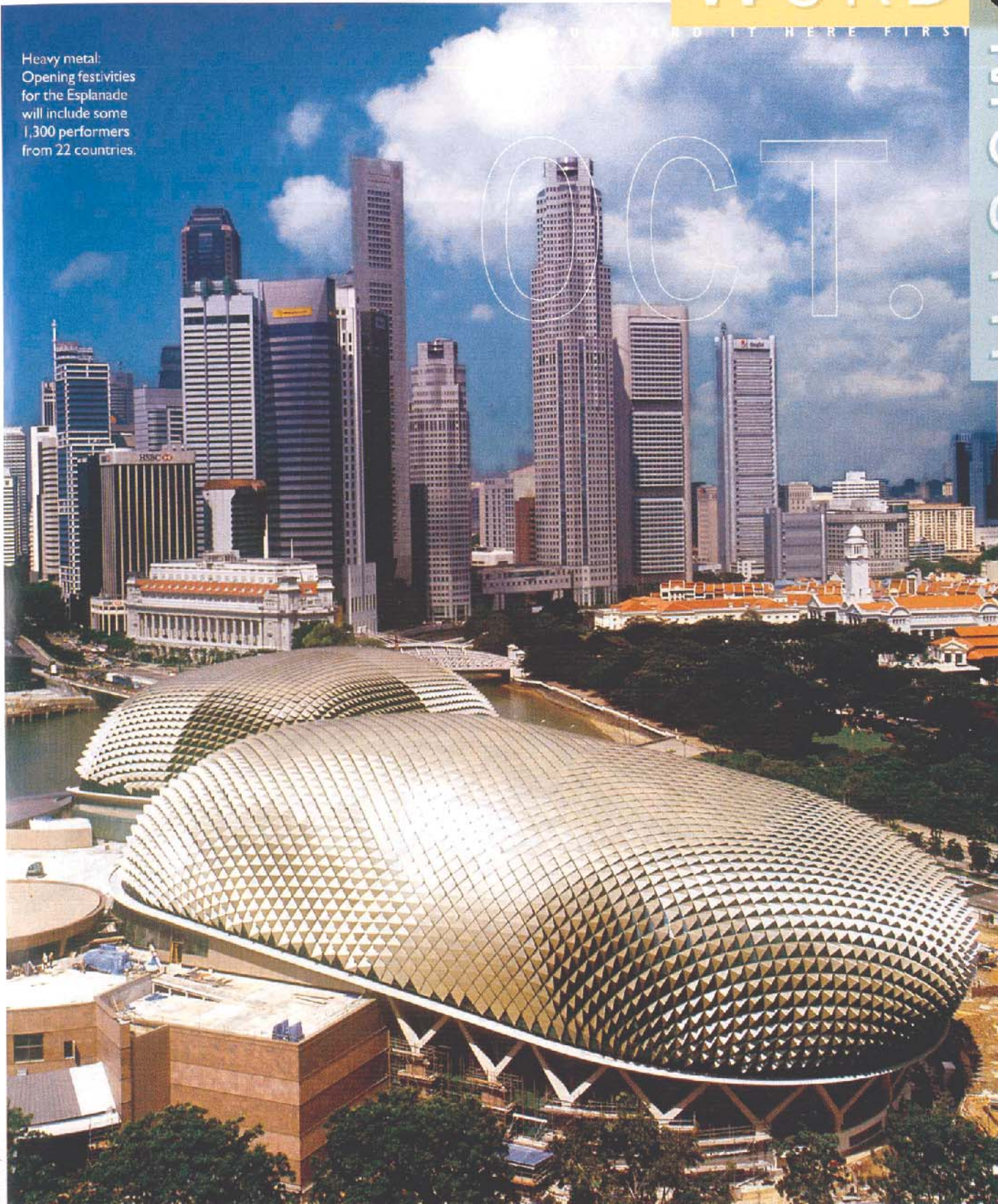




Heavy metal:  
Opening festivities  
for the Esplanade  
will include some  
1,300 performers  
from 22 countries.

OCT.



R. Ian Lloyd

## SINGAPORE

**BUNS OF STEEL**

Critics have compared it to pineapples, hedgehogs, and giant fly eyes, but the slings and arrows of aesthetic judgment have failed to dent Singapore's enthusiasm for its new **Esplanade** arts center. Within the spiky steel-and-glass exteriors are a 2,000-seat theater, a 1,600-seat concert hall, and myriad smaller spaces where programs of music, dance, and drama will soon unfold year-round. In typical Singaporean fashion, the government recruited the world's top sound technicians and theater planners to create this \$350 million complex. But, less typically for the city, the center's off-the-wall architecture has sparked fierce public debate. Starting October 12, judge for yourself during the opening three-week performing arts fest, which will feature everything from American jazz to traditional Cantonese opera and Indonesian dance ([esplanade.com](http://esplanade.com)). —Joe Yogerst