

FROM PAGE 10
themselves, fiddling around. They decided that it should be a tango. We'd been watching *Last Tango* on video when working on the second album, so it became a tango!"

The problem with having a successful debut LP is coming up with material for the followup:

you're too busy raising your touring profile to do write songs.

"After the first LP people had certain expectations, but no one felt we had accomplished so much that we could really sit back. At the same time I needed time to write. So we ended up taking two years in between records, and I think

we'll take another two years. By April we should be finished with all the touring, and I'll have next year to take off and write."

Mixture

Vega's latest album is a mixture of older songs, written as far back as 1978, and new

material written with her band. How did you find writing with other people?

"I like it — the thing about working with a band is you have to act as director and editor, 'cause it's still my name that goes on the album. But they were really inventive and could come up with wonderful things.

So I could pick and choose what I wanted and I learned a lot about the structure of the music."

Vega avoids the confessional style of Joni Mitchell, preferring to her songs to have characters, or an observational tone. "I never write about things that are purely abstract, all the songs are partly the truth and fiction mixed together. But people who think I'm talking about myself are mistaken. That's not to say I don't share the feelings of the characters, I pick them because I have a certain sympathy with them, an emotional parallel. I'm not just writing about people that I'm spying on."

While many of her songs have been labelled introspective, Vega's pop skills are evident on 'Marlene' and 'Luka,' the latter being a rarity: a Top 5 song about child abuse. Who was Luka?

"There was a boy I used to know in one of my old neighbourhoods, whose name was Luka. He was about nine or 10 years old, and I used to see him playing outside the building. The thing is I never knew if he was an abused child, and I suspect that he wasn't, but I was taken with his name and his character and his face, and he seemed set apart from other kids when I saw him playing. So I guess I kind of took his name and used it for the point of view in the song."

Language

"A lot of people figure that because it's a woman's voice singing, it must be a woman. But I was thinking more of the language of a nine-year-old rather than an adult woman. An adult woman would have handled it differently."

Luka's almost down-playing the situation, like a child would to avoid flak.

"That in a way is the point of the song. He'll never tell you what's going on. But you can definitely read between the lines. And that's the way I think a real child would have done it."

"Also, some people ask, Why is it a cheery song? But I hadn't meant to make it cheery, only matter-of-fact. That's why I used major chords. I didn't want it to be a sad melancholy song about the boy sitting on a stoop feeling sorry for himself. I wanted there to be some spirit to it, I felt the real kid was very tough and would have survived."

Legend

On the latest album some songs seem to require a particularly literate audience. 'Wooden Horse,' for example, is based on the German legend of Kaspar Hauser, the boy who spent his first 17 years locked in a cellar. 'Calypso' is a character in the *Odyssey*.

"I've never thought of it that way, I guess I write about those things that interest me, and

since I read a lot, it's more that I get excited by an idea or something I've seen or read. I think it's possible to enjoy the songs without knowing what they're about."

You've done an English degree — what was your field?

"Actually my English degree was kinda like a weird thing. I was mostly going to school because I just wanted to finish it. But my these was a one-act play I wrote around the life and work of Carson McCullers, and I acted as her and her characters in this play."

Vega first found her creative voice not in music or writing, however, but in dance. She studied dancing for several years at the NY High School of Performing Arts, the *Fame* school.

Your music seems so personal, yet dance seems the most extroverted of art forms:

"I found that also," says Vega. "I was doing the Martha Graham technique, which is also somewhat introspective, her philosophy of dancing. But most of the time I found I didn't really have the temperament to really get out there and compete with other dancers. If I couldn't be the best, I'd be the worst. And that's not exactly the right attitude to have. If I couldn't get noticed one way, I'd get noticed another."

Weary

You've been on the road several months now. How do you deal with the machinery that takes over?

"It's really hard, you have to struggle with it. You start feeling a certain weariness. You have to keep it new, keep listening to tapes and make sure you're performing the best way you can. I try to take time for myself everyday, do my morning and evening prayers, because I'm a Buddhist and I've been practising for 12 years. You have to make time for those things, otherwise you just go bananas. Sometimes you have to get angry with people and say no, I'm not going to do this extra thing. I don't care how successful we're being."

What do you do now to kick your heels up?

"I've been wondering about that myself lately, 'cause it's been a while. A few years ago I'd say, well I go out to the Kettle of Fish and have a few drinks and stay up till four o'clock in the morning, carrying on and talking. But now, I don't go out nearly as much. I'm tired, I just go home and got to bed. For amusement, I just take baths, which sounds very boring. Or I go shopping. I buy makeup and ... experiment with it. I don't wear a lot of makeup, but I buy a lot of it and fiddle with it!"

Well, Suzanne's tired: it's 9.30am in New York, and 1.30am the next morning here. So let's both get some sleep! "Alrighty!" she says.

Chris Bourke

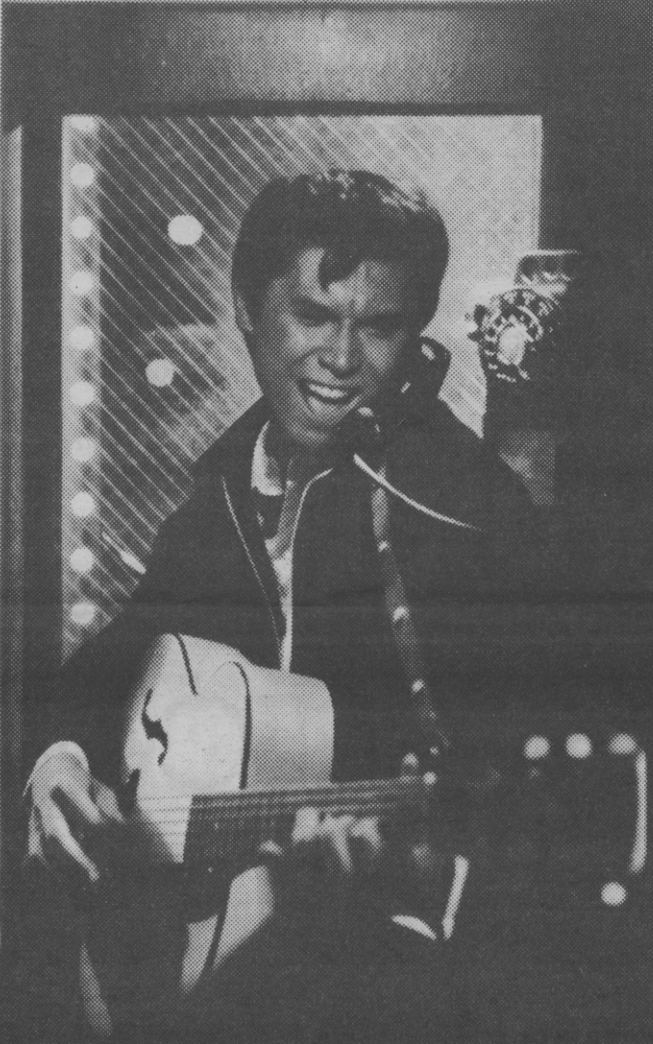
LA BAMB A

He's got three hits on the charts.

A million screaming fans.

A girl he loves named Donna.

And he's only 17.



COLUMBIA PICTURES PRESENTS · A NEW VISIONS PRODUCTION · LA BAMB A · ESAI MORALES · ROSANA DeSOTO · ELIZABETH PEÑA
 JOE PANTOLIANO · LOU DIAMOND PHILLIPS · ORIGINAL MUSIC BY CARLOS SANTANA AND MILES GOODMAN · DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ADAM GREENBERG
 EXECUTIVE PRODUCER JOEL SILL · EXECUTIVE PRODUCER STUART BENJAMIN · PRODUCED BY TAYLOR HACKFORD AND BILL BORDEN · WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LUIS VALDEZ
 GY SOME CONTENT MAY OFFEND · DOLBY STEREO · DIGITAL SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON CD, VHS, AND LASERDISC
 © 1987 COLUMBIA PICTURES INDUSTRIES, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

See it at a Kerridge Odeon Cinema (Auckland now showing from September 11 nationwide)

SCHOOL OF AUDIO ENGINEERING 1987

Established 1980 with the assistance of the
QUEEN ELIZABETH II ARTS COUNCIL of New Zealand.

OCTOBER 24th — NOVEMBER 2nd

NEW ZEALAND'S ONLY 24 TRACK RECORDING SCHOOL

HARLEQUIN RECORDING STUDIOS 112 Albert St, Auckland City

All enquiries and applications to:
SCHOOL OF AUDIO ENGINEERING,
P.O. BOX 7125, Wellesley St,
Auckland.

Or phone (business hours only):
HARLEQUIN — 779-353 or 799-826
(LIMITED PLACES AVAILABLE)