

10) The Concert

We ended 1993 with a special ZigZag Family Tribunal. First, we went to the home in Montecito, and with the assistance of a local nursery, installed and decorated a seventeen foot Christmas tree. The children helped (with Sissy's guidance) by making popcorn strings and then when the decorating was finished, they placed their hand written letters to Santa beneath the tree. Unbeknownst to them, another group of "elves", headed by Leah and Joy Bennett, were unloading an entire truck filled with gifts into the storage facility across the compound. Trikes and bikes, dolls and trucks, clothes and candy and personal items. There were things in life that we couldn't provide for these children, but we could certainly do our best to show them that they were truly loved. I moved about the house, helping little but healing much. It was humbling to me to realize the impact we were having on these young lives. Not that I could personally take any credit for the miracles that were created here, but just glad to be part of the machinery that was making it happen. I wandered back into the living room just as the children had finished placing their letters under the tree and scurried off at Alicia's mention of cookies and punch. I picked up one of the letters and started to read:

Dear Santa:

I don't need much. That's because the only thing I ever wanted was a mom and a dad. I came here after my Auntie Lois died. I thought I'd just be another "orphan" for the rest of my life. Always a stranger. Always just another mouth to feed. But this place is so different. Patty and Mr. Greg treat me like their daughter, and I've never been this happy in my life.

I will ask for one thing Santa. I heard the grown-ups talking the other day. The man who owns this house is in a band called ZigZag, and their last record wasn't very good. Could you please bring them some new hit songs? I think they could use some.

Love,

Jennifer Matsen  
Age 8

Leah walked in about that time, and saw me reading with tears in my eyes. I handed her the letter and plopped in a chair in the corner. I couldn't bring myself to read any more.

I'd never met Jennifer, and only knew marginally of her story. She was from Lacrosse, Wisconsin, and her parents were killed by a drunk driver when she was

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three. Jennifer had survived the accident and moved in with her elderly aunt and only living relative. When her aunt died of a heart attack Jennifer was placed in foster care at seven years of age. Considered too old to be “adoptable”, it was the consensus of opinion that she was destined to be a foster system kid. She had three different placements in her first year in the system and had been physically and emotionally abused. When the latest placement was closed and the operator of the home arrested for the emotional trauma she and her boyfriend had been inflicting on the five children in their care, it made the local news in Milwaukee. My childhood friend Jarvis’s partner Maria had heard the story, seen the pictures of this pretty little girl with the emotionless expression on her face, and contacted Leah. Leah talked to Patty, and Patty did one of those miracles that she does. In just a few weeks Jennifer legally became part of the Montecito family.

As we prepared for the evening dinner, Leah and I discussed our personal family plans for the holidays as we toiled around Santa Barbara County in the Aston Martin. The Tribunal was held at San Ysidro Ranch, an elegant resort just a few minutes from the home. A hideaway for Hollywood and other worldwide celebrities since the 1930’s, the San Ysidro boasted a guest list that included Bing Crosby, Groucho Marx, Lucille Ball and Winston Churchill. Film stars Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier were married at the Ranch, and then U.S. Representative John and Jacqueline Kennedy honeymooned there. Leah and I were staying in a suite that had previously been occupied for three months by John Huston, while he was completing the script for the Humphrey Bogart-Katherine Hepburn classic “The African Queen”. Whole Dungeness crabs were flown in from Washington State as the entrée for the evening. We talked of the year ahead, and promised ourselves that it was going to be our best ever. Plans had been set in motion for a feature film that was based upon a collection of live performances, both from the stadium shows over the past few years and also some Pop-Op performances, and a number of interviews with the band and other ZigZag family and friends would be integrated as well. A “greatest hits” project was also in the works, under the watchful eye of Tom Dowd, and completion of the current U.S. tour would be followed by trips to Australia and then on to Japan. We were scheduled to head back into The Stitch late in the year to begin work on a new (as yet unnamed) studio project. With Scott and Franchesca now living in Venice full time, Greg’s commitments with Love’s Labour, Eric and Birgitt discussing the purchase of a villa in Switzerland, and R.L.’s recent decision to build himself a place near Montecito, the band was literally scattering to the wind. It was taking more and more advance planning just to find time for the five of us to sit and talk about ZigZag’s future.

The next morning we convened for the “business” portion of this event. George Bennett was now fully in charge of the management end of things, and was doing incredibly well for all of us. In looking over the financial statements and investment portfolio, it was difficult to translate these huge figures on the page into anything meaningful. Mike, Leah, and I sat there in awe as George went through the numbers. The Judge was on speaker from his office in Kentucky, but

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offered little other than to occasionally concur with George's decisions and assessments. ZigZag LLC was now fully diversified and we owned stock in a number of different enterprises. Amongst the largest of these purchases was a considerable (almost two billion dollar) investment in Oracle Systems Corporation, a computer company that specialized in database management systems. George also spoke of a new technology platform called the "Internet".

This "new" medium had actually been established nearly two decades earlier and was primarily used by academic and research facilities. The concept, based upon a "World Wide Web" model invented by British scientist Timothy Berners-Lee in 1989, provided the means for large scale information sharing to be accomplished via existing telecommunications networks. There was growing interest from the public sector to utilize this technology for retail sales and mass market advertising. George was convinced that the Internet was the wave of the future. We were going to get in on the ground floor.

Our last piece of business was focused on Love's Labour, and Patty and Greg joined us for this part of the discussion. I was intent (and even more so after reading Jennifer's letter the previous day) on establishing a financial safety net for the foundation so that it would be secure and solvent independent of the primary company. This task was assigned to Dru Barnhill, who would be asked to become Chief Operating Officer for Love's Labour, Incorporated, and to create a business plan independent of ZigZag LLC. We concluded our meeting with the "usual" process. We said goodbye to the Judge, knowing that Leah and I would see him in about a week, excused the clerical and technical staff that had been facilitating the meeting, and fired up a celebratory joint. Despite all of the "bumps" we had encountered, it had still been a very good year.

There were three phases to our family's Christmas plan. We stopped first in Texas to visit with the Butler clan. Jessica was left in the more than willing hands of Leah's parents and her sister Marla and we moved on to Kentucky. We were there for Christmas day - a really big event for three year old Billy and he soaked it all in. There was snow on the ground, and I think he would have just stayed outside indefinitely. His sister Heather loved the idea of snow, but the reality of the cold and wet conditions drove her back inside after only a few minutes. Billy stayed with mom and dad, as well as my brother David, his wife Lillian, and there two month old son Thomas, as we took Heather for her first adventure in New York City.

Her mother and I had been telling Heather for a couple of weeks that she wasn't going to believe what we had in store for her. We started with ice skating at Rockefeller Center. Again the notion was greater than the reality. The next stop however, was the ultimate. We went to FAO Schwarz (heaven for a seven year old) and told Heather she could have anything that would fit in the town car.

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German immigrant Fredrick August Otto Schwarz opened his initial toy store in Baltimore, Maryland in 1862. Relocating to New York City eight years later under the name “Schwarz Toy Bazaar”, the company (Fredrick and his three brothers) made a name for itself by importing the finest European toys. Within ten years the burgeoning little company had become known as the most exclusive, imaginative, and expensive toy stores in all of New York and drew their clientele from the city’s elite and wealthiest of citizens. Now known as FAO Schwarz, they relocated to Fifth Avenue in the heart of the prestigious Manhattan shopping district. The new store featured an elegant marble staircase and a slide that went down from the first floor to the main lobby. Their toy displays (especially at Christmas time) had become legendary, and the display windows quite a tourist attraction. With a business model that included unique products, an unparalleled environment, personal shopping services, and home delivery, FAO is the mecca for toy lovers of all ages.

We were probably there for close to three hours and all Heather wanted to do was look. “Can I have this?” was the question of the day, and she must have asked it a hundred times. Only once or twice did I say no. Leah on the other hand was far less accommodating. It became a game for Heather and me. She would ask for something that she knew she couldn’t have, like a ten foot tall stuffed owl or an archery set (nothing that could be used as a weapon with her brother and sister), and I would agree. This left Leah to be the “heavy”, a role to which she was accustomed, but one in which she was not very pleased. Pee-Tee and Gladys Brown were also on board for this adventure, and were taking great joy in watching the little “game” that we were playing. This process came to a screeching halt as we approached the “Barbie Boutique”, a store within a store dedicated entirely to the Mattel Company’s signature doll. Heather had found her Nirvana. First, we needed a “New York Barbie” along with winter clothes and, of course, her very own apartment. Then we had to have a convertible for the “California Barbie” that lived in Topanga Canyon. Her final move was one with which her mother and I were most pleased and proud, and showed us that our daughter was in tune with “the program”. She brought over a brand new “Malibu Barbie”, complete with a hot pink bikini, and told us that she was going to buy it for her new friend Jennifer in Montecito, insistent on using her own money as well. Even the ever stoic Pee-Tee was visibly moved by our daughter’s gesture.

While we were in Manhattan we also had lunch at Katz’s Deli, saw the Statue of Liberty, ate at a couple of wonderful Italian restaurants in Little Italy and toured the now fully remodeled Ed Sullivan Theater. Our tour guide of course was my pal and the latest Theater resident, Dave Letterman. We talked about the history of the building, the bands including Elvis and The Beatles who had performed on that stage, and I mused out loud about the notion that ZigZag might want to do a show there. My daughter, by this point bored with these proceedings, interjected that the idea would be “cool”. She doesn’t know much about popular music, but she does know who The Beatles are. As she calls them “your friend George’s band”. I liked the sound of that statement. Returning to the apartment that

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evening, we had the pleasure of meeting and riding in an elevator with Dustin Hoffman, who also lives in the San Remo. Heather leaned over and whispered in her mother's ear that the man looked a lot like the woman who played "Tootsie". Leah laughed and told Dustin the story. To this day when we see the incomparable Mr. Hoffman, he always asks about our "Tootsie".

We returned to Topanga Canyon from NYC the second week of January, 1994. Billy arrived with Uncle Dave, Aunt Lillian and Cousin Tommy the next day. Janet and Marla Butler, with Jessica in tow, flew in the following morning. Jimmy had decided to spend a couple of weeks in the hunting cabin with Justin (who was entering his final semester at Texas A&M) before heading out to assist with the children when ZigZag went back on tour in March. We had the whole family back together again, and chaos-as-usual was in vogue at The LaVonda Inn. I think the staff (especially Danny who verbalized his joy on several occasions) were happy to see us, as they had spent nearly a month with none of the direct family in the house. Steph had been there for most of the time, and R.L. was living in one of the guest houses (he moved in shortly after Melanie's death and put his house on the market), but I think from their perspective it was way too quiet. That all changed in a hurry. Heather went back to school Monday morning, and we were preparing for a viewing of Mike's video from Christmas morning in Montecito on Saturday night. He and Joy had spent their holidays with the children at the home and Mike was anxious to present his chronicle of those events. With a three day weekend (including the Martin Luther King holiday) ahead, there was bound to be a crew at the Inn.

I awoke very early the following Monday morning to the rattling of glass, and both Billy and Jessica crying. I looked at Leah. We both sensed immediately that we were probably having an earthquake. Leah turned on the television, but there was no signal. We knew that the epicenter must have been close to Los Angeles. Pee-Tee arrived less than five minutes later and informed us that the greatest damage, according to the police band radio he had been monitoring, was in the Northridge area in the San Fernando Valley, only about eight miles away from us.

After calming the children and checking out the rest of the property – we only sustained minor damage, primarily from things falling over in the Pop-Op Palace, we returned to the house and Leah was on the phone with Patty in Montecito. They were all fine, Patty reported, although the children were plenty scared. We discussed an action plan, and started moving bottled water (ZigZag LLC now owned the bottling plant) toward the Northridge and Reseda areas later that morning. As we got more information, the scope of the plan increased. There were over thirty confirmed deaths, and several thousand injuries. The greatest single loss was at the Northridge Meadows apartment complex, where sixteen people were killed when the entire building collapsed.

A three story, wood framed structure, the Northridge Meadows Apartments had what was called a "soft" first story – meaning that there were parking spaces

below the apartments on the ground level. The earthquake caused the building to “pancake”, meaning that the second and third floors came down on the first floor and flattened it. This wasn’t even noticed by the Los Angeles Fire Department on their initial drive-thru, it just looked like a two story building. Because of the early hour and the Federal holiday, most of the residents were still in their beds when the building collapsed. After dealing with the “walking wounded” and gaining control over the situation and all of the well meaning but untrained survivors who were attempting to reach their loved ones still inside the structure, LAFD began the work of locating and rescue. Using picks, sledge hammers, and chain saws, they commenced the arduous process of methodically breaking through the deck between the first and second floors. Another issue that hampered the relief efforts was the fact that the upper floors did not fall straight down, in some cases shifting the structure sideways by as much as ten feet. This was caused by a phenomenon called “ground acceleration”. In layman’s terms, this is the measurement of how hard the ground shakes during an earthquake. In the case of the Northridge Earthquake, the ground acceleration rate was the highest ever recorded in a North American urban area. In many apartments, this meant that cutting through the floor of a second story bedroom did not gain entry to the first floor bedrooms as initially projected. K-9 searches were also attempted, but these proved only marginally successful. Once a special California earthquake task force unit arrived late that afternoon, they began using fiber optic cameras to search for survivors, which reduced the size of the hole that initially needed to be cut through the floor. Things got more complicated when electrical power was restored to the area, causing fires to start in several of the apartments. LAFD was then called back to the scene to deal with these blazes and to cut the power to the building. Nearly twenty four hours after the earthquake occurred, the “all clear” was given for the entire one hundred and sixty three unit complex. Along with the fatalities and numerous injuries there were also many people who were now homeless. That’s where Love’s Labour got involved.

When we first heard the plight of the folks in Northridge Meadows on the radio, Greg began making calls to Army-Navy surplus stores in the area looking for cots and blankets. A truck was dispatched once a warehouse with the needed supplies was located in Goleta, a small city near Santa Barbara. The recreation center on the Love’s Labour property, a gymnasium for the school which was the former tenant, was quickly turned into a shelter facility. Patty contacted the Red Cross, and informed them of our intentions and availability. In coordination with the Los Angeles Police Department, a route was secured and a charter bus was located in the Reseda area. After six trips back and forth from Montecito to the earthquake site, we had nearly three hundred temporary residents on the property, many of whom had been tenants in the Northridge Meadows apartment complex. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) set up a command center on the premises and began the process of permanent relocation for the impacted families and individuals. We contracted with a Santa Barbara mental health agency to bring two counselors on sight to deal with grief and anxiety issues. Pee-Tee enlisted a number of area police officers and Los Angeles County sheriff

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deputies to provide security. Leah's sister Marla recruited several dozen volunteers from Pepperdine University, where she was currently a sophomore majoring in theatre and media production. These young adults did an incredible job managing the nuts and bolts of the operation, assisted with food preparation, and were our "eyes and ears" inside the facility. The shelter was open for a total of seventeen days. Nearly fifteen thousand meals were prepared (with the generous assistance of local grocery suppliers and produce markets). Phone banks and mail services were provided for folks to contact their friends and relatives.

The name ZigZag was never once uttered, either publicly or privately.

Tagged by the media as the "Northridge Earthquake", the epicenter of the quake was actually in the city of Reseda, California (near the intersection of Reseda Boulevard and Strathern Streets to be exact), and the impact was felt as far away as Las Vegas. Although in close proximity to the San Andreas Fault, this quake actually occurred near what is known as the Pico thrust fault. Unidentified prior to this event, the Pico Fault is what is known as a "blind thrust fault", called such because with no surface evidence, they are difficult to detect until an eruption occurs. Total damage estimates were in the range of twenty billion dollars. Far more expensive was the cost to human life. Along with the deaths, there were sixteen hundred hospitalizations. Transportation was a mess, as parts of the Santa Monica Freeway (known as the busiest in the country), the Golden State Freeway, and the Antelope Valley Freeway had all collapsed and would take months to rebuild. Surface roads were congested, and mass transit was near peak capacity. Major structural damage occurred to the California State University campus at Northridge, part of the scoreboard had fallen at Anaheim Stadium, and gas and water mains were busting all over the San Fernando Valley causing a strange mix of fire and flooding. Parts of Santa Clarita, Santa Monica, and Simi Valley were extensively damaged as well. The quake halted production on a number of television and movie sets as well. Both California Governor Pete Wilson and President Bill Clinton arrived within a few days after the disaster to tour the area and pledge state and national support for the reconstruction. From a "truth is stranger than fiction" perspective, film director/producer Wes Craven was in the midst of filming a movie called "New Nightmare" when the Northridge Earthquake occurred. They had already filmed some dramatized earthquake sequences for the movie, and many in the cast and crew believed that they had been overdone. After reviewing that actual damage, they were shocked at the realism.

One of the most tragic stories (if it is even possible to establish "degrees" of tragedy) was that of Los Angeles Police Department motorcycle officer Clarence Dean. Traveling south onto the Newhall Pass interchange in the early morning darkness, the officer was simply unaware that the elevated highway had collapsed and he fell nearly forty feet and died instantly. The rebuilt interchange has been named in his honor.

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“A Night for our Neighbors”, a benefit concert for the victims of the Northridge Earthquake and their families, was held at the Reseda Country Club on Friday, February 11, 1994. The RCC, home to many concerts in the early 80’s, and more recently video shoots and award show after parties, is a huge venue, capable of holding nearly a thousand folks. And contrary to the name, it is a music venue – NOT a country club, although they get the occasional phone call about tee times and pool hours. Mike Bennett organized the event in collaboration with Capitol Records, but there were a number of artists from various labels involved.

ZigZag was “officially” the headline act, but we actually played fairly early in the evening and several “ad hoc” groups closed the show. This was the first concert we had ever played without Scotty, who had commitments in Italy and couldn’t get away on such short notice. Glenn Martin, Mike Campbell, Jerry Garcia, and Carlos Santana all graciously rotated on lead guitar duties for us. We played about a half dozen songs and then the players and front men started rotating. Tom Petty came out and did a couple of songs, including “Refugee” and “Breakdown”, basically backed by ZigZag and Mike Campbell. Jeff Lynne then joined in for a rendition of Roy Orbison’s “Pretty Woman” and an Electric Light Orchestra standard “Strange Magic”, on which Eric laid out a killer keyboard sound. Tom, Mike, and Jeff departed, and Jerry Garcia, Phil Lesh and Bill Kreutzmann ran through a set of Grateful Dead classics, including “Casey Jones”, “U.S. Blues”, and “Scarlet Begonias”. I went back out and joined them on “Unbroken Chain”. We took a twenty minute intermission, and then Dave Pirner and Soul Asylum opened the second half. Carlos Santana joined them on guitar for “Black Magic Woman” and “Oye Como Va”. The latter song featured the stage debut of nine year old Randy Chambers (R.L. and Alicia had recently agreed to legally change his last name) on cabasa and maracas.

The Beefeaters took the stage and closed the show. We backed Neil Young on a harrowing version of “Helpless” and raucous renditions of “Cowgirl in the Sand” and “Rockin’ in the Free World”. Then we had some real fun. Jerry Garcia and his banjo came on stage and he and Glenn Martin put on a clinic, trading solos on “The Wabash Cannonball”, “Panama Red”, and a very interesting version of the Gregg Allman classic “Whipping Post”. Tiny and Big Bob got lots of compliments after the show for their performances – they were becoming quite a rhythm unit.

Tom Petty came back out and introduced a video message recorded by George Harrison, which was followed by some brief remarks from Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan who concluded by presenting a proclamation to Love’s Labour, which Patty Neibauer Townsend accepted on behalf of all of the staff and countless volunteers who assisted in the relief efforts. She then announced that the evening’s event had raised in excess of \$175,000 which would be used to continue relocation endeavors. The show ended with extended versions of “Labour of Love”, including an incredible solo from Carlos Santana, and a twenty

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minute jam of the Heartbreakers classic “An American Girl”. There were guitar solos from Carlos, Mike Campbell, Neil Young, and Glenn Martin. I even joined the fray with a twelve bar harmonica solo. God I love that song.

The after party was a tremendous experience as well, especially when Jerry Garcia approached Glenn and I and asked if The Beefeaters could use a banjo player. I was so honored by the gesture that I nearly cried.

Less than a week later, R. L. bought a little over four acres of scrub land just outside the city limits of Montecito proper. He didn't mention this to anyone, didn't even ask Mike or Dru for advice. He just called a local realtor and two days later had the bank cut a cashier's check. He also never mentioned his renewed relationship with Alicia. I got that information out of Sissy one day at lunch. A trip that I had normally been making on a midweek morning was now a Saturday affair, so that Heather could go along and visit with her new best friend Jennifer Madsen.

According to Sissy, R.L. had been around the home quite a bit of late. Under the guise of visiting his son Randy, it was apparent to those wired into the situation that there was more to the story. At first, these were casual outings where R.L. would take both the boy and his mother. Domestic errands like clothes or shoe shopping, or catching a Dodger's game at Chavez Ravine. It wasn't long before Alicia started having “mystery dates” on her night off. And then one day she pulled in driving a brand new Land Rover. After the verbal lashing I had received from R.L. during the Melanie fiasco, I wasn't about to intervene. I figured that if they were happy with the relationship – regardless of the terms, then so was I. Obviously, R.L. wanted to keep this a private matter, and we needed to respect that as long as it didn't impact Alicia's responsibilities or the operation at Love's Labour. Within those parameters, they were consenting adults and this was nobody's business. I did bring Greg and Patty into the loop, and could tell by their responses that they already had a pretty good idea about what was going on. Leah and I talked about it as well. The consensus we came to was that as long as Patty wasn't having issues just let it be. I suspected that Kelly, and perhaps Jerry as well, were “in the know”. If this was what my backbone needed to create some semblance of personal happiness, I was all for it. I love the guy, and couldn't imagine doing this thing without him. Besides, Greg was now part time, Scott and Franchesca were in Italy and I hadn't seen Scotty since Christmas, and Eric and Birgitt were holed up in a hotel off Wilshire Boulevard that might as well have been on another planet. I needed somebody around to remind me that ZigZag was still a viable entity, and that indeed I was still in a “Band”. Leah's final words to me on the subject – “Let sleeping dogs lay”.

Scott and I did talk on the phone about twice a month. Primarily because I needed to get a commitment from him for the upcoming U.S., Australia, and Japan tour dates and set up a recording schedule for the next studio project. Initially, I sensed that he was rather ambivalent about the whole process, but

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beyond the time and travel obligations, there were financial issues as well. Tiny had informed me that Scotty was going through cash at even a more alarming rate than when he was doing coke. The wedding, the new house, and a wife who was being lavished with the best things money could buy took a fiscal toll. It wasn't like Scott was broke, but the trends weren't looking good. He had chosen not to invest personally with the rest of us in ZigZag LLC, and a couple of margin calls on his personal investments had caused some serious cash flow issues. Truthfully, he needed to work. I didn't enjoy sharing this news with him, or using it as leverage to be part of the touring act – but I did it anyway. It was easier for me, easier for the crew, and better from a public relations standpoint. We needed him out front and exposed to the media, with his beautiful bride on his arm, not holed up in a castle watching the world go by. Domestically, they were doing well, really hoping to have news of a pregnancy soon, and as Scotty put it, being “Naughty with a purpose.”

Leah and I celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary that February as well. I love that girl more than I could have ever imagined. The old saying “time flies when you're having fun” has never been truer. The band Orleans summed it up for me quite nicely:

“You're still the one I want to talk to in bed.  
Still the one that turns my head.  
We're still having fun, and you're still the one.”<sup>64</sup>

Just prior to the beginning of the second half of our U.S. Tour, Capitol released a ZigZag greatest hits compilation, entitled “So Far”. As one might expect, it included all of the bands highest rated Billboard songs and a few fan favorites as well. It could easily have been the set list for our upcoming tour. Tom Dowd did an incredible job taking a number of songs from the first three albums and remastering them using the current digital technology. I was extremely impressed with the product, and again amazed at Mr. Dowd's technical acuity.

We began this second leg of the U.S. Tour with four sold out dates at Rupp Arena in Lexington. While we were back “home”, we attended to a couple of other pieces of business. First was the announcement that the Kentucky Educational Television (KET) would be starting construction on a new studio just north of the University of Kentucky campus. The new structure would come to be known as the “Bennett Building”. I didn't ask Mike for permission, I just did it. The four shows at UK were in the middle of March, the week before the campus let out for spring break. Talk about a party environment.

The Beefeaters were the opening act for those Lexington shows. This wasn't something that we were going to be able to continue for the duration of the tour, as I knew that over the long haul my energy level would be compromised, but I could manage for a week. It did create the opportunity for the Sutton, Walling, Martin, and Winters families to enjoy the festivities in proximity to their homes.

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One of the highlights of those sets was The Beefeaters rendition of “Hey Do Ya Wanna”, a song written by Glenn’s father Bud – and a perfect vehicle for Deb Sutton’s vocal talents. Although The Beefeaters act is really designed for smaller venues (we still performed from chairs or stools, even on the big stage), the difference in styles between ZigZag and The Beefeaters provided a good point and counterpoint for those shows.

The second piece of business while in Lexington was much more personal. In recognition of his service to the state and to the college, University of Kentucky President Charles T. Wethington, Jr. announced the creation of a new park near the law school library. The park was to be named after an alumnus and benefactor of the university, my father the Judge. And yes, for those who must know, a considerable donation was made to the university in the Judges’ name by ZigZag LLC. Think what you will.

After leaving Lexington, we played stadium shows in Louisville, Cincinnati, Columbus, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Detroit, Toronto, and Milwaukee before settling into Chicago for a two week Pop-Op stay at the Aragon Ballroom and a huge show at Soldier Field. A well deserved week off was followed by dates in Minneapolis, Des Moines, St. Louis, Oklahoma City, Birmingham, Jackson, New Orleans and finally Houston. Once in our hometown we bookended a two week Pop-Op run at the Music Hall with shows in the Astrodome and at Rice University Stadium.

To this point I haven’t discussed the opening acts for our stadium shows, although we have certainly had them (The Thompson Twins and Loverboy to name a couple). On this tour the Minneapolis alt rock group Soul Asylum was serving in that capacity.

Fresh off a Grammy win for their hit song “Runaway Train” and performance at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton, Soul Asylum was on the move after struggling to find a national following for a number of years. They were loud and dynamic – once described as an “unholy cross between Kiss and Hank Williams.” I hit it off well with their lead singer Dave Pirner (also a former drummer). What most impressed me about this group was their video for “Runaway Train”.

Although not part of what was being shown on MTV, the introductory scenes are inspiring use of art for purpose. The first is a simple message in white blocked text on a black background:

"There are over one million youth lost on the streets of America".

The second is a drawing of a girl that was done by a young lady who is mentioned in a voiceover as having run away from home over one hundred times.

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The actual video shows scenes of Pirner and the band playing and singing the song, intermixed with scenes of a man abusing his wife who is later seen driving around in his automobile in search of young girls and of a lady in a vehicle stalking a young mother and eventually abducting her child. Pictures of missing children, with their names and how long they had been missing are displayed during the choruses. There are three different American versions of the video, and a total of thirty six children are presented. In versions created for various other countries, the pictures reflect local children from that area of the world.

Another scene at the end of the video is often not shown as well. In front of the camera, Pirner says "If you've seen one of these kids, or you are one of them, please call this number," and a phone number is displayed on the screen.

Many of the missing children were reunited with their families, thanks in part to the "Runaway Train" video, including some who saw themselves and chose to return home. If MTV hadn't viewed the messages as an inappropriate "public service announcement" and refused to show them, who knows how much more impact the video could have had. We allowed Soul Asylum to show the footage at the end of their set at every concert, and then put the phone number back up on the screen when the ZigZag show concluded.

For the Pop-Op shows in Chicago and Houston (and also later in Denver and in California) we used another of my favorite singer/songwriters as the opening act – Dana Cooper.

The very first concert that I attended after arriving in Houston was at a club near the Galleria shopping mall off West Alabama Street that is long since gone and whose name I do not remember. The headliner that night was the Shake Russell/Dana Cooper Band.

A native of Independence, Missouri, Dana began his career playing in Kansas City clubs at the age of sixteen. He left college and headed for Los Angeles, where he signed with Elektra Records and released a self titled debut album that included some incredible L.A. studio musicians including Leland Skylar and Russ Kunkel. After Elektra was consolidated with Asylum Records and its artist roster cut nearly in half, Dana headed for Texas and joined forces with local legend Shake Russell. Together they released three regionally successful folk-rock albums, one of which was released by MCA Records, and became a dominate force on the Texas folk scene.

After a time of artistic exploration with a high energy trio called DC3, Dana returned to his roots and began performing solo again. Listening to Dana is a constant reminder of why I wanted to write songs in the first place. His combination of passionate lyrics, powerful and expressive guitar work, and tremendous vocal quality make him a true original.

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Following our respite in Houston, the tour concluded with stadium shows in Dallas, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Denver, Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles. We did a one week Pop-Op stint at Red Rocks Amphitheater just outside of Denver, and finished with a two week run back at the Greek Theater in L.A. It wears me out just recalling all of the stops. As Jackson Browne so accurately exclaimed, we were “Runnin’ on Empty”.

In the summer of 1994, “A Stitch in Time”, a feature film (with accompanying soundtrack) was released. The movie was produced and directed by Jonathan Demme, and based primarily on audio and video from a live concert in Tokyo and various Pop-Op shows, with lots of old footage interwoven as well. There were also interviews with the band and a number of support team members including Tate, Tiny, Rick, Ramon, Jerry, Ollie, Dru, Sissy, and Steph. I was apprehensive about this project at first, and really wasn’t sure when Jonathan sent his nephew and fellow director Ted Demme out to the compound to pour through the video vault. There’s some stuff in there that I never wanted to see the light of day. Our contract with Capitol was about to run out of options, and the film, although not a major box office success, got us back to a good leverage point with the record company, which we needed in order to negotiate a new contract. We actually threatened to leave Capitol at a couple of points during the contract talks, and had some serious conversations with David Geffen (who come to find out was a classmate of Connie Leggio at New Utrecht High School in Brooklyn), but in the end ZigZag signed another four record deal with Capital. The soundtrack went gold (one million units sold) in the first month after release, and fans in Japan lined up days in advance to purchase tickets for the movie.

Jonathan Demme is probably best known for directing the 1991 classic “The Silence of the Lambs” for which he won an Oscar for Best Director (the film ran the table winning all five of the major awards that night). Mike and Joy Bennett were introduced to Jonathan at a Hollywood party, and there was conversation about using “The Pennsylvania Turnpike” as part of the soundtrack for his current project at the time, “Philadelphia” starring Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington. We were also well aware of Jonathan’s work on the Talking Heads movie “Stop Making Sense”, and when Mike mentioned our video vault and the thousands of hours of footage that we had amassed, Jonathan’s interest was piqued.

“Turnpike” was ultimately not selected to be part of the “Philadelphia” soundtrack (the scene that it was being considered for had landed on the editing room floor), and for good reason considering the quality of recordings that made the cut on that project. Neil Young’s eerie “Philadelphia” and Springsteen’s sobering “Streets of Philadelphia” were both nominated for Academy Awards, with The Boss taking home the Oscar (and later several Grammy’s) – and stirring my soul with these incredible lines:

“Ain't no angel gonna greet me.  
It's just you and I my friend.

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My clothes don't fit me no more,  
I walked a thousand miles just to slip this skin.”<sup>65</sup>

Another of Jonathan Demme’s lesser known documentary works, “Kombit: Burning Rhythms in Haiti”, was also brought to my attention during this process. From the American perspective, all we see of the Caribbean nation known as the Republic of Haiti on the news are scenes of squalor, destitution, and political unrest. But the Haitian popular music culture is very rich. Consisting primarily of a style know as “compas” – a blend of salsa, jazz, merengue, and a local variation of Carnival known as “ra-ra”, this film highlights a number of Haiti’s most prominent bands, and specifically a group called the Tabou Combo, which features brothers Adolphe and Albert Chancy on guitar and bass respectively. These guys, with a style that mixes the music of their heritage with the funk/soul sound of The Commodores, just make you want to dance.

We got back to Topanga Canyon to find that Ollie Harrelson was at it again. I’m guessing he took his lead from my near constant litany of complaints about the volume of video tape being stored literally everywhere in The Stitch. Boxes and boxes piled to the ceiling just about everywhere you looked. The video store room had been filled to overflowing for some time now, and “wherever” was now the response when someone asked for a location to put the latest series of tapes. We had a good method of cataloguing everything (thanks to the original database application that Ollie had developed some years back and the continuing support of visual arts students from several of the nearby colleges), but if you needed to actually lay your hands on a tape from a specific show or era you still had to rummage through the boxes. During the exploration process that led to “A Stitch in Time”, Ted Demme had often bemoaned this fact as well.

So Ollie took to the task of digitizing this mountain of video onto external hard disks attached to his recently purchased Macintosh computer. And God bless his wife Marcia. I’m sure she got involved in this project just so she could spend some “quality time” with her boy wonder of a husband, and upon our return to The Inn, Stanley informed me that they been staying in the pool house for the better part of the last month and the only meal he had prepared for them the entire time was a huge pot of spaghetti that they ate on for a week. Otherwise they dined on Chinese takeout or frozen TV dinners. He also bemoaned the fact that Ollie had gone through a “truck load” of Dr. Pepper. Marcia had conscientiously followed behind Ollie and relabeled, reboxed, and carefully catalogued the contents of every tape that her husband had processed – after a full day of teaching at UCLA. Otherwise, I’m sure we would have returned to a studio scattered with tapes, pizza boxes, and DP cans and a “mad scientist” encamped in the middle of it all oblivious to his surroundings.

Ollie’s setup looked a bit like an electronic octopus. Cords and cables running from the back of the Mac to a variety of cameras, video recorders, and DAT tape drives. There were four or five different videotaping systems that had been used

over the years, and a couple were so obsolete that he had to rummage through pawn shops in east Hollywood to find some of the equipment. There was also an entire case of external disk drives that had been flown in from China in order to have enough media to accomplish the task at hand. Not only was he converting all of the tape to digital format and storing this data on the external hard disks, Ollie was making backup copies of everything onto the DAT drive as well. Marcia had the backup tapes all organized in specially designed crates, and they were the only thing we were going to continue to keep on site in The Stitch. The boxes and boxes of video tape were headed for a climate controlled warehouse that Tiny had found in Santa Barbara. For their efforts, we instructed George Bennett to make a business purchase on the Harrelson's behalf. He found a small family owned bakery in Oklahoma that had been making and locally marketing their desert items for half a century. We purchased the manufacturing facility and started a new chain, with distribution channels all over the South and Midwest. A marketing firm was hired to manage the change in ownership and branding (although we didn't replace a single employee in the bakery). Before long the product was on the shelves in grocery and convenience stores from Mississippi to Colorado. We named the product "Ollie's Fried Pies" and even put his picture on the packaging. The incorporation documents also list Oliver Harrelson as President and C.E.O.

The first time I heard the term "victimless crime" the reference was pertaining to marijuana use. That smoking pot was a choice, and no one was really impacted by this personal preference. As someone who has indulged in this vice (and many would say to excess), I'll be the first to tell you that I don't believe this notion. There are plenty of victims. Maybe not so much if you are a self made millionaire, and your family is financially secure for perpetuity, but back in the days when I needed a paycheck every week to eat and pay the rent, the bucks I spent to feed my head did have consequences financially. Fortunately, I didn't have other mouths to feed, and the money binds I put myself in were of my own doing. There are health issues as well. Maybe not as bad for your body as cigarettes, and certainly not as dangerous as alcohol, but a health risk none the less.

### **A Victimless Crime**

"Don't you see we can't just do this for free,  
We've got style and some sense and a loan.  
Yeah we've got guitar that can wail from afar,  
But you don't hear the backstage moans.  
There's these perplexing plots disillusioned in thought,  
And visions of villas in France.  
When you really see what we've got this can mean quite a lot,  
Why call a conference in global finance.  
It's a victimless crime.  
A victimless crime."

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The first time I was asked what the song was about, my response was "caring too much." It's pretty much a self incriminating song about being in a band, and all of the hassles that go along with the personalities, egos, and self indulgence. The lyrics came to me one night after our "publicist" at the time (who also happened to be the current bass player's wife) wanted to have a band meeting. It took about five minutes for my bullshit meter to reach overload levels. I didn't want to hear about marketing strategies and public relations tips - I've always believed that writing good songs and playing them well was the best PR you could get. I found out afterwards that everyone else felt pretty much the same way.

“There’s no need to explain your God given right to complain,  
I hope the strain isn’t too much to bear.  
I’ve got no proof that I’m right or much need for a fight,  
Can you compete with a wing and a prayer.  
Different groups stake their claim to ancient castles in flames,  
For the sake of appearing outraged.  
So called friends hit the scene and say they know what it means,  
To be a star of the screen and the stage.  
It’s a victimless crime.  
A victimless crime.”

The funny thing is that the person who was the most outspoken was our current sound man Mark. He railed in loathing terms about this girl (her name was Lisa) and her agenda. It wasn't six months later that she had moved out on her bass playing husband (ex bass player by this point I think) and had moved in with the sound man. I had told R.L. the night of the meeting that I sensed some chemistry between Mark and Lisa, and we had better keep our eye on them. My radar when it comes to relationships usually isn't anywhere near that good, so even I was a bit surprised when my prognostication became reality.

“So it’s tough to refrain from thoughts you see in your brain,  
Would you care to just give us a peek.  
Is there a doubt in your mind of the results that you’ll find,  
When the whole thing comes off tongue in cheek.  
And whose role is to care about the clothes that I wear,  
Or what kind of games that we play.  
But it’s so hard to sleep when bedfellows you keep,  
Are in cahoots with the CIA.  
It’s a victimless crime.  
A victimless crime.  
A victimless crime.  
A victimless crime.”<sup>66</sup>

The whole thing came to a head one night in Lake Charles where we had just gotten one of our first decent paying gigs. That evening Mark informed the band

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between sets that Lisa was going to start taking a percentage of our nightly earnings, after all, she was the one who procured the booking. She did, for one weekend. After that we took care of the bookings ourselves, and got ourselves a new sound man.

The initial plan was to only do stadium shows in Australia and Japan. But when we were notified that ZigZag had been approved to use the Concert Hall in the Sydney Opera House, we just couldn't resist. So since we were going to do two weeks of Pop-Op in Sydney, we went ahead and planned a one week stay in Tokyo as well, surrounded on both sides by three stadium shows. We were already going to the expense of shipping the Pop-Op sets halfway around the world, so it only made sense to send them (as well as the cast and additional crew) on to Japan. Four stadium shows were also going to be done in Australia (Brisbane and Sydney before the Pop-Op shows and Perth and Melbourne afterward). Of course, this is exactly what the folks in Cleveland wanted, and why The Handler made the money he did. We'd tried everything we knew to book the Opera House, with no success. Obviously, Don Amaritto had more pull.

The Sydney Opera House is an incredible building, one of the most beautiful and recognizable in the world. Situated on Bennelong Point, it sits at the northeastern tip of downtown Sydney and is surrounded on three sides by water. There are actually seven different performance areas within the building, ranging from the twenty six hundred seat Opera House to rooms that can be configured for as few as two hundred people. There are also a recording studio, cafes, restaurants, bars and retail outlets housed within the facility. Guided tours can give the public a backstage look at areas normally reserved for cast and crew.

The addition of the Pop-Op shows allowed for this to become more of a social event and a number of folks brought their families along. Heather made her first extend trip with us and R.L. brought along Randy and Alicia as well. The inclusion of the youngsters meant that our valet Danny was now a needed part of the team. He got the pleasure of escorting the kids to the zoo and the beach. Heather's mantra for the rest of the trip was "Daddy, can I take home a kangaroo???" Greg and Patty met us in Tokyo for the Pop-Op run, although we were using a session bassist for the remainder of the tour. Scott, Franchesca, Eric, and Birgitt shared a rented house in Sydney and were actually there for two weeks before the rest of us arrived. Soul Asylum was opening all of these stadium shows also. Comedian Darrell Hammond was scheduled to do the "warm up" for both of the Pop-Op runs. Leah and I took a side trip to visit a couple of aboriginal villages in the Australian "out back" and ate some incredible seafood in Perth. It was weird to be there in September and watch the blooming of spring.

We rolled into Japan and continued our run of really, really good performances. The Nagoya and Osaka stadium shows had us feeling the love of the Japanese people, and believing that ZigZag was once again sitting on top of the world. We headed to Fukuoka to do the show that started this entire blitz of the free world.

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The newly build Fukuoka Dome was the first retractable roofed stadium in all of Japan. It would hold nearly thirty seven thousand fans for a SoftBank Hawks baseball game. Including festival seating on the field, they had sold fifty thousand tickets for the ZigZag show.

We checked in at the hotel, ran to the stadium for a quick sound check, and then I had a bit to eat and a nap. I awoke from the edges of a dream that still consumed my thoughts an hour later. I was standing alone on the beach, watching as a tsunami rolled directly toward me. Several people attempted to persuade me to evacuate, but I was for some reason intent on seeing this thing through to its conclusion. Little did I know that this destiny would have been greatly preferred to the reality that was about to come our way.

Arriving backstage about half way through Soul Asylum's opening set, the first thing that struck me was the number of people in the stadium. There were fifty thousand fans in a building that should have only allowed forty thousand. With the festival style seating, there was a sea of humanity covering the entire field of the baseball stadium.

### Unwanted Dreams

“It's the ultimate illusion,  
At best you know you're gonna suffer some contusions.  
Though there's a fair amount of reflex,  
Condensed within the realm of ordinary defect.  
That's when your hopes define a rhyme within the reason.  
Don't try'n claim to see a method to the season.  
Why waste your time living an act just shy of treason.  
When you endure unwanted dreams.  
Unwanted dreams.”

Near the beginning of every concert we fired confetti cannons into the crowd. For many years we opened every show with Zep's "Rock and Roll", fired off the cannons, and got the party started. We were doing it a little differently of late. Wanting to induce an environment that was a bit more retrospective, there was a lot more focus on a video montage, some drama as a prelude (almost like an opening act), and all of the pyrotechnics and the confetti came at the beginning as we were discretely making our presence on the stage known to the crowd. One at a time the band members took their pre-show positions on or near the stage. With subtle lighting and sometimes an audio clip, each of the main players was introduced to the crowd. I was always last. In the middle. In the back. The silhouette of a man holding a guitar. It could have been anyone. Except for the position of the man and the way he held that old Gibson arch top. Millions of people worldwide recognized that pose. I don't even recall where or when it started. I know I did it at the beginning of the first Letterman appearance. Mike has me on video in various iterations of "the pose" from back in the early college

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venue days. It was as recognizable as Chubby's twist or Elvis hovering over a mic.

“There's this physical attraction,  
Supplied complete to solve emotional contractions.  
Beyond the logical compression,  
You see a need to overcome this first impression.  
But when you hear that spirit callin' out your name now,  
Best heed the warning.  
Life becomes so strange now 'til you can't wait for morning.  
Pain precludes the postscript.  
Once you've diffused unwanted dreams.  
Unwanted dreams.”

Although the crowd was animated and excited, by and large they were well behaved for the first two thirds of the show. These events have become “See Spot Run” sets for the band - nothing but standards and greatest hits. There was far less activity on the stage, and therefore far fewer technical and artistic directors barking through the in-ear monitoring system. Less set changes, wardrobe changes, less musicians and actors/dancers, less of everything. From the band's perspective, this was the most relaxed and manageable environment to make good live music. And it showed – it was no wonder that the majority of both of ZigZag's live projects had been recorded during Far East tours.

“So cite some paralytic prefix,  
Seems passive suffrage through a search obsessed with halfwits.  
Reach for power from the conflict,  
There in offsetting claims befitting of a convict.  
It's then you feel the cost salvation seems to weigh down.  
Any creative thoughts can make you feel,  
Akin to tiny inexpensive show clowns.  
You're still a long long way from heading for the big town.  
So why contest unwanted dreams.  
Unwanted dreams.”<sup>67</sup>

It seemed like the trouble came out of nowhere. A small fight broke out on the floor to the left of the stage. The fight itself was short lived, but the ripple effect of pushing and shoving started to spread toward the front left corner of the stage and the stage extension. Right on top of where Franchesa was holding court. At about the same time, something caught fire in the stands almost directly to the left of the stage above the guests on the stage extension, nearly straight up from where the fight was now turning into an agitated wave of humanity on the floor. The folks in the stands began to head toward the floor as the folks on the floor were pushing towards the stage. The guests on the stage extension were overrun. By this time the music had stopped and the band had been pulled from the stage – so we didn't see the worst of it. The last vision I caught was of Danny heading down

the walk way in the front of the stage extension and toward the backstage area. He had Heather under one arm and Randy under the other. The determined look on his face was like that of a fullback charging through the line, needing two yards to gain a first down. In an effort to physically convince Scotty that he couldn't help Franchesca from that vantage point and to get off the stage, Mike Bennett set his video camera, still running, on a speaker column near Scotty's stage left position and got them both the hell out of there. Three dead, several more seriously injured. Trampled like the bulls running at Pamplona. Someone in the VIP section wielded a chair and a young girl ended up with a skull fracture. The local police tried to find someone to blame and arrest, but to their frustration, the overall level of chaos was such that (other than the chair incident) it was impossible to determine what was an act of aggression, and what was simply an act of self defense. Public relations for the tour took a huge worldwide hit in the media; insurance underwriters stepped in to dissect the events and added a new set of safety rules going forward that would reduce both the crowd size and the profits. A week's worth of Pop-Op shows were cancelled, and ZigZag was left to publicly apologize for something that was totally out of our control.

The deed was planned out with the same attention to detail and orchestration as one of the Pop-Op shows. They set in place a plan that had multiple scenarios' worked out with solutions for everything. They had people involved that were sitting right next to each other, one not knowing that the other was involved. As a person who had seen it all, done it all (except for maybe biting the head off of a live bat), and lived to tell the stories, covering all of the basic's multiple times leads to a great production. These folks were playing in the same league as Marty Scorsese and Tommy Tune. The plan was brilliant.

The fight was real. There was of course an outside instigator, but the fight itself was between two unknowing accomplices. They had several marks. It wasn't difficult to sift through the database of credit card purchases for floor tickets to the show, especially those who purchased two tickets. They were looking for couples. Young cute girl, boyfriend with credit problems, court history, or a drinking pattern. Preferably interracial: an oriental girl with a black or white American male. With ticket sales done over three months in advance for these events, they had plenty of time to find perfect matches. Actually, they had pin pointed nearly a dozen.

The initial act only took a moment. As one young man was nudged into the girl, another smoothly moved in and grabbed her ass. It was an added bonus that the young man also made contact with the boyfriend. IT was on. A little yelling and a couple of half-hearted roundhouse swings, then it was over. Broken up nearly as quickly and quietly as it had all begun. The key to the entire plan was not the fight. It was the movement of the crowd from the inception of the fight that they wanted to control.

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The confetti we were using on this tour was yellow and green. Some of the green confetti was also placed on the floor by a couple of the transport crew in advance of the show – as markers for each of the crowd plants.

Getting the crowd to move in a wave towards the stage was a lot like playing with dominoes. Topple the first one and the entire stack would fall. Mr. Push and Mr. Grab Ass started it all by moving three or four people each toward the stage and away from the fight. Add to that another plant that was positioned right in front of the fighters, and moving folks away from the action and into the forward surge. He started yelling “fight, fight, FIGHT.” Now more than a dozen people were all progressing violently in the same direction all at the same time. Another trio of plants and now nearly thirty people were less than two dozen feet from the front corner of the stage, gaining steam, and being tweaked by pros. A young woman in her early thirties fell in the second wave. As she tumbled toward the turf someone from behind caught her squarely in the throat with their knee and crushed her larynx. She died before any security staff could get close to her.

The fire and ensuing chaos on the stage extension were more overtly orchestrated. The concept that became VIP seating just off the left hand side of the stage started out of necessity. There were just too many folks backstage. At the Pop-Op shows most of these individuals - sponsors, record company executives and the like, would have seats in front of the stage. At the stadium events they (and their entourage) would inevitably end up standing or sitting right in someone’s way. There were two evenings that led to the permanent solution: the first was when one of the children of a Capitol VP just wandered on stage during the show and insisted on staying. The second was a full scale cat fight between someone’s current girlfriend and ex-girlfriend. The next tour started with a small “lounge” area set up just off the end of the stage. The “set” was now off limits to all but band and key personnel. Over the years this had expanded to include a bar, restrooms, and a small set of stands that extended out into the audience. Quite a nice vantage point for a few folks to sit and watch the show. For this tour there was probably room for fifty or so people to sit and watch (along with another twenty something “regulars” who would hang out near the bar for the entire show). Family, friends, business associates, senior tour staff, and endless requests from local “dignitaries”. Those were the “VIP’s”. There was another location beyond the backstage area for the laborers, drivers, and other staff not involved in the mechanics of the actual production. They could watch via close circuit video, sit on a couch, drink beer and eat pizza. Maybe the best seats in the house.

It was not unusual for Connie Leggio to sit in these VIP seats. Since she’d been with the Teamster’s tour operation for many years, knew everyone, everywhere, and I think enjoyed the shows (or the thought of being a part of the show). Sometimes alone, more often she came with a guest or a date. You could sense some events where she was using the privilege to court business opportunities, and other times to show her position and importance. One thing Connie never had to worry about – being noticed. In fact, in retrospect, her way to “blend in”

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was to stand out. So obvious that she was overlooked. Absent by being conspicuously present.

This night Connie was positioned four or five rows up, near an aisle, with an older Oriental gentleman as a companion. Sitting amongst a mix of family members (always an increase on the non-U.S. tours), Pacific Rim Capitol executives, a couple of local radio show ticket winners (with an inordinate number of radio station “personalities” tagging along), and other guests, she chatted to friends and strangers alike, more than willing to impart “knowledge” about the set list or the pyrotechnics.

Three rows in front of her was the young broker, Kenechi Takahashi, who would have happily been almost anywhere else. He didn’t like the noise, chaos, and general mayhem associated with live concerts. He liked the music OK – just preferred to listen in the confines of his home, his BMW sedan, or on his headset during a morning jog. Kenechi was there because his new girl wanted to go, had somehow managed these great seats, and his partners at the investment firm told him he needed a night away from the office. Heck, maybe he’d find a new client or two at the show.

There’s a “whiz kid” in every pyrotechnics crew. Jason Hedgewick wasn’t really a kid anymore; he had started working regional shows in Texas and Louisiana and some local theater in the area at the age of fifteen. Jason was now in his second decade with us, but relatively speaking still a “kid” in our midst at the ripe old age of twenty-seven. And The Kid was very good at his job. He always figured out how to get us what we wanted, and never made mistakes. The son of a gunsmith and grandson of gun maker, Jason was an expert on all things that go “boom”. But he was also self-admittedly an “odd duck”. A backwoods boy from East Texas, he came to us because he was a friend of one of R.L.’s cousins. He’d already been through two wives (some would say an occupational hazard in our business), lots of money on cars, ladies, and sour mash, yet his biggest problem was something else altogether. Jason liked to gamble, which kind of went with the territory. When you deal with explosives every day your entire existence is a “gamble”. High stakes Texas Hold ‘Em was his passion and his weakness. Not a local game or even an “executive game”. He was playing in games with important people who had lots of disposable income. He lost far more than he won and was in deep to “the house.” Things were about to get worse.

The approach came in the parking lot of the stadium in Vancouver the previous spring. He had just finished final preparations for the evening and was outside having a smoke while we did our sound check. We rehearse the Pop-Op show to death, but the stadium show, although certainly not an afterthought, receives far less attention. Two or three new songs at most, otherwise these shows were more or less the same as the last tour. We overhaul the live act only every four or five years. We were adding a song that night as a “warm up” for the impending dates in California. Jason was just killing time before the business of the evening

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commenced. The way it was laid out by this middle aged, non-descript man, who happened to know the sorted details of Jason's poker issues, all the kid had to do was take care of this little "detail" as a favor, and someone would make a mistake when calculating the interest on his current debt. And the project wasn't anything Jason couldn't have accomplished in grade school. A thin layer of explosive that could be painted onto any surface while warm, was stable and solid at room temperature, and detonated when cooled. He wasn't told what it would be used for, and he didn't ask. Just an easy way to save twenty grand.

The surface the substance was painted on was the bottom of a disposable soda cup. To be totally accurate five soda cups. Not just any soda cups, but the exact same soda cups that were used by the vendor who had the contract for the drink concessions at the baseball stadium where the ZigZag concert was to be held in Fukuoka. It didn't really matter who amongst the VIP's got the cups as long as they were setting in the end section of the stands. This was easy to assure by putting them all in the concession cart of the young man who was serving that section.

There was never any intention for the substance to create much of an explosion. Once it cooled down enough to crystallize, the devices went off. A flash of light, enough smoke to be noticeable but not overwhelming, and sufficient heat to incinerate the cup (evidence). If the arson squad found anything, it would be presented to the public as home-made fireworks and a prank. That report had already been bought and paid for. A couple of plants in the section had cups with ice in the bottom and paper in the top. When they went off bits of flaming shredded newsprint flew into the air.

The reaction to these small controlled fires was immediate and intense. All together, four of these devices detonated. The other three failed because the compound was spread on too thickly and didn't get cold enough for the chemical reaction to take place, which was purposeful to limit the size of the explosions. The first one that went off was still in the concession cart. It blew almost directly in the vendor face. Nothing serious, just some burnt hair (that smelled really, really bad), but the reaction of the young man made the rest of the operation incredibly easy to accomplish. The vendor was in the aisle in between the third and fourth rows when it detonated. Connie Leggio was two seats away. The young broker was two rows ahead, and four seats from the aisle. The drink vendor's immediate reaction was to remove the cart from his vicinity, and in so doing launched beverages into the third row and beyond. The cart ended up several seats down the row. On the way back to earth it came in contact with the back of the skull of a middle aged Oriental gentleman who was at that very moment taking a huge bite of pizza. The impact of the cart, along with the movement of the crowd, spiraled the man down into a kneeling position in front of his seat, and as he went down he hit the other side of their head on the seat in front of him. The pizza lodged in the man's throat, making it impossible for him to breathe. During the on rush from behind, two different people stepped on his

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seat, literally stampeding over the gentleman as he silently choked to death in a semiconscious state.

The other three detonations weren't nearly as dramatic as the first. But all three served an integral purpose. The second cup was being held by the brother-in-law of the "fill in" bass player's instrument technician. He was sitting in the first seat in the front row on the opposite side of the aisle. He dropped it on the platform in front of him, only receiving slightly worse than a mild sunburn (and settled out of court on the damages). It did however create enough of a stir with the folks to his right and directly behind to seal off the platform in front of the stands from becoming an easy exit route for the people in the end section. Franchesca was stuck in the corner, and really had nowhere to go. Scotty was going crazy backstage, but efforts to get to his wife immediately were pointless. Fortunately, Franchesca remained calm and stood her ground, garnering only a sprained ankle for the incident. The wave of fans from the floor surging toward that corner of the stage made escape over the rail impossible as well. That pocket of the stage extension had been fairly well isolated. The other two cups were in the possession of the plants. One was in the seventh row of the end section. The other was one row down on the opposite side of the aisle two seats in. Neither was injured seriously (although by design one of them hired a stateside ambulance chaser who tried to sue everybody, eventually getting a moderate settlement from the production company's insurance carrier), and they created the necessary downward push from the upper rows.

Between the third and fourth explosions, Connie began to make her move. She needed to get to the young broker in the second row before he had much of an opportunity to move. First, she deftly slid past the end seat of the fourth row, into the aisle, and then past a couple in the first two seats of the third row. At that point a large man in the third row picked her up and lifted her over the second row of seats. They were both about three seats away from where the Oriental man was silently suffocating. Connie now had only two people between herself and Kenechi Takahashi, who was attempting to climb over the front row of seats and at the same time, assist his girlfriend whose purse was apparently stuck on something. Connie side stepped the first person and the man who had previously lifted her was now half way over the second row of seats and his left leg was blocking any further traffic in the second row. After two swift steps toward the broker, she suddenly looked to her right – and directly into the lens of Mike Bennett's abandoned video camera.

When she looked back toward the young broker, Connie was now nearly directly behind him; her left shoulder was even with his right. He was leaning forward, making every effort to get himself and his girlfriend out of the melee, but it was useless – they were trapped. As Connie moved across behind Kenechi Takahashi the force of the crowd from the rear drove her over the second row of seats and pushed her against the couple. As she was nearing them she put up both hands to brace herself. She had on a pair of gloves. Seemed she almost always wore

gloves. But these were different. These were made out of some sort of woven fabric – and normally Connie wore leather gloves. As she came into contact with the young broker, her right hand near his right shoulder blade, The Project activated a computer chip implanted in the glove by touching the tips of her thumb and pinky fingers. A strand of special fiber that had been woven into the glove extended from the palm of the hand up to the tip of the index finger and about two inches beyond. With the circuitry engaged, this fiber strand ionized, and became stiff. It had the same tensile strength as a surgical steel rod, but was more the size of a small acupuncture needle – or an .11 gauge E string on an electric guitar. As her hand came in contact with Kenechi, she swiftly inserted the device between two of his ribs, and then disabled it with the same movement that had turned it on. In conjunction with the movements of the two plants, and the large man on her left, Connie Leggio was “escorted” across the front row of seats just past the young couple and another guest, onto the far corner of the platform, right next to Franchesca McNaughton and out of harm’s way.

Other than a brief flash of pain when the device was inserted, the young broker felt no immediate ill effects of the instrument the woman had inserted into his body. But his troubles were far from over. As the crowd continued to press forward, the force (along with a bit of purposefully neglectful installation) began to have a negative impact on the mechanical integrity of the temporary stands. In two different locations, the seats had come loose from the platform and folded forward on the people in the preceding row. The first were a pair of seats right on the outer rail on the end section in the second row. One woman banged her knee trying to get out of the way, but otherwise no one was injured. The second collapse came when four seats in the front row, directly in front of where Kenechi and his girlfriend were stranded; trapped by the crowd movement. As the seats gave way, the couple, along with several people beside and in front of them, fell to the platform. One couple was trapped under the seats briefly, and four, including the young couple, were laying face first over the broken seats. The young broker’s chin caught squarely on the edge of the seat as his rib cage crashed into the back of the seat. As the crowd behind him continued to press forward, a rather large gentleman with a size 13 ½ shoe stepped directly onto Kenechi’s right shoulder blade, cracking two ribs in the process.

At about that time the house lights came on and the crowd movement quickly abated, leaving only the aftermath of the incident to sort through. The band was already back at the hotel when we heard that there were two confirmed dead, several dozen injured (mostly minor), and no real explanation for why it all had happened. Taking the hash pipe with me, I retreated into the bathroom in search of some solace. I had just gotten out of the shower when I heard the details, and against the advice of my security and tour staff, insisted on going back to the stadium. I never made it out of the hotel parking lot – the local authorities simply wouldn’t allow it. Kenechi Takahashi made it to the concourse with the assistance of his girlfriend before collapsing. He was currently listed as “injured” by the stadium emergency personnel, but would die on the way to the hospital.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Connie Leggio was about to leave her hotel suite. She had a private jet waiting to take her to a pre-planned weekend with her cousin in Barcelona. The camera was just beginning its journey, currently in the hands of a lighting technician who was in route to deliver it to Mike at the hotel bar.

Everyone was upset, outraged, or a combination of the two. R.L. was furious that this had all happened within a few feet of the children. Pee-Tee was having a conversation with some local law enforcement member in the hall. Leah was sitting on the bed holding Heather, who was still in a state of shock. Scott was on a rant about the predicament his wife had been placed in, and was very vocally questioning the need to any longer be involved with this “traveling circus”. Mike Bennett was on the phone, attempting futilely to conjure damage control with the press. Eric sat in front of the television, vacantly watching “Happy Days” with Japanese voiceover. I was sure the typhoon in my earlier dream would have caused far less damage. Looking on at the chaos surrounding me, Gerry Rafferty and Stealers Wheel was running through my brain.

“Clowns to the left of me,  
Jokers to the right.  
Here I am,  
Stuck in the middle with you.”<sup>68</sup>