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mood at the time. Generally, there's a different mood happening at the beginning, middle, and end of a tour. Sometimes around the middle of the tour, you get bored and come up with new ways to keep yourself interested. And then towards the end of a tour, when you feel like you're about to go home, perhaps you start to tighten up again.

How does either of you feel about the idea of purity of convention? There's still this attitude about what constitutes so-called authentic jazz or rock, especially in regard to the use of electronics, drum machines, and such. It seems to me an anachronistic, if not fascist, attitude.

OR-L: I hate all that. I'm so sick of people saying that we don't have songs, or trying to impose guidelines on what music is and can be. They're choking the life out of it because they don't want it to evolve into anything beyond their own understanding. People who say that rock music should only be verse-chorus-verse, that jazz shouldn't contain electronics, or offer up similarly lame rules are purists—and purists are boring. Purists are the same people who got down on Miles Davis and Bob Dylan for going electric.

LH: We've never tried to purposefully combine styles, but rather make music that doesn't conform to one style. In a way, the more you work with music, the less you can think like that. Mars Volta has been on the top of the charts in Norway for awhile now, and people are saying that it's so intense. And I can see that, but I don't know why people wouldn't want music to be intense. It *should* involve you. That's the great thing about your band, Omar. It's like listening to *Bitches Brew*: there's lots of information to absorb, but when you listen to it you get deep into it. That's the point.

America supposedly has a rep for being a forward-looking place, but challenging music like yours, Omar, is pretty much banned from mainstream pop culture.

OR-L: I don't mind, because I find all of that incredibly boring. If the music is boring, it's because people want all of their music to sound the same. They want their Social Distortion or Green Day played over and over again. People who don't have an open mind to different forms of music are so archaic. If music was a country, they'd be the Republicans. *[All laugh]* Music is a form of expression and freedom that we can all share, and these people are only interested in telling us how we can share it, how it can be expressed, and how it has to be regulated.

