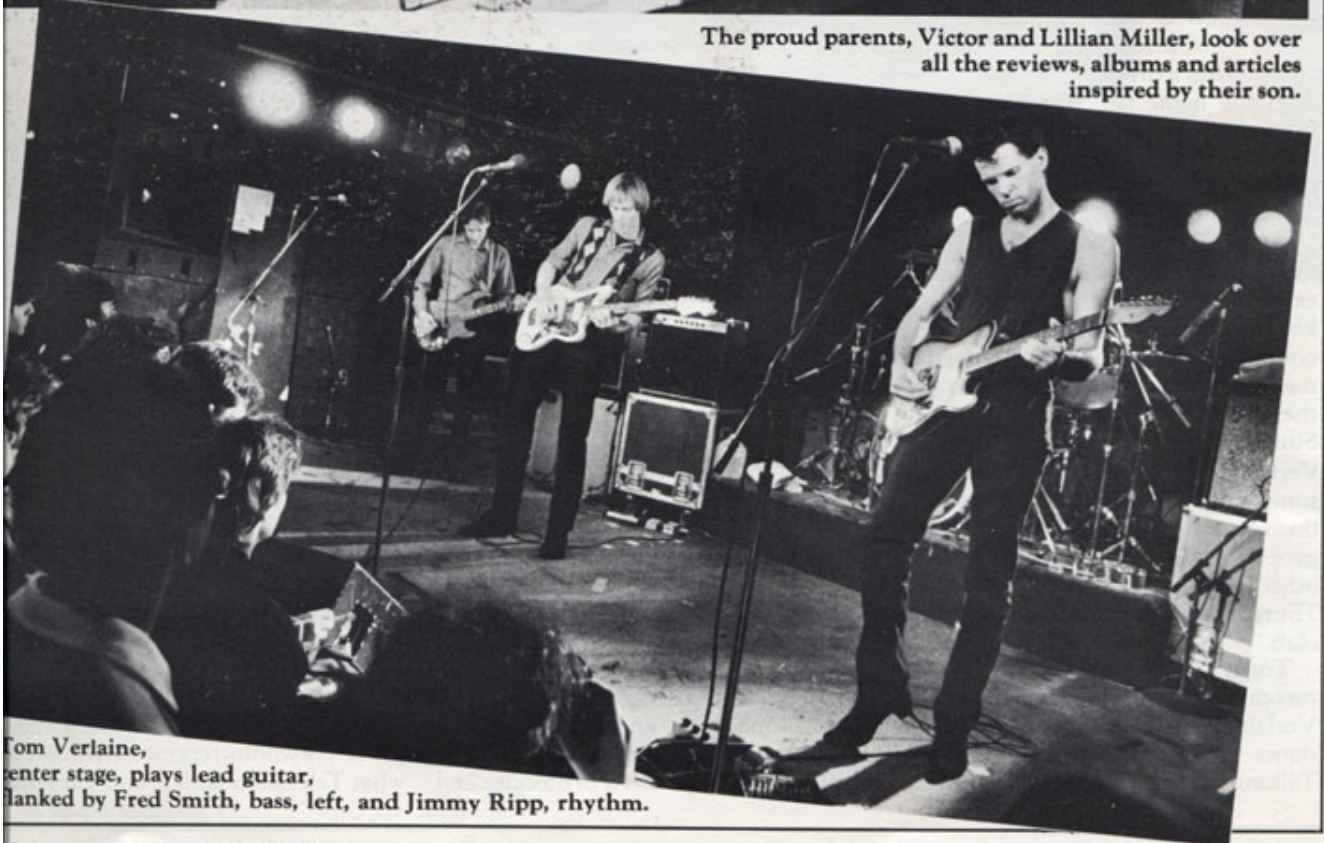
Instead, Miller lit out for New York, where he lived with various friends while holding a number of jobs, including one as a salesman at the Strand Book Store in Greenwich Village. He adopted the last name of Paul Verlaine, the 19th century French Symbolist poet, and "had little junky things published" in local magazines.

One of the magazines that published his work was run by Richard Hell, the out-of-state boarder with whom Verlaine had several times run away from Sanford. Verlaine, in the interview at the Ripley Music Hall, said that his early writings were mainly "humorous stuff—especially humorous when you read it today." During his first four years in New York, which Verlaine described as "a learning experience," he also stayed up one night writing a book of poetry with Patti Smith, who was to become one of the most creative forces in the New Wave-punk movement.

In 1971, Verlaine and Hell teamed up with fellow Sanford alum Ficca to form The Neon Boys. The New York music scene at the time was populated by glitter bands, all flash, but with little substance. The Neon Boys were the



The proud parents, Victor and Lillian Miller, look over all the reviews, albums and articles inspired by their son.



Tom Verlaine, center stage, plays lead guitar, flanked by Fred Smith, bass, left, and Jimmy Ripp, rhythm.

Photography by MEL EVANS

seminal punk band.

Fronted by the flamboyant Hell, snarling and jumping around the stage in shirts too small for him, the band was all emotion and raw energy. But as Andy Schwartz pointed out in an article in Music and Sound Output last year, its first recordings showed the brilliant promise that Verlaine was later to fulfill.

"Verlaine's overdubbed rhythm and lead parts on 'That's All I Know (Right Now)' and 'Love Comes in Spurts' contain, in a crude but thrilling form, all the essential elements of his style: slashing chords straight up from the Who's 'My Generation'; skittering, skywalking leads that seem closer to the burbling electric jug sounds of the 13th Floor Elevator than to any stock B.B. King or Chuck Berry riffs; and a tensile, cutting Fender tone that stands in stark contrast to the fat, fuzzy Les Paul sounds of the early '70s," Schwartz wrote.

In 1973, the Neon Boys evolved into Television. Terry Ork took the trio under his wing, and introduced them to a friend named Richard Lloyd, who was living in his downtown loft, practicing the guitar and searching for a kindred spirit. He found what he was looking for in Verlaine, and joined the band as the second guitarist.

The origin of the name Television is open to dispute. The most obvious explanation is that it stemmed from Verlaine's initials (TV). Another account has a drunken Hell coming up with the name late one night when, dissatisfied with other potential names, he noticed a TV set in the corner of the room.

Searching for a place to play, Ork and Verlaine approached Hilly Kristal, owner of a run-down, Bowery beer joint called CBGB's. The bar featured the kind of music its initials stood for: country, bluegrass and blues. The two managed to convince Kristal to give them a shot. "He said, 'I'll put you on Sunday night. It's a dead night,'" Verlaine recalled. "And we brought something of a following in, which led them to put other bands on, any they gave us Saturday night, which led to other bands and opening up Friday and Thursday nights until it became a rock club."

Today, CBGB's is regarded as the mecca of punk rock. It was created by Verlaine and Hell, who opened the doors for such acts as Patti Smith, Talking Heads and Blondie. Indeed,



Tom Verlaine, on stage, at the Ripley Music Hall.

Hell penned the first punk anthem while with Television, "Blank Generation:"

*I was sayin'  
let me out of here  
before I was even born.  
It's such a gamble  
when you get a face . . .  
I belong to the blank generation.  
And I can take it  
or leave it each time.*

However, Hell and Verlaine were as different as the pseudonyms they chose for themselves, and in 1975, they parted ways. Hell was replaced on bass by Fred Smith, formerly of Blondie, and

Television became Verlaine's band. That same year, Island Records sent Brian Eno, then with Roxy Music, to New York to produce a demo tape of the band. Verlaine hated it, nixed a potential recording deal, and released Television's first single, "Little John Jewel," on Ork Records, an independent label named after the band's manager.

The record sold for two dollars, and is now a collector's item. Shortly after it was released, Nick Tosches gave the record a plug in Penthouse magazine: "A Verlaine original, 'Little Johnny Jewel' is a wholly representative taste of what Television is all about. The lyrics

*continued on page 40*



Everything  
for "My Lady"

Dresses, Coats,  
Lingerie, Sportswear  
and Boutique Items

also Our Young "Miss Jo's"

ROCKLAND ROAD  
Montchanin, Delaware 19710  
9 to 4:30 & Saturday 10-4

### Elegant Country Romance

Relive the romance of a quiet past while surrounding yourself with all the modern comforts of our time. Over 100 colonially appointed rooms on 58 scenic acres nestled in the Heart of Amish Farmlands.



FOR A MEMORABLE LODGING & DINING EXPERIENCE  
Route 896, Strasburg (Lancaster County), PA 17579  
Call or write for free brochure: 717-687-7691

## VERLAINE

continued from page 22

are truculent, devoid of pretention, and almost mystic in their breezy concision. The music is a blend of honest, untheatrical rock 'n' roll and freeblown weirdness . . . Records on small, one-shot labels are usually trite and amateurish. 'Johnny Jewel,' however, shames most everything issued by major companies."

The major companies took note. After his disillusioning experience with Eno and Island Records, Verlaine gained a reputation of being overly cautious, even eccentric, in dealing with record companies. Finally, on Aug. 12, 1976, Television signed a one-year, one-album contract with Elektra Records, based in Los Angeles.

Verlaine, in an interview with Hit Parader shortly before Television's first album was released, said that cutting a record for Elektra fulfilled a dream he had had since he was a teenager. "I wanted to do a record since I was 16. . . . Even then, Elektra was the label I was fascinated with, really. When I was 16 it was the Doors and Love, and I thought their covers were great. It looked like somebody there really cared about the sound. They had the first great rock engineers, they really cared about it. It seemed like the hippest label, it was the hippest label," he said.

Elektra brought in Andy Johns, who had earned a reputation as one of the best rock producers through his work with the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, to help with "Marquee Moon," Television's debut album. However, that was virtually the extent of Elektra's support for the band that many critics hailed as the most promising in the country.

"Marquee Moon" launched Television on a whirlwind world tour, during which the band was featured in almost every publication from Time to Al Goldstein's National Screw. The record was a huge success in England, and was named by the British publication, Sounds, as album of the year for 1977. The New Musical Express, a London publication, hailed "Marquee Moon" as a work of genius":

"If this review needs to state anything in big, bold, black type it's simply this: 'Marquee Moon' is an album for everyone whatever their musical creeds and/or quirks. Don't let any other critic put you off with jive turkey terms like 'avant-garde' or 'New York psych-rock.' This music is passionate, full-

## HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. ONLY \$89

### LABOR DAY WEEKEND

4 days/ 3 nights at luxurious Hyatt Hotel for two.  
Dinner on Fri., Sat. & Sunday Brunch for two.  
Offer limited to 10 families that qualify. Call  
478-3800 Today to find out how you can qualify.

478-3800



(Associated With  
Sachs Realty)



**WNRK**  
1260 AM  
Newark, Del.

Your kind of Radio  
to Reach  
Your kind of Customers  
in Greater Newark

### WNRK Radio

Cook Broadcasting Inc.  
496 Walther RD., Newark, Delaware 19702  
(302) 737-5200

blooded, dazzlingly well-crafted, brilliantly conceived and totally accessible to anyone who (like myself) has been yearning for a band with the vision to break on through into new dimensions of sonic overdrive and the ability to back it up," the reviewer wrote.

And "Marquee Moon" has more than stood the test of time. In his 1979 Music and Sound Output article, Schwartz called it an "acknowledged classic beyond category." Five years later, it sounds as fresh, as daring, as exhilarating as the day it was released. Verlaine's guitar solos on the title track and on "Torn Curtain" defy description. They moved one critic to label Verlaine "easily the most brilliant and innovative American guitarist since Hendrix."

The record also remains the personal favorite of one Lillian Miller. "It's going to be a classic someday," she said. When her son appeared at the Ripley Music Hall, Mrs. Miller met him in the dressing room, and asked him to include "Marquee Moon" in his set for her. He did.

The album features one of the most beautiful songs that Verlaine, or anyone else, for that matter, has written. "Venus" was a classic years before it ever appeared on Television's debut record, a favorite of the band's cult following at CBGB's. The haunting, imagistic lyrics deal with Verlaine's most recurrent themes: night, loneliness, love, freedom, depicting a dream-like, ethereal netherworld.

*Tight toy night,  
streets were so bright  
The world looked so thin  
and between my bones and skin  
there stood another person  
who was a little surprised  
to be face to face  
with a world so alive.  
I fell.*

In a 1978 interview with Melody Maker, Verlaine discussed his beliefs about the transcendental attributes of music:

"Music can express more than a physical reality. It's capable of more than the imitation of reality. It's such a wierd experience...it's so mysterious. I find it difficult to talk about.

"There are all these patterns, and lack of patterns, that are really new patterns forming, and you try to make sense of them, locate them and understand them. Music is like a way of going beyond yourself. It's like an emotional

drive that takes you further and further out. It's a way of allowing yourself freedom, absolute freedom, not suppressing your own awareness."

Television's second album proved to be its last. But what a way to go. "Adventure" garnered the same rave reviews as its predecessor, and was even more commercially accessible. "Glory," still Verlaine's catchiest tune ("When I see the glory, I ain't got a worry") opened the record, and was followed by the bittersweet "Days," featuring a jangling, Roger McGuinn-style lead guitar line that Verlaine once described as " 'Mr. Tamborine Man' played backwards."

After a final round of performances in New York in the fall of 1978, Television broke up, primarily because Verlaine and Lloyd wanted to move in different directions. Verlaine released his first solo album, titled simply "Tom Verlaine," on Elektra in July 1979.

The record featured "Kingdom Come," a song covered by David Bowie on his "Scary Monsters" album, and "Breakin' In My Heart," an improvisational tour-de-force that Television performed on rare occasions to showcase Verlaine's guitar mastery. On record, Verlaine has always been in complete control, his playing understated and restrained. On "Breakin' In My Heart," Verlaine cut loose with a dazzling solo. But once again, only the critics noticed.

The record received virtually no airplay, and worse, in Verlaine's eyes, was its lack of support by Elektra. There followed the worst year in Verlaine's life, as he was embroiled in a legal battle to get out of his contract with Elektra. When the dust settled, he was with Warner Brothers.

"There seemed to be a better interest in what I was doing at Warners, what amounts to having a record company on your case," Verlaine said. "If there are people there who actually like what you do, they think that something good's got to happen to this guy. So they try to help, whereas if you're on a label where nobody knows who you are or cares, or thinks you're a junkie—which is part of the reason I left Elektra. They're a very West Coast-oriented thing. They thought of me as some junkie band from New York."

Verlaine spent most of 1980 in self-imposed exile. No recording. No touring. But with the release of his debut album for Warners, "Dreamtime," in September of last year, he returned with a vengeance. Verlaine put together a touring band featuring



**Brandywine  
Rug Co.**

SALE

**Fine Oriental-Rugs**

KASHAN Red & Blue 19<sup>6</sup> x 12<sup>8</sup>

PURE SILK QUM Ivory/Red/Blue 5<sup>2</sup> x 3<sup>6</sup>

SILK WOOL IS FAHAN Blue & Ivory 7<sup>9</sup> x 5<sup>2</sup>

North of Dupont Country Club on Rockland Road  
654-1121

## Delaware Today Delivers!

- Our magazine delivers a statewide readership that's definitely in a position to use your product or service.
- 67.5% of our readers earn greater than 30,000 per year.

**BE A PART OF IT!**

Call today for  
Advertising Rates.

**Delaware  
MAGAZINE TODAY**

**(302) 995-7146**

# TILE & CARPET OUTLET

Providing Complete installation service for  
all Commercial and Residential needs.  
Trained personnel with over 80 years  
combined experience.  
Quality • Service • Satisfaction

**Tile • Ceramic Tile • No-Wax Vinyl • Hardwood  
Parquet Flooring • Carpet Accessories • Blinds  
Woven Woods • Wall Coverings • MirrorTile  
• Mirrors**

All by Famous Brand Names Such as...  
*Armstrong • Congoleum • Mannington • Tarkette  
Levalor • Graber • Delmar Windows • Tentina  
Sykes • Hartco • Bruce  
Pepperell • Cabin Craft  
Downs • Armstrong  
American Olean • Wenzel  
And Many More*



We believe in  
American know-how and  
craftsmanship. And we're  
proud to say that over 90% of  
the Fine Home Products you'll  
find at **Tile & Carpet Outlet**  
were made in the U.S.A.

# TILE & CARPET OUTLET

DELAWARE'S ONLY ARMSTRONG CARPET STUDIO.  
MEMBER OF THE DELAWARE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.  
**1126 KIRKWOOD HWY.(NEXT TO LUM'S)  
NEWARK, DEL.  
(302)731-1721**



**HOURS:**  
Mon.- Fri. 9-9  
Sat. 9-5  
Sun. 12-5

We will match or better any price for like materials in Delaware  
**PLUS**  
We guarantee our workmanship and a quality line product

Television bassist Fred Smith; Jimmy Ripp, formerly of Kid Creole and the Coconuts, on rhythm guitar; and Jay Dee Daughterty, who played with Patti Smith for years, on drums.

Stereo Review's Steve Simels wrote of "Dreamtime": "Even if you haven't fallen for Tom Verlaine in the past, you should hear this record; if there was a better piece of rock-and-roll foisted on the public in 1981, it didn't cross my desk." The album received similar reviews from Rolling Stone, *The Village Voice*, N.Y. *Rocker* and the Boston Phoenix.

The songs continue to explore the mysterious realm beyond physical reality. As Verlaine sings in "Fragile," "I've got to face what's never there."

It also contains a Dylanesque put-down, "A Future In Noise":

*You're a graduate of  
the Reemco School of Numbness  
and you walk in here  
with your fifteen degrees  
telling everyone you knew  
they must be some kind of puppet  
and how the big mirage,  
it is your specialty  
who can believe you*

Verlaine is on the road again this summer, touring the U.S. and Europe to support "Words From The Front," released in May. The title track is destined to be a classic, a stark vignette of the devastation of war as portrayed by a blind soldier:

*John died last night  
He had no chance  
Beneath the surgeon's drunken hands  
It's hard to see  
Who's about  
The fires we light  
Soon smolder out*

When Verlaine played in Boston last fall, one local musician told a reporter, "Every guitarist in town is here." That appears to be Verlaine's fate. He has stubbornly refused to compromise himself or his music. As a result, he is a "cult hero," while guitarists of far less talent and imagination are "super-stars."

Somehow, the inherent unfairness of that doesn't seem to bother Verlaine. He still lives simply in the West Village, where he has found the freedom he sought 14 years ago when he left Delaware.

"I think of New York as being my home," he said. "That was the place, when I moved to it, that felt like home. As much as I ever feel at home." ●