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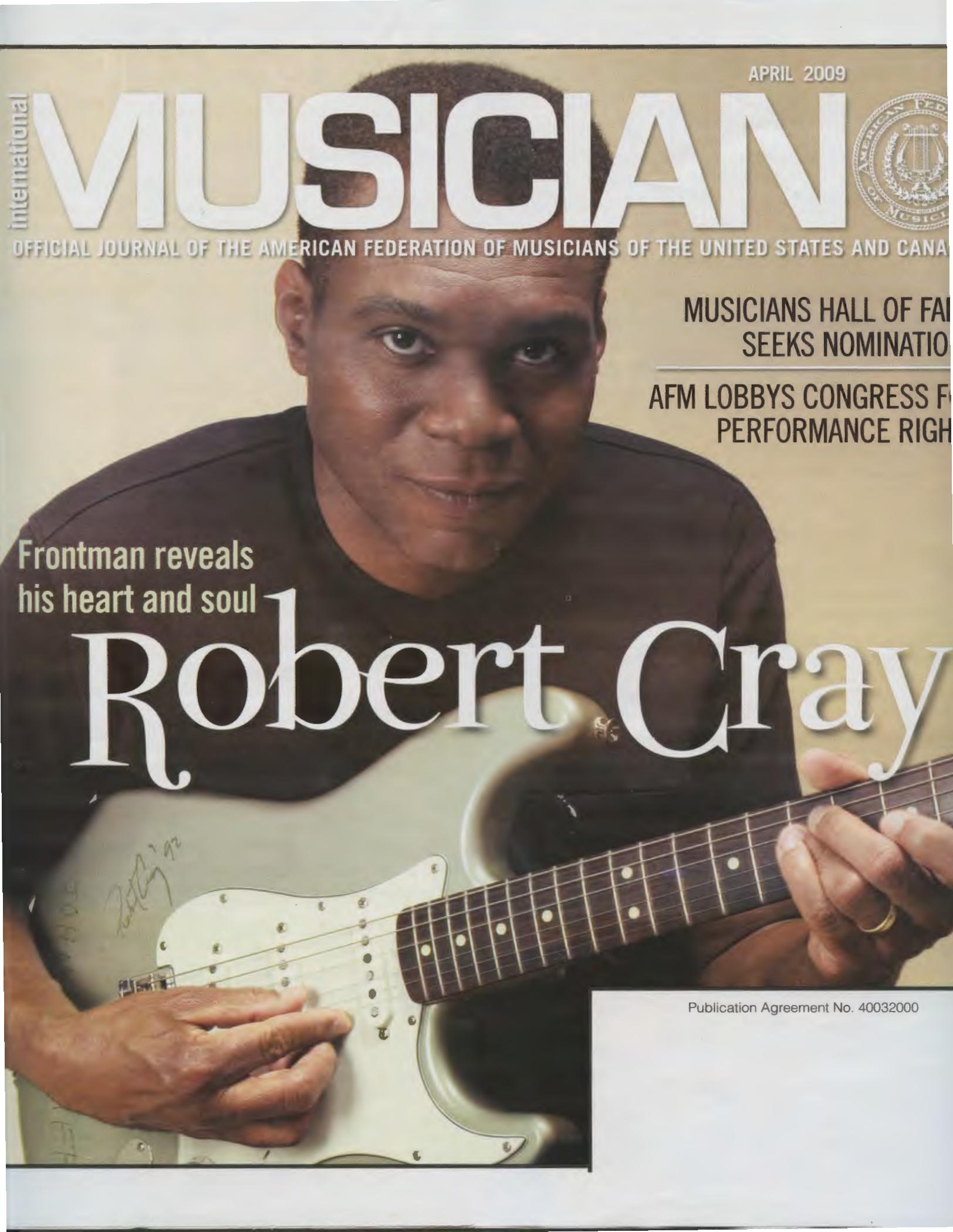
OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

MUSICIANS HALL OF FAME  
SEEKS NOMINATION

AFM LOBBYS CONGRESS FOR  
PERFORMANCE RIGHTS

Frontman reveals  
his heart and soul

# Robert Cray



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## Musician Travels the World

Scott Stephens of Local 325 (San Diego, CA), vocalist, songwriter, and manager for the band Liquid Blue, began making music at a young age. "My mother told me, 'You were singing before you could talk,'" he says. Of his childhood, he notes, "Music was around all the time. The first stuff you listen to, whatever it may be, is what influences you."

This influence carried over into his teens when he simultaneously started a punk magazine, skated with the L.A. Thunderbirds roller derby team, and played in a metal/punk band. "It was quite tough to juggle," he says. "I knew one had to give." Stephens eventually gave up both the roller derby and the magazine to focus on playing. "I loved the energy of the [music] scene," he says. "I went with my heart."

After performing with several other groups, Stephens co-founded Liquid Blue in 1996. Since then the group has gained a small amount of notoriety for holding the official record as the world's most traveled band, with gigs in more than 600 cities, 100 countries, and on all seven continents. Stephens says that the band markets itself, and it travels without the help of a major record label or a hit single.

As an eight-year member of the AFM, Stephens says he values his membership not only because the Federation occasionally helps the band get gigs, but also because, as a socially active group, he and his bandmates believe in the importance of unions. Though Liquid Blue is primarily a cover band, the original music they perform is politically and socially charged. Stephens says his passion for activism was inspired by what he learned from his parents and teachers. "When you're young," he says, "You learn simple truths of right and wrong," and these lessons have stayed with him.

Stephens and his band promote three primary causes: peace, the environment, and human rights. He believes that he has a responsibility to send a message through his songwriting. "Music is a great vehicle," he says. "People are moved by music. When you write a song, you have a choice of what you want to write about. If there's a million great love songs out there, I don't want to write another love song." Liquid Blue's 2003 album *Supernova* was one of the first to come out against the war in Iraq. "No one was writing about it," he says. "We didn't start the trend, but musicians can lead the way."

According to Stephens, most of what's popular on the radio today is "useless stuff" that focuses on sex and the degradation of others. "When you have the power of the mike going on, there's no sense going in the gutter with it," he says. Still, he welcomes dissenting opinions. "If everyone agreed, I wouldn't need to say anything," he says. "I hate preaching to the choir." Instead, he likes to "get in front of an audience that's listening and open-minded. I like to make people think."



Scott Stephens of Local 325 (San Diego, CA) likes to write songs that make people think.

Stephens accomplishes this through his travels with Liquid Blue. In addition to performing in venues ranging from stadiums to cruise ships, the band has gone on multiple tours of US military bases sponsored by the United Services Organizations (USO) and Armed Forces Entertainment (AFE). Though they consider themselves pacifists, Stephens says the band is happy to perform for the troops and boost their morale. "They're good people trying to do what they think is right," he says of the troops. Of the band's political message, Stephens continues, "We don't preach, but our music is there."

Because Stephens and the band are independent artists (except in China, where they are signed to the Shanghai Audio and Visual label), they don't see as much profit from touring and album sales as other acts. Instead they rely on income from other avenues, like private shows. With the recent economic crisis, Stephens says, "Musicians have to be creative." Though he has not yet been affected, he continues, "We feel that the amount that companies pay for private events will go down. Music is very susceptible to a down economy." Despite those concerns, Stephens is content to do what he loves.

"I love being a musician," he says. "As long as you can make a living and be happy, I think the payoff is worth the price."

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