BASSIST-COMPOSER RANDY MEISNER COURAGEOUSLY BAILED OUT OF THE EAGLES SO THAT HE COULD ROCK HIS OWN BOAT

ON THE MOVE

Testing a new speedboat at his Studio City home, Randy finds himself without a paddle. His other sports include skiing, bowling and poker, but his direst challenge was leaving the Eagles.

Below at a 1975 New Year's Eve gig, their lineup was (from left) Meisner, Joe Walsh, Don Felder, Glenn Frey and drummer Don Henley plus guests (at right) Linda Ronstadt and Jackson Browne.

Rock's scrap heap is littered with the careers of hotshot players who dared to leave brand-name bands. So when bass-man Randy Meisner left the Eagles' cushy nest in 1977 for a solo flight, some friends wondered if he weren't heading over the cuckoo's nest instead. Meisner might have agreed with them, momentarily, when his first album fizzled in 1978.

But Randy's fine new follow-up LP, *One More Song*, is climbing up the charts. "He's one of the nicest guys in the business and he deserves it," says friend James Taylor. Other compatriots must feel the same way, because plenty of music heavies helped in the taping studio. Kim Carnes joined in the plaintive *Deep inside My Heart*, which was the album's first big single, and other participants included Eric Kaz,

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ON THE MOVE

Wendy Waldman and producer Val Garay. Jackson Browne suggested the title cut, which chronicles a young artist's last gig with a band called the Silverados, and none other than Eagles drummer Don Henley and guitarist-singer Glenn Frey came in to record harmony. "It's appropriate," Meisner says amiably, "since it's kind of about me leaving the group." Their donation of time seems fair, since the current double LP *Eagles Live* is enhanced by four Meisner appearances, including his memorable rendition of *Take It to the Limit*, which he co-wrote.

When Randy opted out after the Eagles' *Hotel California* tour in 1977, his biggest beef was the Frey-Henley creative domination of the group. He took the view that "a lot of their studio music was sterilized and safe." The other factor was the carousing that they immortalized in their 1976 classic *Life in the Fast Lane*. "I could have tripled my money if I'd stayed," Meisner says now, without regret. "But I was just tired of the touring. It's a crazy life that you live at twice the normal speed. When it got to the point of sanity or money," he says, "I thought I'd rather have sanity."

To try to find it, Randy returned to his native Scottsbluff, Nebr. and bought an 80-acre farm to "grow my own vegetables and get as far away from the music business as I could." He soon discovered there wasn't much to do in the slow lane but drink beer and roar around town on his Harley-Davidson. "I realized I'd changed so much," he observes, "and I missed the city. I thought I could get away, but music's in my blood."

Randy recalls that as a kid, "Farms and corn were just about it" until his German immigrant grandfather, a classical violinist, cultivated his first interest in music. By his 12th birthday, Meisner was picking out Presley and other rock tunes on a guitar, then switched to bass to play with local bands. At 16, he married his high school sweetheart, Jennifer Barton, and began touring the state with a group called the Dynamics. Finally, at 19, Randy made it to L.A. with the Denver-spawned Soul Survivors. "Seeing Sunset Boulevard," he recalls, "was a fantasy come true."

The band soon renamed itself the Poor, a wry comment on their standard of living—"five of us in one room in East L.A." But Meisner made some big connections playing with one of the pioneers of country-rock, Poco, followed by Rick Nelson's underappreciated Stone Canyon Band. In the early '70s Randy was on the road with an up-and-coming rocker named Linda Ronstadt. "She loved my singing but *hated* my playing," he remembers. "She gave me looks that could kill." The diva's distemper proved historic. When his fellow backups Henley and Frey broke off to form their own band, Meisner followed—and the supergroup called the Eagles took wing.

Randy, now 34, shuttles between a Palm Springs condo ("Most people say it's boring, but to me it's relaxing") and a rented place in L.A.'s Studio City. He is presently divorcing his wife, Jennifer, who stayed back in Scottsbluff with their son Dana, 17, and 10-year-old twins Heather and Eric.

With his Eagle royalties, Meisner is free of financial worries. Besides his working farm (which he left in the stewardship of his father), Randy has a remarkable car collection including 15 antique Fords, a Porsche, a Jaguar XJ-S plus '57 and '67 Corvettes. He hangs out these days not with the Eagles but with his own band, which he has dubbed the Silverados. (After old pal Henley, 33, was charged last month with possession of 22 ounces of cocaine and offering drugs to a 16-year-old girl, Meisner lamented, "It's terrible. I'm really concerned.")

Following three relatively placid years, Meisner plans to hit the road next month with the Silverados. "I have fond memories of the Eagles," he says, "but there's no looking back. The I-told-you-sos didn't make me feel too good, but it was right to leave when I did. I haven't wanted to return."

DAVID SHEFF

Echoing the Eagles' "Desperados" nickname, Meisner's band, the Silverados, gathers for cards.