

2) Video Killed the Radio Star

After we finished the second album, Capital put us back out on the road. This time a series of seventeen college towns, playing auditorium sized venues in most towns, and on a couple of occasions as the opening act for a headliner who was in town for a special college weekend. Austin, Norman, Boulder, Albuquerque, Tucson, and San Diego before we appeared on Letterman. Palo Alto, Idaho Falls, Des Moines, Madison, Milwaukee, Ann Arbor, Bloomington, Lexington, Columbus, Pittsburgh, and Ithaca before the Saturday Night Live performance. “I Don’t Know” was getting some play on the college stations, and we really enjoyed having rooms filled with young adults that really wanted to party. We had maybe the best times of our lives as a band rolling around the country in a second hand tour bus and a truck full of gear.

I first noticed the trucking issue quite by accident. Others, particularly Rick and Tate, were more clued in. One night after a show in Boulder, we were walking past the loading dock on the way to the van that took us to the hotel. Occasionally, we did get a night of rest, although most nights it was back on the bus and rolling to the next town. I looked into the back of the truck while a forklift was rolling in the drum kit. There was a chair in the nose of the truck. A very large, ornate, upholstered chair. I made some smart ass remark about being glad they had gotten my “throne” stowed well in with the other gear. I still catch grief from time to time by Tate and Scotty about that remark. To this day we have no idea who that chair belonged to, or where it was headed. A couple of nights later it was gone. After a conversation with Rick, and a separate one with Johnny, I asked Tate to check out the truck thing without making a bunch of noise and let me know. It was also about that time that I came to realize that this operation had gotten too big for the band to manage, and I didn’t totally trust the label to have our best interests at heart.

The first move was to call Louisiana. Pee-Tee said “no” the first three times I called. Then after I first called Capitol and insisted upon additional security and wanted to hand pick the Chief – and then called back and yelled at them some more, I made a fourth call to Pee-Tee. I threw enough of Capitol’s money at him that his wife wouldn’t let him say no. He caught up with us in Des Moines the following week. And has been by my side part of almost every day since.

The second task was going to be a tougher sell. At least that was what I thought. We needed a real “manager”. Someone who could handle the finances, control the promoters, keep the crew reasonably happy, and most of all I need someone I could trust. Really, really TRUST. I needed my old friend from UK, Mike Bennett.

I met Mike Bennett my freshman year at the University of Kentucky. He lived in the dorm room across the hall and was from Bowling Green. His father had been

## Long Live Rock And Roll

a career military man who died on an “observation” mission in Viet Nam in 1970. They were living in Fort Benning, Georgia at the time. Mike’s mom moved him and his brother George to Bowling Green to be near to family. Mike was going to college on the benefits from his father’s service history and Social Security. He never had any money. He also ran cross country for the university and would be out every morning running ten to twelve miles before breakfast. I never joined him in that endeavor. His goal was to run in the New York marathon. His mom and dad were originally from Brooklyn, and Mike was a big Yankee’s fan. We became lifetime friends and trusted confidants.

Mike was the proud holder of what we called “The Record”. The premise was simple – how long did it take one to drink an entire six pack of twelve ounce cans of beer??? I think the first time it was attempted Mike came in at around half an hour. No one else was even close to that pace. I gave up after the second beer, as Mike had already finished his third and was opening number four at the time. After the initial session, I don’t believe anybody but Mike participated in the competition. By the end of our freshman year, I think Mike had “The Record” down to somewhere between eight and nine minutes. And man was he drunk when he finished.

Mike also had a way with the ladies. Although not what one considered classically “handsome”, he was almost always in the company of a good looking coed. Let me just put it this way: Mike was well equipped to make the women happy. I benefited from the fact that often there were “friends” or “roommates” that needed male companionship. I was more than happy most of the time to fill that role.

Second semester of our freshman year, Mike and I devised a plan to duplicate our schedules. That way we took turns going to the lectures and were reading the same books. I certainly didn’t do as well at taking notes or grasping the literature. That’s why he made the Dean’s list and I play guitar. We even took it so far as to schedule two classes at the same time on the same days. Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 11:00 a.m. We had both “Introduction to Astronomy” and “Political Science Survey”. On Tuesday he went to one class, I went to the other. On Thursday, we switched classes. When it came time for finals, we had to finagle one of the professors into allowing us to reschedule, as we couldn’t take two finals at the same time. We got away with it, but the prof knew something was up. I got “B’s” in both classes. Mike got an “A” in Astronomy, and a “B” in PolySci.

Almost everyone who attended the University of Kentucky has one common passion – Kentucky Wildcat basketball. There are no professional sports teams (other than minor league baseball) in the state of Kentucky. The last was the Kentucky Colonels of the old America Basketball Association (ABA). The joke goes that “there are only two sets of athletes who get paid in Kentucky – the horses at Churchill Downs, and the basketball players at the University of

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Kentucky. Other than those who live in and around Louisville and support the University of Louisville Cardinals, the entire population of the state are “Big Blue Nation” fans. From our childhood, most Kentuckians, and especially the boys, can be found wherever the nearest hoop has been attached to the side of a barn or above the garage door. We relived the great victories, and mourned the losses. High school stars in Kentucky rarely leave for the basketball mecca’s that are North Carolina, Duke, and UCLA. They stay home in hopes of being Wildcat Heroes, their names etched in the history of what many consider the finest college basketball program in the country. This was never more true than during my childhood.

Adolph Rupp, the “Baron of the Bluegrass” was the Kentucky head basketball coach from 1930 until he was forced to retire at age seventy in 1972 (Kentucky law made it mandatory at the time for all state employees to retire upon reaching their 70<sup>th</sup> birthday). During his time at Kentucky, Rupp led the Wildcats to 876 victories (fourth on the all time list) and four of Kentucky’s seven national championships. During my teenage years from 1967-1972 every year Kentucky reached at least the “Sweet Sixteen” in college basketball’s national tournament. By the time we got to Kentucky, one of Rupp’s assistants, Joe B.Hall was the head coach, and the team played its home games in the newly built Rupp Arena. In 1978 we won another national championship. Now that was a SERIOUS party.

Mike’s brother George was several years older than us and had already graduated from college and was in law school when we met. He went on to work for my father for a bit before taking a position with a national firm and was relocated to Atlanta. Mike “inherited” George’s record collection. There was a ton of great music in that milk crate full of vinyl. We poured through those recordings like they were buried treasure. Thick vinyl imports from England were amongst my favorites – “12 x 5” from the Rolling Stones and the Beatles “Revolver” and “Rubber Soul”.

Although Mike banged around on the acoustic guitar a bit during college (and his interest in the instrument is about the same these days), he wasn’t consumed by the music like some of the rest of us. He was content to hang out at the jam sessions, drink a few beers, and chase the skirts. Mike was far more focused on getting a formal college education than most everyone else. He also found another passion during our college years. He began volunteering at the local PBS television station and was intrigued with video recording.

Kentucky Educational Television (KET) is a statewide public television network. Headquartered in Lexington, it is the largest PBS network in the nation. It’s studios are located adjacent to the University of Kentucky campus, but have no direct affiliation with the school. In the mid-1950s, a UK professor began taping a popular anthropology course, and the response was enough for him to consider founding an educational television station at UK. A donation from Ashland Oil Company provided the funds to acquire thirteen transmitters, and KET was born.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Mike spent a considerable amount of time, especially on Saturday and Sunday mornings, at the KET studios. He learned how to operate the cameras, make and store the video records on magnetic tape, and was becoming very knowledgeable about the entire process.

The last time I saw Mike he had just gotten married, bought a house, had a nice job with a major Houston hospital, and was enjoying the good life. I'd called him a couple of times a couple of years back, but Mike wasn't interested in hanging out with the "band". I was pretty sure he would still feel that way, but maybe he could point me toward someone that he knew that could handle this assignment. I pondered all of this for a couple of days. And then I called him.

What I found was certainly not what I had expected. The home number in Houston was disconnected. The work number went to the hospital's general voice mail box. I called R.L.'s brother in law Jerry and asked him to drive by the house. There was a "For Sale" sign out front. I called the realtor who reluctantly agreed to call Mike – in Dallas, and give him my number at the hotel. He called me back the next night. Unfortunately, we had moved on to Ann Arbor. Luckily, I had enough foresight to get the Capitol PR person to leave the itinerary for the next several nights with the hotel manager. When we got back to the hotel after the show in Ann Arbor that night, there was a message for me at the desk. Mike Bennett's new home number.

After the usual preliminary BS, I asked what the hell he was doing in Dallas. That's when the entire story unfolded. Married – divorced. Met a girl from Dallas. Moved in with her but was having second thoughts. Had taken an offer from a hospital in Arlington, Texas that he really didn't want, but needed a job to make the move. Not too many friends. Way too much drinking. I got this sense that Mike was beginning to circle the drain. I told him why I was calling, and he didn't wait for me to finish my spiel before he accepted. What I thought was going to be difficult had been anything but. I was concerned about the well being of my friend, and a bit apprehensive about throwing him into this circus in his current state. But I also knew that once Mike found his purpose in the operation that he would be more than up for the challenge. The next step now became the issue.

Capitol insisted that the tour management they had in place was adequate and there wasn't any room in the budget for Mike – now or going forward. After my normal tact of cajoling and yelling didn't get anywhere, I pulled in the big guns and called my father.

Although my dad the Judge didn't negotiate our contract with Capitol, we hired a local Los Angeles entertainment lawyer to do that, he knew the ins and outs of the deal and probably had a better understanding of the language than the corporate

## Long Live Rock And Roll

attorneys at Capitol who had written the document. There was a clause in the indemnification section (whatever the hell that is) that detailed the ability of the “band’s executive agent” to make one time adjustments to the payment schedule on the advance, if in the agent’s opinion, the “functional operation of the enterprise” was being compromised in some way. I was the “executive agent” detailed in the contract. I called Capitol and invoked my privilege in this matter. With much chagrin, the accounting department transferred \$75,000 to the operating account. And put Michael Bennett’s name on the band manifest starting with a date in Lexington the following week. Mike gave notice to the hospital and packed his things.

The next part of the process was more culture than substance. The band was used to the autonomy of being able to do about anything we wanted as long as we were there for show time. The Capitol folks with us on the tour were content to let “whatever happens” rule the day as long as no one ended up in jail or in the news. They were caught up in the madness with us. I was told that overspending was expected and budgets a “rough guess” and that allowances were made (read: they were using OUR advance money) to offset the deficits in the tour budget. To me this was unacceptable. We were working hard, and having success. And although that really was the point to this entire endeavor, I didn’t want to get to the end of the tour to find that we were hemorrhaging cash and impacting our ability to do anything but be on the road to make a decent living. It was never as dire as my imagination allowed for, but it was OUR money, and I was going to do whatever I could to protect every penny. Too many stories about “famous but broke” celebrities. I didn’t want to be one of them.

When Mike arrive in Lexington, among the items in his baggage was a portable video recorder.

Although it would be a late in 1982 before Sony officially released the Betacam system, Mike had managed to procure an initial release model that was targeted for industry insiders. This system was the first with both the camera and recorder housed within a single unit, eliminating the need for a cable between the two units and greatly improved the camera operator’s freedom of movement. Although still a relatively large and heavy piece of gear, and not something you could hold with one hand, the Betacam (or “BatCam” as we called it) was either sitting on Mike’s shoulder, or on top of a table or speaker cabinet. We also started buying the half inch tapes from a wholesaler a case at a time.

Mike earned his keep the very first week. And the topic was food, not music. After each show there was a caterer hired to provide food for the band and crew. Usually a nice spread, but seldom utilized by anyone but the road crew, the local media, and the transportation folks. A lot of it was either taken home by event staff or thrown away. Most of us ate at the hotel and put it on the room tab, or on the bus. We used the Capitol public relations man’s corporate credit card if we dined in a group at a restaurant. Everyone was getting a per diem as well – all

## Long Live Rock And Roll

part of the contract. We were handing out piles of money every week as reimbursement for food that we were paying for anyway. With Mike in charge now, this stopped almost immediately. Everybody still got free food. We just didn't get paid for eating it any more. The union grumbled at first, but when given the option of having the food backstage or receiving a per diem, they chose the latter. We still put some food backstage for the media, but really all they wanted to do was drink and talk. The better news for me was that the burden of every complaint from every member of the band and crew (and other ancillary folks) was no longer my responsibility. And by and large the transition was fairly amicable. It took a little while for the band – especially R.L. and Eric, to trust Mike with the management of certain situations and requests. Nothing major, just stuff that I guess from the time in Europe we all thought was “band only” information. I wasn't surprised, especially from R.L. We had talked (in fact the entire band knew for a week or more prior to Mike's arrival) about the need for a “road manager” for awhile. R.L. wanted someone in the “family” to assume this task, but I was passionate about needing this to be someone I KNEW I knew I could trust. He'd heard me talk enough about my dad to know that if the Judge thought this was the right move then indeed it probably was. We followed a lot of that logic regarding the opinion of my father over the entire course of our careers.

I also got Mike involved with the trucking issues almost immediately. We both talked with Tate and he laid out what he knew for sure, and what he “assumed” by connecting the dots. The responsibility of the gear fell into several well defined roles. The trucking company took it from the loading dock and into the truck. They moved it to the next location and then unloaded onto the dock. From the dock the responsibility fell to the contract employees of the auditorium or convention center we were playing at that night. They got it to the stage. From there our roadies took over. After the show the roadies packed it all up, and the process was reversed. The trucking company had a very solid contract that defined what they did and did not do. I think that in retrospect every one of us who were there at the beginning would tell you we didn't trust the trucking folks. There were always two big guys who did all of the unloading and loading. Not always the same two people, but always two big guys. The third member of their crew was a “twitchy” little guy who was the driver. He never lifted anything. Mostly stood around and smoked endless cigarettes and drank coffee. He did all of the driving to my knowledge. And I'm pretty sure he was a crank or crystal meth addict. Besides the chair incident, there were numerous other “little” things that more than one of us noticed. Equipment cases on the truck that were never unloaded and didn't appear to be part of the band setup. The fact that things were never loaded quite the same after every show. And sometimes it changed between the load out the night before and the load in the next day. Still to the best of our knowledge, whatever they were doing wasn't costing us anything or compromising our ability to stay on schedule. What they did for us they did very well. No one outside the band complained about anything related to the trucking, and for all we knew this was all just part of their legitimate business.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

The Lexington show was a fun night for all of us, but especially for Greg and for myself. Not only did I get to reunite with Mike, but we had lots of family and friends at the show, and at a post concert party that had been arranged by my father. My mom and brother were there also, as were about twenty-five friends and relatives. Greg probably had a couple dozen in the room as well.

Most people are familiar with Stephen Foster's "My Old Kentucky Home" from the traditional playing at the Kentucky Derby. The University of Kentucky band also plays it prior to each home football game and at the conclusion of its basketball games. During the playing at the conclusion of the game, it is a tradition for the fans and cheerleaders to remain silent until the band plays the final verse ("Weep no more my lady") and to hold their right hands with index fingers extended to signify the number 1. Former Kentucky Governor and Major League Baseball Commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler sometimes led the singing of "My Old Kentucky Home" at football games and there was a recording of a live version with the University of Kentucky Marching Band.

We played that audio as part of the introduction prior to the concert in Lexington that night. Then we proceed to rock the top off of Rupp Arena.

The presence of the video camera from almost the beginning has been really quite fortuitous. One could argue that the camera was Mike's instrument in the band. He can break it out at the most inopportune times to be sure, but he also has recorded hours and hours of musical and cultural history over the years. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame loves him (he sits on their Board of Directors) and the press has offered several small fortunes for his clips, but he has always turned them down. Thank goodness he's my friend and partner – otherwise, I'd have been cooked by the press long ago. Video really came to the forefront for both of us during the early development of Pop-Op. With all of the split staging, choreography, and multiple things going on at the same time, reviewing video of the block outs and rehearsals made directing the entire production much simpler and explainable.

Back in the early days of the concept, when the band thought I was nuts and didn't really have a clue about sequencing and needing wardrobe and instruments to fit with the theme, I'd have one of the roadies "stand in" for me while I sat in the back of the auditorium looking at the big picture.

Not that any of this preproduction stuff was Mike's responsibility. Soon enough we had a full time videographer within the crew, and a handful of assistants when we went on the road. We've even had a couple of grad school interns over the years that came on board to gather data for a thesis or case study of the new genre. Mike was, is, and always shall be the "business" manager. That title and the millions of little details that went along with it were more than enough for any sane person to attempt to handle. He was my college classmate (in fact the only member of the immediate band family other than Greg to have a college degree),

## Long Live Rock And Roll

my friend, and most of all, my protector and confident. I've said on a number of occasions that I'd walk through the Gates of Hell for Mike. What I was very late to comprehend was that Mike had been trudging through those gates on my behalf for many, many years.

Mike's skill with the camera was finding what wasn't working. He could take thirty seconds of video during a two hour rehearsal and get straight to the heart of the problem/difficulty. And he could do it with tact. He knew most of the cast and crew as long and as well as I did. Perhaps even better, since although he was the person ultimately in charge of the entire operation, no one saw him as being "the boss" – that was my role. His disarming style and engaging wit had seen us through an untold number of incidents with club owners, record executives, women, unhappy musicians, women, the IRS, theater management, and did I mention women ???

The latest and greatest digital video device was never more than an arm's length from him – and almost always running. He had it with him so much that I think people forgot it was there. He could make a to do about turning it on in a meeting to change the focus of the discussion, lighten the mood during a rehearsal by sticking it up the skirt of some young girl and then projecting the view onto the big screen, or walk into an argument, turn it on, and then leave it behind when he departed to chronicle the going's on in his absence.

In the beginning, we used to look at the video after each show and analyze what we saw. We stopped shortly thereafter. Someone was always getting their feelings hurt, and arguing normally ensued. If there were technical issues, then someone would take a look – but not the entire band. I probably haven't looked at any of that footage in twenty years. Maybe some day I will, but for now I just want to keep moving forward.

Rick Daniels didn't so much take care of my guitars as he took care of me. Rick knew his job so well, and had been doing it for so long, that he needed far less time than most of the rest of the tech crew to get ready for a show. He was an extra set of eyes and ears on the stage, and most of the time he resolved problems before they occurred. Rick was a simple man for northeastern Arkansas. He had a ready smile and a love of the blues. He's been managing my gear since the first tour in '81. Technically, he was my sound man on stage. Everything I ran onstage was plugged into a mix that Rick managed from about thirty five feet away. He sent one main feed to the house. It was easier that way. I only had to explain myself once. I met Rick while we were working on the first record at SugarHill studio in Houston. He had been taking audio engineering classes at a local junior college and was doing an internship at SugarHill. He did a lot of the setup for our sessions, and was very good at what he did. He would also drag me out occasionally to see some obscure local blues talent. We went to a lot of dives and "juke joints". Sometimes we might be the only white people in the place. But we didn't care. We were there for the music, just like everyone else. Over

## Long Live Rock And Roll

the years, Rick has been more like a brother than an employee. Our families are close, and we live only seven miles apart in Southern California.

Although my guitar setup has gotten a little more complicated over the years, it's still a fairly straightforward arrangement. On stage I primarily play one of three instruments, "The Gibson" (or one of two or three extra ES-125's that I always take on the road), one of several Gibson Les Paul Juniors, or a Fender Telecaster (I usually have two or three of these with us as well). Occasionally I'll pull out a Rickenbacher 360/12 or one of the acoustics (primarily a custom made Northwood), but that doesn't happen very often during a live show. All of the instruments we expect to use on any give night are all set up with wireless packs fastened to the guitar straps. The signal from the wireless goes directly into a rack mounted preamp that has a selector switch enabling the use of a combination of amplifiers I have on stage. Most of the time I run through two Fender Princeton 90's. There is also a Marshall half stack and a Mesa Boogie on either side of the Princeton's. The Marshall gets used mostly in combination with one of the Les Paul Juniors, and the Mesa for the Tele (normally paired with one of the Princeton's as well). There is also an effects loop in the preamp that is chained to any number of effects units, which almost always include a reverb unit, a parabolic equalizer, a distortion pedal and some sort of multi-effects box. We then program the presets to a midi controller that is placed next to my microphone stand. The brands and models on this gear changes all the time. We break things, wear them out, or newer and/or better gear becomes available. I leave most of that stuff to Rick. When we are preparing for a tour, he'll get the rack set and we will have a couple of brief "run throughs" with just him and me to see if everything is performing to expectation. We rarely change anything while on the road unless it breaks. And I don't know this for a fact, but I'm guessing that Rick has spares of everything, and the contact information for procuring more gear from pretty much anywhere we happen to be.

In the early years, I tried using a headset microphone. I liked being free of the mic stand, and usually wore a hat to cover the harness. These were the first units Shure made, and they were yet to be wireless. So I was dragging around two sets of cords (one for the mic and one for the in-ear monitor) for the entire performance. Our first sound man hated the thing, and I think he either hid it or broke it. One night there was a mic stand and a Shure SM58 microphone sitting where my headset was normally placed. I never used the headset again in a concert setting.

Leah managed to finish cosmetology school, and her mother was pleased for the moment. She actually was becoming very good at cutting hair. Scotty trusted her to cut his, and Scott was VERY picky about his hair. At the time mine was very easy – a little over shoulder length all the way around, just cut off the split ends. Almost every day we are on tour someone in the crew approaches her about a "trim". She was also becoming involved in some of the band discussions when the topic moved from how we sounded to how we looked. Our relationship was

## Long Live Rock And Roll

solid, but none the less interesting. Although I love her very much, I believe that Leah loves me more than I love her. By that I mean she is more forgiving, understanding, and probably a better “friend”. Maybe what I’m saying is that she is a better human being than I. I’m not going to tell you that I’m a really good guy – sometimes I’m an absolute prick. I’m also not going to tell you that Leah is the only woman I’ve slept with in the past twenty years. Or that I’m “Drug Free” (whatever that means). I rationalize my behavior sometimes by extolling “the nature of the beast” that is our business, and claim my exemption from being a member of society at large because I’m an “artist.” But enough about that. Leah was my partner, and an asset to the team. Probably because I could trust her more than she could trust me.

Up until the Petty tour, there was no “dress code” within the band. Scotty and I were into the “stage outfits” from the very start. I loved trekking around to thrift stores and “vintage clothiers” to see what I could find of interest. Once Leah and I were together, she had her say about my wardrobe as well. We probably argue more about what I wear on stage than any other singular topic. We loved to spend time walking the streets in a Houston area called “The Montrose”, browsing through antique and second hand clothing stores. One particular place where we used to find stage wear was called “Timeless Taffeta.” Leah always had fun with this name because for some reason the word “Taffeta” didn’t want to come out of my mouth with a reasonable or even consistent pronunciation. TA-FI-TUH. The rest of the band was pretty much content with blue jeans, tennis shoes, and an interesting shirt – usually something out of their closet. R.L. had made it clear for years that he had to be comfortable in order to play – he was only visible from the waist up anyways.

### Fashion

“Starts with a chain reaction,  
Intense attraction,  
You can’t say no.  
Makin’ out like a winner,  
You’re no sinner,  
Brought along in tow.  
Dazzler, put on a new fez.  
Keepin’ up with the Joneses.  
Got a lot to show.  
Breaks like a rage of passion,  
It’s just fashion,  
Oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh,oh.

Preppies in penny loafers,  
Look like gophers,

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Move way too slow.  
Coeds in tight wool sweaters,  
Seem so much better,  
Hey don't you know.  
Beehives and Karmen Ghia's,  
Not for me-a  
A no, no, no.  
Know you'd rather spend than ration,  
It's just fashion,  
Oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.

Fashion to the left of you,  
Fashion to the right.  
Don't mind what it costs,  
Long as you're lookin' good tonight.  
Fashion out in front of you,  
Fashion to the rear.  
Lookin' good to some,  
May to others seem so queer.

Dazzle, put on a new fez.  
Keepin' up with the Joneses.  
Got a lot to show.  
Breaks like a rage of passion,  
It's just fashion,  
Oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.  
Fashion, oh, oh, oh.<sup>10</sup>

It wasn't really all that hard to work out. It's not like anyone was advocating identical jumpsuits or flower pots on our heads. Leah and a consultant from Capital went from band member to band member individually and discussed a "look". R.L. went with jeans and a tank top. Sometimes he wore a fedora for part of the evening. Greg decided to be formal and sported a jacket and ascot (and sometimes a pipe he never smoked). Eric became comfortable in fringed shirts and white pants. Scotty almost always wore black leather pants, most of the time with a white undershirt and a colorful sweater. I was off the map. All I wanted was to be noticed. Usually colored cotton pants with tennis shoes on the bottom. Anything from a military dress coat with only an undershirt underneath to Hawaiian shirts, a yellow sports coat, and a green derby on top. I even once went to the hardware store, bought a length of rope, tied it into a noose, and wore it around my neck for an entire set.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

I was a bit apprehensive (actually more than a bit) when we were asked/informed by Capitol that we were going to open for Queen for a block of American dates followed by six shows in Japan. Billy Squire was scheduled to open for the entirety of the North American leg of what was in total a sixty-nine date worldwide tour that Queen embarked upon starting in April of 1982. Apparently, Billy had a previous commitment that conflicted with a few of the southern and western U.S. shows, and was unavailable for the dates in Japan. Billy opened all of the east coast shows and we took over starting with a date in Biloxi, Mississippi on August 19th. We did all of the southern and western cities, with Billy joining us again for the two shows in the Forum in Los Angeles. We opened those California shows with a brief eight song set, followed by Billy, and then Freddy, Brian May and the boys brought down the house.

Don't get me wrong, I like Queen. In fact, I like Queen a lot. I owned the first album back in high school, and one of my favorite all time lyrics is from "Teenage Lament" off that project.

"My new purple shoes,  
Are amazing the people next door.  
And my Rock and Roll forty-five's,  
Are enraging the folks on the lower floor"<sup>11</sup>

I also remember when "Sheer Heart Attack" was released, and "Killer Queen" was huge on the radio. No my issue wasn't with Queen. I just thought we were a bad fit as an opening act. Boy was I wrong about that. And what I learned from listening and watching Mr. Mercury, et. al. for a solid month changed everything for me and for ZigZag.

During the U.S. shows, we were amazed at how well we were received by a crowd that we assumed would be into glam rock and basically we would be enjoyed but ignored. They sang along with us on "I Don't Know" and "Thoroughbred". Our merchandise sold like crazy. We heard rumblings from some of the Queen staff that they preferred us to Squire, and darn sure enjoyed our show more than that of "Bow Wow Wow", who opened on a number of the European dates.

We never really "hung out" with the members of Queen. In fact, we almost never saw any of them except on stage or maybe in passing at the hotel if we had a day off from travel. They had a private jet for the band and record company executives. One of the assistants from Capitol, a cute leggy blonde, had gotten to travel with them for a couple of days with an accountant from EMI. She later said that the band mostly slept.

The first best part of this tour was no bus travel. We were flying from city to city on the charter that also housed the Queen technical crew and other record company personnel. Every night we slept in a real bed in a real hotel. No meals

## Long Live Rock And Roll

at drive thrus or carry out from an all night diner. The women were better and so were the drugs. The big time sure tasted sweet.

Of course, the concert in Houston was a highlight. We probably had fifty or so friends at the show, including a few folks from Hilborn, the staff at Sugar Hill, R.L.'s family, and Leah's parents, Jimmy and Janet Butler. We had dinner with them the night after the show in Dallas, which they also attended. Stephanie was there with her mom and step dad the deputy sheriff as well. I don't think we scared them too badly. It's tough to look down on someone who only hours earlier was being cheered by thousands. Leah was being well fed and looked none the worse for wear. The only comment I heard her mother say to Leah was that she should be wearing a bra to go out in public.

Two significant things happened during our twenty-seven days on Queen's North American "Hot Space" tour: One was coming to the realization that I was not going to be the kind of front man that could captivate stadium sized audiences – especially not with the energy and presence that Freddy Mercury possessed. The other was the way their crew had an eye for detail, and made the stage experience for us an education in the science of production.

I guess we should start this discussion with what I'm not. I'm not a "front man". In fact, ZigZag doesn't have a front man. Almost from the beginning, it's been Scott and Eric stage right, with Greg on the left beside me. R.L. is dead center in the back. We did this to balance the stage so that there were sightlines to everyone. I didn't want to stand in front of R.L. all night for a couple of reasons. I don't want to be right in front of the kick drum and I don't want to have to turn all the way around to look at my drummer. Scott and I have our microphone stands the same distance from the front of the stage for the same reason – eye contact. I view my role in the band as the primary writer, featured vocalist, and second guitarist for ZigZag.

Offstage, I marshaled the entire entity. On stage there can be no I.

The mechanics of becoming a "songsmith" are both adventurous and a bit schizophrenic. First of all let me state equivocally that there IS NO FORMULA. Every song is a different process or processes, and just like your children, they all have to be managed individually. I say "songsmith" instead of "songwriter" primarily due to the nature of our process. I write the lyrics and chord progressions (occasionally it is Scott). Then it is introduced to the band, usually on a cassette tape or CD. After everyone has had the opportunity to listen a few times and mull over the contents, we get together and "have a go". Sometimes we do the song as presented. More often than not, there are tempo changes, key changes, lyrical "suggestions", and restructuring of the arrangement. Individual parts are almost never dictated – at least initially. If something isn't working, we stop and make adjustments. The "normal" distillation process can take one rehearsal or several. Sometimes changes are suggested in the group setting, other

## Long Live Rock And Roll

times to me in private. As long as we get it right, I really don't care. I love each and every one of my "babies", even the ones that everyone else rejects. But I long ago dispatched the notion that "this is the way I wrote it, and this is the way it needs to be done." Although this process is not a totally democratic one, I know better than to attempt to dictate direction. That might work for some bands, but not with ZigZag – I would have been dispatched long ago if I'd tried to impose my will on this process. The songs are bigger than any (or all) of us. A good case study would be "Carry Me Back" from the "Uneven Stitches" project.

First of all, I wrote the song as a moderate "folksy" number (there would be some who tell you that I write them all this way). Two days later at rehearsal R.L. had a guitar in his hands, had pushed the tempo, and is using Chuck Berry rock and roll chord stylings. He wanted to see more "urgency" in the structure. I had to change some lyrics to remove some syllables and make it a bit choppier.

### Carry Me Back

"Carry me back to that lonely city,  
The times were hard but the girls were skinny.  
The skies were cold and the nights so long.  
Boney knees and high top sneakers,  
Try'n our best to become true believers.  
Havin' no sense, but then needin' none.  
Carry me back, carry me back when I roam.  
Carry me back. Lord carry me back to my home."

By the next practice, Scott and Greg had come up with the bridge riff – totally out of the blue. They had to teach it to me.

"Carry me back with a thrill for vengeance,  
A shift to the real lead away from this nonsense.  
Of broken hearts and pieced up shattered dreams.  
Words to the wise amidst thoughts of pretension,  
Spout a bit with little chance for retention.  
Living hopes dangerously courting our dreams.  
Carry me back now help me to find a real start.  
Carry me back, Lord carry me back to my heart."

When Eric left that night he told me to "give him a week". That usually meant he had an idea and would be up for the next two days to figure it out and get it perfect. The honky tonk piano part that he laid out was right as rain. The solo flowed right into Scotty's lead and by now we were at full boil I don't even play the rest of the song live – Scott has it handled, and then some.

Carry me back feel me slowly breakin',  
Terrible odds against the chances I'm takin'.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Carry my bones, bury the still remains.  
Carry me back, oh carry the weight of my rein.  
Carry me back, Lord carry me over the pain.<sup>12</sup>

Throw in a great drum break by R.L. on the “terrible odds” line, a return to the bridge riff, and an exit refrain. “Building a Song – 101”. After writing this all down, I think back and recall that it wasn’t quite as easy as I have depicted. Maybe it was and in the moment it just seemed more difficult. We weren’t doing anything all that new. In fact most of my ideas about lyric, melody and chord progression have come from those I’ve listened to and imitated.

There has been discussion for years about who is the “greatest” contemporary songwriter. Most people cite Bob Dylan, or perhaps Lennon and McCartney. In my mind Jagger and Richards, Van Morrison, Jackson Browne, Brian Wilson, Neil Young, Bruce Springsteen, Willie Nelson and Jim Croce (just to name a few) should all be part of the conversation. The most adamant endorsement I’ve ever heard was from Steve Earle, who swears that he “would stand on Bob Dylan’s coffee table in his cowboy boots and holler to the heavens” that Townes Van Zant is the best there ever was. His contention has some merit. I’d throw J.J. Cale into the mix as well. To me, it’s a matter of personal taste. And depending on my disposition and current environment I could make an argument for any of the above. It’s my feeling that the world would be a lesser place without any of the above mentioned troubadours (and a host of others as well). I was trying to follow in some gigantic footsteps.

Technically, we learned a ton on the Queen tour. These guys had the rigging and staging down to an exact science. They had to – there was a hell of a lot going on. The staging and lighting took two full semi-trailers to haul it all around. But these guys had already set up and torn down this set about fifty times before we first encountered them in Biloxi. If we were going to move to the next level, then we were going to have to get on top of this technical challenge.

Simon Crowley was the chief lighting technician for the Queen tour. Prior to his time with Queen, Simon had worked the theater district in London, and really had a first love for the stage. He helped design the lighting set used on both this Queen tour and also the ’81 tour of Japan and South America. The high point for Simon was the knowledge that the band couldn’t perform at Royal Albert Hall as planned because the lighting rig was too heavy for the floor. British humor – sometimes I just don’t get it. Anyway, Leah and I spent a great deal of time talking with Simon on the plane. Mike did a fair bit as well, once I asked him to check Simon out. Which he did by making a couple of phone calls at the next stop. We needed a big picture guy. Someone that was always sitting a hundred feet away from the stage and from that vantage point evaluating what worked and what didn’t. Mike’s interest in video spiked a kindred spirit in Simon as well, and they talked for hours on the merits of Beta versus VHS and other such “pointy-headed” topics. At the end of the tour we offered Simon the position of chief

## Long Live Rock And Roll

production advisor. We doubled his salary. With the dividends returned by investing in our relation with Simon, we should have quadrupled it. It would have still been a bargain.

When Cameron Crowe from Rolling Stone called the first time, I nearly fell out my chair – literally. We’d all been reading his articles for years, and “Fast Times at Ridgmont High”, his story of an adult (himself at age 22) posing as a senior in high school had just been released. We were in Seattle at the time. He wanted to spend a few days with the band when we got to California a week later, with the purpose of writing a cover story for “the magazine”. When I got off the phone, I couldn’t help myself. I went out onto the balcony overlooking the pool and sang/screamed at the top of my lungs:

“Well we’re big rock singers,  
We got golden fingers,  
And we’re loved everywhere we go.  
We sing about beauty,  
And we sing about truth,  
At ten thousand dollars a show.  
We take all kinds of pills,  
To give use all kinds of thrills,  
But the thrill we’ve never known.  
Is the thrill that will get you,  
When you get your picture,  
On the cover of the Rolling Stone.”<sup>13</sup>

Cameron had said he would bring a photographer, but based upon a referral from our CPA firm, we located an up and coming photo journalist named Scott Silversteen, a recent Indian University graduate who was working free lance for the Indianapolis Star at the time. Scott agreed to meet us in Phoenix the night before the final California shows. We were thinking about the upcoming album and the need for promotional and jacket shots. We were also thinking that this picture for Rolling Stone needed to be PERFECT.

As per his reputation, Cameron Crowe is a very charming man with a disarming personality and the ability to “blend in” almost immediately. He shadowed us for the four nights in Irving and Inglewood, and then we had two other conversations while working in the Capitol studios the following week. We didn’t change anything, we didn’t hide anything. We didn’t need to – there were no skeletons in our closets. His piece came very near to the heart of our current circumstances. We were a band on the way up, but still searching for an identity and a niche. We were young and bright, and still learning the ropes. We knew this was serious business, but we still couldn’t take it all that seriously. It came off as some sort of search for that “holy grail” – being one with your music and your audience. It also brought emphasis to the fact that we were all friends, working hard, having

## Long Live Rock And Roll

fun, and trying our darnedest to get a foothold in the side of the mountain that was the music “business”. The title page read – “ZigZag: Rebels with a Cause”.

When we started discussing the photo shoot, I believe Cameron had hoped it would just be a head shot of me, or perhaps a couple of us. That wasn't going to happen. This was a BAND achievement, and the entire band would damn well be in the picture. We looked over the live shots that Scott and the RS photog had taken over the past few nights. And I found the perfect cover shot. On the second night in Irvine we had a contingence of friends and extended family in attendance. The joke was that they were all there to go to Disneyland the next day. The fact that we were playing that night and in the area was just a coincidence. So Scott took some groups shots of everybody back stage after the show. He got us all: The band, Mike, Leah and Steph, Rick and his wife and sons, my dad and brother, Tate and Pee-Tee. R.L.'s mom, sister Kelly and her husband Jerry, Greg's fiancée Patty and his brother Todd with his wife and little daughter. Eric's brother Pete, and Scott's sister Stacey and brother in law Chad rounded out the crew. This was what we were really about. It took the entire village to get us where we were, and they deserved the credit. My one regret was that mom didn't make that trip (my grandfather was ill at the time). This picture, enlarged and framed, is the first piece of memorabilia that you see when entering the front door of our home in Topanga Canyon. Some things should never change.

We were really impressed with Scott. After inquiring about his availability for the concerts in Japan, Scott checked his calendar and said “sure, I can take some architectural shots while I'm there as well. Maybe sell them to a magazine”. Turns out he probably didn't need the work. Scott Silversteen has covered every tour as our band photographer. He has also taken every picture for every project we have done since 1983. Here's the way I explain it: “Scott doesn't take pictures of us. He catches images of the essence of us.”

Due to contractual arrangements that Queen had made with a video production company to record and produce a live video from the Hot Space Tour, we were not allowed to record any of the audio or video from our performances as the opening act. Mike was pissed. He went round after round with Queen's management group, but this was a deal breaker. No video recording or no tour. Even once we got out on the road he still verbally worked over the video team as well, trying to get some assistance. We couldn't record it, and they wouldn't record it for us. Strange, but true. So we have almost no video from that tour. I say “almost” because Mike still found creative ways to “hide” the camera on stage occasionally and hit the “play” button right before we walked on to perform. There is however a ton of footage while we were traveling, and in the hotels. Looking back now, a lot of it is really funny. Mike would record one side of a conference call for example. All you see on video the entire time is some group of us huddled around a speaker phone talking to an invisible voice. There was also a lot of very outrageous behavior, some of it not so legal as well. Quite a bit

## Long Live Rock And Roll

of the footage is either “R” rated (or worse) and/or would be self incriminating to display. Today it’s all locked away in a very safe place.

Our first major brush with the law came during this tour. It happened in Los Angeles, on the night between the two shows in Irvine and the two shows at the Forum. Scotty had hooked up with some television sweet tart named Tara and she was calling to see if they could go “hang out” somewhere. Scott told her to just catch a cab and come over to the hotel. The next part of the conversation was crucial. Tara was with her seventeen year old sister Jena, and she wanted to come “hang out” too, but not at our hotel. People knew them here. As soon as Johnny heard “seventeen” he had his keys and his jacket. When Tate has his keys in his hands and says “bye” – he is GOING. There isn’t, nor was, nor will ever be a way to get the man to stay when he says he’s leaving. I’ve seen dozens try. Girls, band members, security, state troopers. Forget it. When the Tater was in motion, you had to just let him go. I just strongly suggest that you don’t send any of your loved ones with him. In this case we failed that test as well. Not only did Scotty hurry out the door behind Tate, he took his coke kit with him. An hour and a half later, Mike had a call at the switchboard from someone with LAPD.

There is a reason why I don’t talk much about Pee-Tee. He does his job so well that most of the time he goes unnoticed. But never unappreciated. When we do need him, Pee-Tee has a near perfect record for managing a situation. Combine that with Mike’s bravado and business savvy and my uncanny ability to bullshit my way out of almost anything – a fairly effective trio.

There were three priorities in this situation.

1. Get the guys out of jail (without charges being filed, if possible).
2. Get the girls the hell away.
3. Keep it out of the press.

The story started this way. Scotty and Tate were going to get into Tate’s new van, do a couple of lines, put the kit in Scotty’s rental car, and then head off to pick up the girls. Sounded like a good plan. Until the “Tate factor” reared its ugly head. Johnny in his normal state was hell bent enough. Once he sucked down the line of blow that Scotty laid out for him, it was off to the races. Scott tried to get him to stop. I think when the cocaine entered Tate’s system, all logic fled.

Now Johnny driving in normal conditions, in his normal (Houston) environment, was menace enough. New wheels in a new city in an altered state. There’s no other way to put it, he was fucking maniacal. Scott said that he got on the I-5, passed two cars on the shoulder, took the feeder to skirt around as many cars as possible – running a red light in the process. He got back on the freeway, went a mile or two, started to go around another car on the inside shoulder, and got caught. A California Highway patrolman on a motorcycle was just about to get on at the next ramp when he looked back and saw what Tate was attempting to

## Long Live Rock And Roll

accomplish. Johnny swerved back into the inside lane and tried to cut over to the middle, but it was too late. The CHIP's officer turned on his lights and siren and literally stopped four lanes of traffic. He pulled in right behind the van and made his intentions clear – they were busted. Tate pulled over as Scotty scurried to stash the kit under the seat. He's not sure if the officer saw him bending down through the rear windows or if he was going to search the van anyway and would have eventually found it. The next thing they know they are on their knees in the ditch next to the road (fortunately behind the van so most of the oncoming traffic couldn't see them). Two squad cars arrived and they are handcuffed and placed in separate vehicles. The van gets towed and then searched more thoroughly. A little weed and some paraphernalia was all they found. But almost two grams of coke was a big enough problem.

Mike was on the phone with his brother George when Pee-Tee called on the other line to say that he had the two jailbirds with him. They had been released on their own recognizance, based on a conversation at the station house after Pee-Tee made a concerned call to a friend he knew that worked for LAPD. The arresting officer was obviously unhappy, but Pee-Tee told him not to be upset, it would have only taken fifteen minutes to bring over as much bail money as was needed. They were both arrested for possession of cocaine. Johnny was also charged with two counts of reckless driving and one count of driving under the influence of a controlled substance. Their court dates were a month and a half away.

I made a vow that night that I have kept ever since. From that moment on, I was never again involved in the purchase, possession, transporting, or sale of illegal narcotics. I didn't say that I stopped doing them, but I just wasn't involved in the acquisition. One word to Pee-Tee and what I wanted was usually made available promptly. Most of the time I didn't even have to ask. We would get into our hotel room, and someone from the staff had already prepared the accommodations.

We started recording "Uneven Stitches" at the Capitol Studios in Los Angeles during the nearly month long gap between the last date of Queen's North America tour and the six dates in Japan. We spent our days roaming around Hollywood, visiting the beach, and basically being tourists. I had about half of the songs for the new project already written, and knew that by the time we got back from Japan the content would be ready. We started with click tracks and working out tempos. A "click track" is really nothing more than a metronome on the tape. It is used to make sure the pace of the song stays as even as possible. Mostly the drummer and bass player have to tolerate the click track. Once the basic tracks are recorded, we usually turn it off for the rest of the process and play to the rhythm section.

I caught a few Dodger games at Chavez Ravine, and came to befriend a couple of the players – Steve Howe and Mike Scioscia in particular. Although I grew up in a basketball state, baseball has always been my favorite sport. From the days as a

## Long Live Rock And Roll

child when we would visit my grandparents and all go to Cincinnati to watch the Reds play, or the many nights spent with a transistor radio in my pocket and earpiece in my ear listening to WLWT radio and the voices of Waite Hoyt and Joe Nuxall doing the play-by-play from far off locations like San Francisco and Philadelphia. These were my first heroes: Frank Robinson, Vada Pinson, Pete Rose, Tony Perez and Johnny Bench just to name a few. What could be a finer profession than being one of the “boys of summer”??? I played the game all the time as a kid, and was the second baseman on our high school team. Had offers to play at a couple of small colleges in Kentucky, but for whatever reason had my heart set on attending UK. But I still love a day at the ballpark, and Dodger Stadium is one of the most beautiful ever built.

It was a busy month. Leah and I stayed in a studio apartment the record company had available near the pier in Santa Monica. We took drives up and down the Pacific Coast Highway and through the state parks. The girls went shopping on Rodeo Drive. R.L. bought a brand new Camaro off the showroom floor and put five hundred miles on it in a week. Eric went with Scott Silversteen to a fashion shoot and snagged a super model. I ran into Glen Frey of the Eagles one night eating sushi, and sat in with master blues harpman Charlie Musslewhite at a little dinner theater in San Juan Capistrano. Scott bought five new guitars in one day. There were parties and celebrity sightings. Long weekends and walks on the beach. Life was good. It was time for a bit of reflecting and taking a very deep breath. I started a horrible habit during this time in California. We could be driving along and suddenly I'd tell the person setting next to me to “drive” and they'd grab the wheel and steer while I jotted something in my journal. I never did it at high rates of speed or in traffic. Something I picked up from Tate, though I hate to admit it. He was known for asking at any time (ninety miles per hour one night between Baton Rouge and Houston). Johnny had a hardware store behind the driver's seat in the Econoline, and you never knew when he might reach around for something. We were a little bit crazy from all the free time and virtually limitless resources. It brought out the idiosyncratic in all of us.

We all jetted back to Lexington the following weekend for Greg and Patty's wedding. I'd known Patty Neibauer from our days on the high school newspaper. She was a year behind Greg and I in school, and was the middle of three Neibauer sisters who were all incredibly good looking. I've know a lot of very beautiful and important women over the years. Very few were what I would call “classy”. A combination of looks, intelligence, and common sense. Patty Neibauer defined the word “classy”. I didn't just look at this as Greg taking a wife. ZigZag was gaining another asset as well. Patty's degree from UK was in international marketing. I was pretty sure that skill set would come in handy before too long. She and Leah were already thick as thieves. At least she got to spend her honeymoon on an all expense paid trip to Japan. It was a working holiday for her husband.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1981, MTV took to the air. Video became everything. The entire music business as it had been run for thirty plus years was about to be turned upside. It wasn't enough any more to "just" write a hit song. You had to combine that with a spectacular video to get any airplay on television. And what they played on television, not the radio, was what everybody wanted to see and hear.

We headed to Japan with Queen for the final six shows of the tour. Everyone was rested and ready to get back on stage. The studio is like a huge goldfish bowl. It's a wonderful place to create and be creative, but from the outside you see how isolated and sterile an environment it is. We needed to plug in, turn up, and play for an audience.

The first two dates in Fukuoka went smoothly, but weren't special. We sensed that the crowd was reserved, but warming to us. That had all changed by the end of the week.

We made the national news in the States for a near riot as Japanese fans overwhelmed our hotel in Osaka. It was the Friday afternoon before a show on Sunday. No one understood then, or really understands now why or how this happened. At first we thought they were looking for Queen (who were not staying in the same hotel as we were). What we witnessed is still not believable to me, although I saw it first hand. Shortly after Leah and I heard the commotion from five floors below, Scotty and Tate started pounding on my door. When I opened it, they just pointed to the window. What I saw, and more to the point what I heard, still blows me away thinking about it all these years later. There were probably a couple thousand Japanese citizens surrounding the south and east sides of the hotel, blocking the street and bringing traffic to a standstill. They had banners and posters, They were yelling and cheering and setting off fire works, and at the same time looking up as the windows above hoping to catch a glimpse of the objects of their affections. Then the chanting began. Zig. Zag. Zig. Zag. One part of the crowd uttering the "Zig" and the other responding with the "Zag". This went on for nearly twenty minutes. Then as mysteriously as it all started, the streets were empty and the crowds disappeared. From the events of that day to this, we have always had a gigantic Japanese fan base.

The final four shows of the tour (Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo and Tokyo) were what I like to call "the end of the beginning". We were no longer unknown, undervalued, or unloved. The Japanese crowds cheered, sang, and reveled in our performances. The cries of "ZigZag, ZigZag, ZigZag" were now the norm at the end of each show. The hotel scene (although not as chaotic or unexpected as in Osaka) occurred again in both Sapporo and Tokyo. Japanese and American journalists alike were asking lots of questions and saying lots of good things in print.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Before we came back home, we took an Air Force transport plane the band members and a bit of gear and flew down to Okinawa to visit the U.S. military troops stationed there. Something the U.S.O. had reached out to Mike about and we thought it was a good idea. I was a kid once watching Bob Hope and others entertain the troops in Vietnam. The toughest part of this request was deciding how much press to allow. Somehow (read: Mike and my dad came up with a plan) the “concert” we performed and the initial introductions of key Air Force personnel would be videoed and photographed, but the time we spend with the individual service men and women would not. The exception being Mike’s personal video camera. Mostly it was a “meet and greet” so that the GI’s could take pictures and talk about home with someone from home. We played a couple of songs, and took a tour of the base. The biggest thing I took from that experience was exposure to a martial arts form know as “karate”.

Karate is a martial art developed in the Ryukyu Islands in what is now Okinawa. Part an indigenous fighting technique called “te” (meaning hand) and Chinese Kenpo. Although on the surface, kkarate is more or less a striking art using hands, elbows, knees and feet for punching and kicking there are locks and restraints taught in some styles as well.

One of the first quotes that I heard in class was from a Japanese karate master and author of “The Essence of Okinawan Karate-Do” Shoshin Nagamine who said: "Karate may be considered as the conflict within oneself or as a life-long marathon which can be won only through self-discipline, hard training and one's own creative efforts." I knew I had the conflict, but wasn't sure about the distance of the race. For starters, I play the GUITAR. That requires the use of my hands. So it was hard to wrap my mind around getting involved in a practice that not only utilized, but actually features, the use of hands as a WEAPON.

In all reality, all I was looking to do was stay reasonably in shape. Leah had been after me for six months or more to find an exercise program. We can't really argue about money and time, so health makes it to the top of the list. I probably hadn't done any “real” exercise since I was in high school. She knew we'd have to hire someone to make it work. I found the best solution to both through the use of a set of exercises called “Hojo undo”. These simple conditioning exercises were designed to develop ambidextrous physical strength, stamina, muscle coordination, speed, and posture and all use simple, traditional devices made of wood and stone.

There are a number of these devices. A couple of the more interesting ones I think are the chi shi and the nigiri game. The chi shi is a weighted lever which is used by moving the wrists and arms in attach motions while gripping one end of a wooden pole with concrete weights attached on the other end. This is really good for the fingers, hands, arms and chest. The nigiri game are ceramic jars filled with sand and gripped by the lip of the rim while moving from stance to stance and position to position. Really good for the arms and shoulders.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Of course with any of the Oriental martial arts, there is another facet to the training. I used another device called the jari bako as a stress reliever. It's really nothing more than a deep bowl filled with rice. Jabbing one's fingers down into the bowl as hard as you can is not only good for the digits. It's a good stress reliever as well.

There was also a lot going on behind the scenes that I was pretty much unaware of. Mike and my father and Mike's brother George had formed a tribunal of sorts. They were reviewing everything. Financially things were starting to get complicated, but that was a good problem. They hired a small CPA firm from Indiana whose principal had been a childhood friend of my dad. There was talk on incorporation and the need for tax sheltering. When they needed something from me, or if a decision needed to be made, Mike, Leah, and I would get on a speaker phone from wherever we were and talk with my dad, George, or a lady named Linda with the CPA firm. The money was certainly rolling in. But there was a lot rolling out as well. To those of us on the front lines of the tour and living the day to day of life on the road, those details were mostly lost. Mike (and to a certain extent Leah) being the exceptions. But to the folks back in Indiana who were getting all of the bills and charge card receipts, the devil was certainly in the details.

There was a fair amount of discussion about rights and trademarks and protecting the "intellectual property" that we were creating. Royalty checks were coming in on a regular basis, and no one was really clear on how to determine if the amounts were correct or not. We were just supposed to trust ASCAP. It was the time of the corporate raider in the mid eighties, and knowing that Michael Jackson owned the Beatles Northern Songs catalog, and Paul McCartney the Buddy Holly catalog, I wanted to make sure that the band and I owned and would always own the rights to our material.

And it was becoming much more than just the music. Trademarking of the ZigZag logo so that it could only be used on licensed products. Video of live concerts was being utilized by public television, and as the VCR became an appendage to the television in households everywhere, the ability to see a concert without actually having to buy a ticket and go was becoming a lucrative business. Merchandising and image rights became a paramount concern following our trip to Japan. The Japanese love merchandise. And not just t-shirts and posters. We saw fans in Tokyo on the streets carrying around their Queen paraphernalia like it was found gold. And there was a ton of money to be made from the merchandise. The costs were relatively cheap, the markup extravagant, and the volume usually incredibly large. The other side of this coin was PROTECTING all of these rights, trademarks, and images. No one was going to do that for us.

Reflecting back, I somehow made three very good choices in about two year's time: I gained a brother-in-arms in R.L., the love of my life and partner in

## Long Live Rock And Roll

everything Leah, and Mike as the business manager who devotes a good portion of his life taking care of mine.

The band is a democratic entity in theory. The reality is that ZigZag is run by R.L. and I. We knew that every ship needed a rudder and a helmsman, and by taking on the responsibility of those roles we also attained overall authority for band direction and song selection. Two disclaimers here from the start – this process was far from dictatorial in nature, and “agree” is a relative term.

First, Scotty has contributed songs since the very first album. But he knew that songs he brought to the band had to work for the band. And fit within our direction. One of the realities is that I’m much more prolific at producing songs than Scott is. I think it also takes the pressure off him to not need to be the principal writer. We need Scotty to work over the Les Paul and cover the background vocals. We need his tone and his attitude. Any and all songs we get from Scott are just a bonus. By far his most important asset to ZigZag is Scott’s ability to understand how I play the guitar and process a song on stage, and respond to that direction. His uncanny ability to fill the holes, bridge the gaps, and add character to the creation is why he is where he is doing what he is doing. Scotty brings LIFE to the monster.

Second, R.L. and I don’t always agree on everything. In fact, I don’t think we agree on much initially. It’s another “process”. R.L. doesn’t ever write. He just rewrites. We seem to hash and rehash every line and every chord. It’s just what we do. And we revel in the minutia of it. Sometimes it’s very, very hard. A perfect example is “Thoroughbred”. Our first major success - #4 on the Billboard charts, got us national exposure on the late night circuit and the radio countdowns, and really got our name in to the DJ’s play lists. R.L. literally HATED these lyrics (and probably still does).

Leah and I had been together nearly every day for almost a year and a half. And I still woke up every morning to look at a face that I still loved very passionately and very intensely, and a person who I trusted with the contents of my soul. We talked about everything. She has a perspective that I can never fully appreciate. Leah is on the sidelines while I’m in the midst of the game. And from her vantage point there is only one focus and attention – what is BEST for me. This approach has led some in the entourage to categorize her as a bit of a “bitch”. And I would resent that if Leah cared at all. If that’s what they want to think, so be it. Anyone who truly “knows her” knows better. She’s my guardian angel with lips sweet as honey. She can sooth the savage beast and torment the passive pragmatist. She knows when to poke the bear and when to let it sleep. To say she is my best friend is an understatement. Leah is my best everything.

Michael Bennett is a prince among men. He has taken the management of ZigZag and turned it into an art form all its own. Perhaps the highest compliment I can pay to Mike is not that I trust him, but that my FATHER trusts him. And believe

## Long Live Rock And Roll

me, my dad doesn't trust anything unless it has fifty pages of affidavits and exhibits attached. Mike has taken a bunch of wide-eyed, slightly delusional, self indulgent musical midgets and turned us into a limited liability corporation with major assets. And for the most part he has transitioned this circus into a marketable product without a lot of coercion and ill feelings. I think everyone understands that Mike simply makes good decisions. And the Judge would concur...

By the time we were ready to immerse ourselves in the next project, not only were we focused on what we heard with our ears, but what we saw with our mind's eye as well.