This article was originally published shortly after Electro-Harmonix's visit to the Soviet Union in July of 1979.

**STRANGE EYES**

At curtain rise, six musicians are standing in front of a luminous tapestry of atomic spirals, symbols, and words rotating and flashing. The crowd that has gathered to hear them is packed into a tiny, nauseatingly hot space, unable to move. Everyone is pouring sweat. The temperature seems to be over 100 F. All these neatly dressed people are excited to be here, and hearing the famous Americans. But something between suspicion and curiosity immobilizes their faces, and they stare at the stage with strange eyes. Caught at just one instant, in the permanence of a photograph, this audience appears to be stunned, or horrified, or sleepy, or sad, or perhaps thinking, "you've got to be kidding!"

That's Willie Magee, who once played guitar in Harlem's famed Apollo Theatre, motoring the Electro-Harmonix Work Band to begin with a certain number by K.C. and the Sunshine Band, in C, all at once. 98 decibels of "Shake Your Body" are echoing through Sokolniki Park and nearby Red Square and bringing the news to the better part of downtown Moscow.

Paul Staff in goggles, satin, and American flag motif don't wait for the cue and then swings in acrobatically from the hand-pulked dome-like ceiling, narrowly missing the lead guitarist Larry DeMarco's eye (it bleeds; no show goes on). The president of the company, Mike Matthews, is putting down a heavy load on the electric piano through the all-time best-selling electronic music accessory, the "Small Stone," alongside the bass of Kenney Richardson. Charles (Cookie) Cook on drums completes the ensemble. And through the group has never played together before, and have not practiced one song before their performing debut, by the end of this two-week Russia gig all hands members will agree that this was the hottest, most energetic, most memorable music experience of their lives.

And now the Russians are beginning to smile! "You don't see a whole lot of smiling going on in Moscow," notes Willie. "Though they are packed together so tight they barely have room to lift their elbows, somehow the Russian audience has started to smile at Willie and Paul's urging, to Sly and the Family Stone's "I Want to Take You Higher." But, oh, oh, what's that? New Willie...
The Electro-Harmonix Work Band comes to Moscow

In contrast, the Electro-Harmonix Work Band comes to Moscow in the first place. The band is composed of American and Russian musicians who have been touring together for several years, and they are known for their innovative use of electronic instruments. The band's name, "E-H," is derived from the name of the company that makes the equipment they use.

The E-H line of equipment includes synthesizers, drum machines, and other instruments that are widely used in the music industry. The band is known for its use of these instruments in their performances, which are often characterized by their experimental nature.

The band's recent tour of Moscow was well-received by the local audience, who were impressed by the band's use of electronic instruments and their ability to create unique and interesting sounds.

The band's upcoming concert in Moscow is expected to be a highlight of the music scene in the city, and it is anticipated that the band will continue to tour and perform in other cities around the world.
"Every show was like a Madison Square Garden concert."
— Willie Magee

"Mike Matthews has the vitality of an eight-year-old... who else could put a band together in one day and have them draw these kinds of crowds? The Electro-Harmonix Work Band could be a top group if they stayed together!"
— Charles "Cookie" Cook

"We symbolized freedom for them. They looked at us and thought about all the cool and wonderful things that we're able to do."
— Larry De Marco

"You definitely discover another person inside yourself with all the worship, all the varnish. You try not to destroy what they're giving you."
— Paul Staff

"The Russians are good musicians technically... but they're just getting their feelings together for rock."
— Mike Matthews

"...an exotic injection, a shot of ecstasy."
— Kenney Richardson

"We symbolized freedom for them. They looked at us and thought about all the cool and wonderful things that we're able to do."
— Larry De Marco
remembers with horror a chicken served nearly raw, and they couldn’t get used to the Russian food. Willie fact, thought that they were going to die of starvation; unemployed and drinking wine in the street. handmade ostrich cowboy boots. But he notices that as a musician anywhere, “ says Cookie. smoothnes—“just like a record!”—and with guitarist for his group The Fakirs. He is impressed with the band’s Electro-Harmonix repertoire, which he intends to learn of banding together that was needed in Russia, with its U.S., a South American. connected with individualism, and something that can’t an old line we used to use in my group,” Kenney laughs: “you on drugs?” Everyone thinks this is very funny.”That’s

waved, ‘The sky! The trees!”

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On the strength of July the Electro-Harmonix Band are guests in the home of the U.S. Ambassador to Russia for an Independence Day Fourth of July party. Famous the green takes the band to the winning place, but after a take of nil or two through the Moscow street. Mike leading with his head in the air, the not following like dogs,” recalls Paul, “leads Paul at the palatial diplomatic establishment, with its doormen in white gloves and a doorman announcing distinguished guests, and they walk right to the door. Mike and Manny are in perfect shape. Their contingent are wearing red flashlights and around their waists. “What are those red?” asks someone in a three-piece suit. “To attract attention,” answers Mike. “For the honor of the host Paul is keeping his man under control and communiqués most the beautiful woman present among an almost in a flash. The band is in their most formal attire, neat and handsome. Mike, in fact, looks like deborian in his upper-class Matisse outfit of white shirt, blue trousers and black shoes who bears a band of the American honor guard stands to attention and salutes him. All the crowd is applauding. The band hangs out, earth pits and table lamps and giant green fresh orange juice and small additional turkey legs into a Steamboat for the band stand. It was so amazing in its own, “Cookie. “My experiences in Russia, Moscow, and works as a radio sportscaster), “and all of a sudden


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Kenney Richardson quality control and new products, musician, tester and international salesman, played bass in Moscow, through his usual instrument is guitar. He was tapped for the trip because Mike likes his fluid and refreshing playing style, and because he is also a great demonstrator. “The gamble paid off—he was essential on bass. And his cosmopolitan sophistication and cool beauty swept a lot of the hippest Russian chicks off their feet,” according to Mike.

Manny Zapata director of international marketing administration, was responsible for the details of setting up and running of the show, as well as the logistics of the trip, all of which he handled with superhuman skill. Mike calls Manny “a brilliant action-oriented administrator.”

Charles (Cookie) Cook of Ithaca, N.Y. on drums was the only member of the WORK BAND not currently working at Electro-Harmonix in New York. A friend and musical partner from Mike’s college days, Cookie was at that time playing for U.S. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Mike says he’s seen hundreds of drummers, and Cookie is one of my all time favorites. He really makes you feel the band.”

Mike Matthews president of Electro-Harmonix, played dominant leads and rhythms on electric piano through the Small Stone. An entrepreneur, industrialist, and musician, Mike conceived of, produced, and directed the Russia trip, and put together the band as composed here. Through his foresight, based on success doing business with Hungary and at trade shows in East Germany, space was booked in Moscow before first word of Elton John’s summer tour there broke, the event confirmed Mike’s thoughts about the potential both to do business in Russia and to have some fun there too, turning people on with E-H sounds and lights.

Willie Magee vice president of sales, “played driving guitar, sang heavy soul, and for a show stopper picked his guitar with his teeth.” In Russia Willie took charge of the band and gave the music a fabric. “Without him, there would have been the chaos of a jam session,” says Mike. “But he insisted on a top quality professional show.”

Bob Bednarz artist and engineer, was sent to Russia to install his newly-designed line of electronic art, one of Mike’s favorite projects of the future.

Larry De Marco customer relations manager, played lead guitar using a great variety of Electro-Harmonix sound effects, from the simple and tiny Muff Fuzz to the new and complicated Micro-Synthesizer. He was selected for the trip over the many other excellent lead guitar players in the company because he is, in Mike’s opinion, the best demonstrator and “a virtuoso player whose lead riffs astonished Russia’s leading artists. He’ll play all day.” Last year Larry worked the Leipzig trade show in East Germany all by himself, where he was mobbed.

Paul Staff sales and special promo man, sang, danced, and performed many feats of showmanship for the Russian audience. He and Mike work especially well together on vocal and piano, with Paul making up 3/4 of their lyrics and Mike doing 3/4 of the melody and musical feel. “We can groove together anytime,” says Mike, “and he’ll always knock me out.”

THE ELECTRO-HARMONIX WORK BAND

Independence Day Party, July 4, 1979, U.S. Ambassador’s Residence, Moscow

(left to right) Kenney Richardson, Manny Zapata, Charles (Cookie) Cook, Mike Matthews, Willie Magee, Bob Bednarz (standing), Larry De Marco, and Paul Staff.