

5) All About the Lifestyle

We began the demonstration with the set for “Who Comes and Goes” prepped and a sheer curtain with the ZigZag logo across the front. The sheer drops and the set is now fully visible. Ollie pushes the button and the entire stage rotates 120 degrees to the right. The set is now ready for “The Heat of the Night”. On more button press and another rotation to the set for “Fashion”. There was silence.

And then out of the mouth of Michael Joseph Bennett:

“That’s about the most fucking incredible thing I’ve ever seen.”

There were nods of agreement. We had another “hit” on our hands. R.L. draped his arm across my shoulder and said something about having ever doubted me. Scotty smiled and muttered that he guessed they should have learned that by now. I looked R.L. Chambers straight in the eye and quoted James T. Kirk: “To boldly go baby, to boldly go...” We were about to unleash Pop-Op onto the world.

We assembled quite a trio of talent to generate this crazy staging invention. Simon Crowley was wonderful, and yet very dry and sardonic at times. He was a drama queen when he needed to be, and a pain in the ass as required. He was unflappable, but willing to compromise when the cause was right. Simon caught the vision very quickly, and I think really is in love what he was doing.

Josh Barnett is a master set builder who worked for Warner Brothers studios for twenty years, until my wife and Mike Bennett talked him off the studio set and into the Pop-Op Palace. Josh had worked on a number of classic movies at Warner, including “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf”, “The Green Berets” (and got to meet John Wayne, the lucky dog), “Bonnie and Clyde”, and “Cook Hand Luke”. He was also a primary set builder for the musicals “My Fair Lady” and “The Music Man” (“with a capital T and that rhymes with P and that stands for Pool”<sup>20</sup> – sorry I couldn’t resist). He came to us with a truckload of experience in “the business” and was a steady, mature influence that equalized Simon’s panache and Ollie’s naiveté.

Ollie was Ollie. An unbridled view on every topic and a solution to every construction issue. Between Simon’s vision, Ollie’s technical know how and Josh’s experience and practical application we had a great team. And they had certainly delivered the goods. By the time we got ready to head for Europe, we had six Pop-Op sets complete, with three more in production. By the time Leah and I returned from Scotland at the end of July, the number of finished sets would be an even dozen.

Before I got totally focused on everything that needed to be accomplished before we headed back out on the road in June, Pee-Tee, Mike, and I took a boy’s weekend and flew to Vero Beach, Florida and Dodgertown. We caught a couple

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of spring training baseball games, hung out a bit with Steve Sax and Mike Scioscia, and got the awesome opportunity to meet Vin Skulley, long time radio voice of the Dodgers in both Brooklyn and Los Angeles. I sang the National Anthem before one of the games, and was asked if I might be interested in doing so at a home game in Chavez Ravine. We also made a quick stop in Miami and had a look at the design and setup at Criteria Studios.

They poured the concrete for the Inn, the guest houses, the pool house and the pool while we were in Florida. Pee-Tee and Gladys had their slab poured as part of the same project. Consultants from all of the major audio equipment companies were making pitches and giving advice to Rick, Ramon and others about setup and design for the studio electronics. Ludwig had delivered two brand new kits a week earlier and Ramon was beginning to catalog and review the parts. He was doing another round of quality control on every piece of drum hardware that entered the front door.

Mike and R.L. both bought houses just a few miles away from us in Fernwood, and moved in during the break (along with Joy and Melanie respectively). Leah and I, as well as Stephanie and Ollie, were still living in the studio. Steph wasn't there very much. Ollie almost never left. We did all of our pre tour rehearsals in The Palace, working both the stadium version and the Pop-Op version of some songs at the same time. The vibe was pretty good as we prepared to embark on another round of shows.

What I first thought would be a big problem actually became a reasonable solution.

We landed in Paris in late June of 1984 to start a three week stadium tour of Europe. These were all huge arenas. Most were built for the purpose of hosting soccer matches or Olympic events. Not my idea of the best setting to present my craft, but we wanted to cover Europe quickly and get back to Topanga for a few weeks to make some final design decisions in the studio before heading to Japan in August.

When we deplaned at De Gaulle Airport, Birgitt Niehaus was standing at the gate. Yes, that Birgitt. The very girl with whom Eric had disappeared in Oslo and for whom he almost left the band. "Oh Shit" was my initial response. I immediately had Pee-Tee place an extra set of eyes on Eric, and I wanted updates. Frequent updates. I envisioned a mess.

Eric had been fairly stable since the end of the U.S. tour. A flair up in a restaurant in Mission Viejo, but nothing serious. Eric was in his element in the studio, and was (I think) enjoying his role as musical coordinator for the Pop-Op process. Unlike a live show when we can pretty much play the song list in any order we want (within reason), the Pop-Op set list was carved in stone. Eric was responsible for managing the flow of the set and creating/designing the transition

pieces utilized during set change. “Preludes, Interludes, and Quaaludes” as coined by Simon, were a big part of the overall process.

Birgitt traveled with the band from Paris to Torino, Italy and then to Rome. Pee-Tee’s reports were fairly positive. It seemed that if anything, Birgitt was having a positive effect on Eric. He was, by his standards, pretty well behaved. Then on the plane to Barcelona Eric plopped down across the aisle from Leah and I and made an interesting request. Eric wanted Birgitt credentialed as an official member of the tour entourage. Now normally, this isn’t done with “girlfriends” or “traveling companions” or whatever you want to call them. Those relationships can turn on a dime, and we just don’t need the headache of making all of the adjustments to all of the documentation. Normally, there are slots for “guests” on both the plane and at the hotel. It’s not the band’s responsibility to get these folks through customs and to the terminal. It’s a monumental task already for Pee-Tee and his staff just to get the band and crew through the process. But Eric’s request was interesting for a couple of reasons. First, this man that I’d known for more than five years was reaching out for some permanency in his life. He had never done that before. However small a step this seemed, for Eric Anderson it was a quantum leap. The second reason my interest was piqued was because I sensed that Eric was admitting in some tiny way that he might need some help – or at least he was willing to consider that possibility. I told him to let me talk to Mike and Pee-Tee and I’d know something before the plane landed. Actually, I didn’t need to confer with anyone – I just wanted a few minutes to think about the ramifications.

I went back to where Eric and Birgitt were sitting and stood over them briefly as I told Eric what I needed before this went any further. Once we arrived in Spain, I needed Birgitt to come up to my suite. Leah and I wanted to talk with her privately (which would be news to Leah as she had been sleeping during my previous conversation with Eric and didn’t have a clue about any meeting). I assured them that it was all good, just details, and then I returned to my seat next to my slumbering wife.

If anything, Birgitt had become more beautiful in the four years since we had seen her last. She was still tall and slender, but I think more fit. It appeared that she was doing a good job preserving her physical temple. She also handled my questions fairly well. We would be running a background check and needed to hold her passport with the rest of the crew. Birgitt didn’t mind any of this. She did have one request (which I wasn’t sure if I would honor); to let her tell Eric anything we found. I was looking for just an inkling of stability for Eric’s life. Leah, who was prepared to hate Birgitt I think, said she didn’t see any reason for concern. Over the years I’ve learned that my wife has damn good radar when it comes to other women in and around the band. I saw no need for rocking what, at least at the present, was a steady boat.

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Now of course, we are all grown men and women, and I have no right to say who can and cannot be someone else's guest. I hope that "asking permission" is a sign that everyone knows that I'll always do what is best for the band. I want the entire crew to know that we are there for them, and really do have their interests in mind. Besides, they all know that if they make a request to Pee-Tee or Mike, I will be conferred anyway.

Pee-Tee ran his background checks on Birgitt and we found out a couple of very interesting things. First, this girl with the supermodel looks was also an intelligent young woman. She held a Master's degree in developmental psychology and was very respected by her peers. She has taught university level courses and presented at conferences worldwide. Second, her father is filthy rich. Thorsen Niehaus was President and CEO of an international transportation company that had been founded by his grandfather. She ran in very lofty social circles with dukes and duchesses, Getty's and Kennedy's. What in the world did she need with an imbalanced piano player from a glorified whorehouse? I was beginning to think that Eric was (and perhaps the lot of us were) part of a grand lab experiment. But what was working was what was working, and I saw no need to change the karma at this juncture. I told Pee-Tee to keep watching and digging into her background, Mike to process Birgitt into the system, and Eric that we really didn't find anything to be alarmed about. I did ask him how much he knew about her. "She likes to be on top" was all he said.

The only extended layover of the entire European tour was a three day stop in Germany. After performing to seventy five thousand screaming fans in Munich, we got up the next morning and took a military transport to Ramstein Air Base. We met the base commander and a few NATO dignitaries, had about a million photos taken (Scott Silversteen would later publish a book of photos taken exclusively with U.S. military personnel – appropriately titled "Freedom Fighter"), played a brief four song set, and then spent the rest of the day visiting with the American military families stationed there. This tour also provided another "first" for me (no, not a three way with a three star general !!!). I got to take a ride in a helicopter. Way cool. The entire experience made me feel really good inside, and reminded me of what was really important in this world. I get words of gratitude from the enlisted, hugs from the children (whom I usually bribe with candy and toys), and according to Leah, who of course notices these things, more than one wishful gaze from an officer's wife. The next morning I told Mike to make a note – we wanted to do these visits at U.S. installations as well as overseas.

We finished the tour with dates in London and Glasgow. It was like we literally took truckloads of lira, francs, shillings, pounds, pesetas and marks to the bank. The corporation was doing quite well. In fact, we had an issue that was unfathomable. We had too much cash. Gross income that was going to be taxed like crazy if we didn't do something and quick. Even with the output of profits into the Topanga projects, we still needed to spend some money. After consulting

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with George, Dru Barnhill in Topanga and of course, the Judge, my first response was to invest in more video. We had released two self produced live videos from the prior U.S. tour, and they made the MTV play list but didn't hold very long. We needed to get new material in front of our fans. We needed quality video production in The Pop-Op Palace.

The Judge and George countered with a land deal that we had come upon as a byproduct of Eric's little episode in Mission Viejo. There was a young man named Terry Randall – I later found out he preferred to be called "Otis" Randall for some reason, a real estate broker by trade, who was in the restaurant when Eric threw his tantrum. Recognizing Eric and knowing that the police were certainly on their way, Otis convinced the restaurant owner to allow him to pay the damages and attempted to get Eric to leave with him. Unfortunately the Orange County sheriff deputy's arrived while they were still in the parking lot, but by assuring the officers that Eric was not driving and was indeed leaving the restaurant he wasn't arrested. Mike bought Otis a case of Chivas Regal. Otis shared a land deal in Mission Viejo with Mike that was too good to believe. But Dru Barnhill checked it out for us and it was real. Land around the lake was about to be parceled into lots and developers were upside down with the bank. They couldn't build the houses fast enough to meet demand, but with the land issues (apparently there were some tax implications as well) the bank had suspended building. ZigZag, LLC was now in the housing business.

My second response was to take a little vacation, so a few of us stayed in Scotland for a bit at the end of the European tour.

Of all the places I've been, I believe that none is more beautiful than Edinburgh, Scotland. Standing on Prince Street, looking across the park and then straight up some two hundred feet, Edinburgh Castle sits majestically on an extinct volcanic plug above the city center. Once you maneuver up this elevation, either through the winding trails in the park, or up the streets to the "Royal Mile", the Castle becomes an even more impressive sight. One of the first items you encounter in the courtyard in front of the castle is an imposing statue of William Wallace, made famous in the movie "Braveheart" starring Mel Gibson. A note of warning lest you might be disappointed – the statue bears no likeness to Mister Gibson.

Once you have arrived at this vantage point, the entire city of Edinburgh lays on all sides, visible for miles. Most impressively, looking back down the Royal Mile you get a great view of Holyrood Palace, which is the Queen of England's residence in Scotland, and beyond it, "Arthur's Seat" – another volcanic plug which is even a higher elevation than the castle. And if a sixteenth century castle on one end of the street and a Royal Palace at the other isn't enough, there are a number of other historical sites and museums between the two landmarks along with Royal Mile ( and one or two spots to stop and get a bite to eat, or a "wee dram" of Scotch Whiskey). A couple of places that were of interest to me (and diverse even by my standards) were the John Knox house, where the history of

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the Presbyterian Church is collected and displayed, and a Scottish toy museum. It was interesting that some of the toys were similar to those of my childhood, and yet others were very different, More basic I think, both in design and operation. And next to the Palace is a Royal Museum, which was exhibiting some incredible DaVinci pencil sketches. I could go on, and on, and on about Edinburgh.

It was at this point that Leah and I “slipped off” and officially had our honeymoon. Only Mike and Pee-Tee knew where we had gone. We caught a train in Edinburgh and traveled north through Perth to the town of Dunkeld. Nestled alongside the Taybank River at the edge of the Scottish Highlands, this quaint, serene environment was just the right tonic for the refreshing of my entire being. I really felt “home” here. We stayed in a nice little hotel called the Atholl Inn, and walked the trails up and down the river and through Birnam Woods nearby. We visited the fourteenth century cathedral that stands at the center of the towns history and purpose. And we visited the pubs. If these people had any notion about who I was, they certainly didn’t let on. I wasn’t once recognized and asked for an autograph or a picture. The great discovery of this little adventure (aside from some new level of “intunement” that Leah and I were experiencing – we were becoming more “one” all the time) was a singer songwriter named Dougie MacLean. Born in nearby Dunblane, Dougie has a style and a substance that is uniquely his own. He plays the guitar and fiddle and sings intimately about his native Scotland and all that is means to be Scottish. He and his wife Jenny (an outstanding artist in her own right – she creates the art for all of Dougie’s album covers) were charming dinner companions as well. Although I must admit that I’m a lightweight when it comes to drinking Scotch. I swear, I think these people can drink and talk all night long. Leah and I both thought that Dougie would be perfect as one of the opening acts for the ensuing Pop-Op tour. One of Jennifer MacLean’s originals now adorns my office wall.

As we arrived back at the train station in Edinburgh, Leah and I encountered an interesting sight. You know for sure that you are in Scotland when the pan handler outside the train station is wearing a kilt and playing the bagpipes.

A month later we were headed back to Japan. The Japanese people absolutely love us. There’s really no other way to put it. From the moment the plane landed in Tokyo until we departed from Okinawa two weeks later, it was a ZigZag love fest in the “Land of the Rising Sun”. Security was tight after the incident at the hotel in Osaka on the previous tour. Housing locations were kept as confidential as possible and none of us dared go out in public. A couple of American men who were mistaken by anxious Japanese teenagers as being members of the band were accosted in a shopping center. Tickets for the eight concerts on that tour sold out in less than three hours. More truckloads of yen into the bank account.

The Japanese started a couple of “traditions” at our concerts that have carried over to the rest of the world. During “Freedom Fighter” they all stand and march in place. They also started saluting in sections, a sort of “military wave”. We have

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such a wonderful time in Japan. Hell, I don't really even need to be there. They could put a cardboard cutout of me on the stage, play the music, and the audience would provide the vocals. They sing (and know the words to) every single song we play. I just wish we had the opportunity to see more of the country. We were also creating a "tradition" of sorts by making the extended trip down to the U.S. military installations in Okinawa. This time the entire band went and we did a full show for about five thousand service men and women stationed on the island. We had really wanted to do something in Yokohama as well, but security issues were just too extreme.

The biggest problems on these tours were band related. Brigitt had Eric in check, almost to the point that we thought from time to time that Eric was just going through the motions. He and Scotty both complained about playing the same dozen songs over and over night after night. I gave anyone that asked that question my standard response:

"We just got paid a half a million bucks to plays those same twelve songs. What the part of that do you have a fucking problem with?"

Scott's cocaine use was increasing, and starting to impact the show. He still played well, in fact was at his best functionally while on stage, otherwise the only time we saw him was at three o'clock in the morning when he needed something. Pee-Tee had to work extra hard attempting to stay out in front of the Naughtyman and his little Habit. The absolute LAST thing we wanted was a drug arrest outside of the United States. I was even a little paranoid about it, and really cautious where I was and who I was around before partaking. And I wanted to know absolutely nothing about who was buying what for whom. I came to the conclusion that denial was the only path to solace. I really knew something was wrong the night in Osaka when Scotty went on stage in black and white stripped pants instead of the standard black leather. I also noticed he had lost some weight.

When we informed Capitol that we would be recording our next project in our own studio, there wasn't a great deal of concern about the location. All of the discussion centered on who was going to engineer and produce the project. There were a number of meetings, and several names were bandied about, but the ultimate decision in the matter belonged to the band. And there was only one name on my list. Tom Dowd.

Anyone who knows anything about studio recording knows about Tom Dowd. Engineer and producer extraordinaire, his credits are a literal "who's who" of the recording industry. Eric Clapton, Aretha Franklin, The Allman Brothers, John Coltrane, Ray Charles, Charlie Parker, Lynard Skynard – that's just the beginning of the list. Tom Dowd has been in the business of making hit records since "If I Knew You Were Comin', I'd Baked a Cake." went to number one on the Billboard charts in 1950. And beyond all the success, Tom had the reputation as an "artist's

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engineer”, his gracious energy and historical knowledge gladly shared with all who are around him. Another right answer. I would have written Tom a blank check. We needed the continued success way more than we needed the money. Tom Dowd has produced every project that has been done in The Stitch. He has the finest set of ears on any human being I have ever known.

We asked Tom to visit The Stichery and give us his feedback. His first comment about the studio: “this is a very percussive space.” That trait about The Stitch shows up on every track of “Architect of Light”. After listening to some of the demo tracks I had prepared, Tom made another astute observation. We were going to need additional instrumentation on this project. Primarily congas, timbales and other “world” instruments. We introduced Tom to Tiny, and told him to get Tom anything he needed. The first thing he asked for was the location of the nearest tobacco shop. Tom was an avid pipe smoker.

Pop-Op was unveiled to the world at the newly remodeled Greek Theatre in Los Angeles in December of 1984. We thought we were ready. We were about to find out. We did a four night stay and every show was a sell out. The first night, it seemed half the entertainers and musicians in the country were there. Not to mention a U.S. Senator, several foreign dignitaries, and astronaut Gene Cernan. There were a few little technical issues, but all in all the show went fine. Most of the critics loved it – and of course, a few hated it. Such is the nature of the beast.

When a Pop-Op song ends, that’s when the real work begins. As soon as the set is cleared, the drum and keyboard presets are removed and relocated and any wiring harnesses are rerouted. Then the set designers make the necessary changes to the backdrops and add props. Once the prep work is finished, the actors and dancers are stationed for easy access once the set goes “hot”, which means is the next song. Of course by then there has been an additional rotation and the process starts all over again. And there’s a live performance going on at the same time to boot. This literal hour and an half ride on a merry go round is all managed by my best girl, and come to find out pretty damned organized girl, Leah. She took to this task like a duck to water. She understands everything. The gear ratios on the electric motors that rotate the stage. Where every actor needs to be staged on every song. Even how to drive the fork lift that moved the presets. Leah spent more time in the Pop-Op Place than I did. She and Mike had a process for reviewing the film from each day’s rehearsals, and then would analyze the footage with Simon Crowley the following day. I knew that big ass TV I bought would come in handy.

There were a lot of back stage logistical changes that went along with the Pop-Op design. For starters, we had to be way more organized. Cases and packing that were normally just left behind the backdrop at a stadium concert have to be moved completely off the stage. Each of the band members was “assigned” a specific location stage left or right where their wardrobe and instrument changes needed to be managed. It was like having a mini dressing room in the wings.

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Each of us had a personal attendant who made sure that the next clothing or instrument was ready when the song ended and assisted normally by taking the current instrument and either holding it (if it was being used again on the next song – happens a lot with The Gibson) on placing it on a stand and picking up the instrument that is to be used next and holding it until I complete my wardrobe change. Depending upon the length of the interlude between songs, I might even set down in a director's chair that is part of my wardrobe setup, and have something cold to drink. Everything was wireless now. I was back using a headset mic, and thankful that I didn't have to drag the cords around any longer. I started wearing a lot more hats in the Pop-Op set, and had a great connection at Miller Hat's in Houston, where they would special order hats in my size (6 7/8) if they thought I would like them. Most of the time we donate the hats (I'll usually sign them or throw in a signed picture or record) to help some charity raise some money. There was a wireless pack on the strap of every guitar. We traveled with two, and then three complete drum kits. That way the platforms and lifts could be set for each section of the stage and the drums didn't have to be relocated from section to section. My biggest issue is with makeup. I don't like it, it don't feel comfortable, and I really don't see the point. For videos maybe, but live ??? And it's not about the whole "male in the beauty parlor" thing. I've had my hair permed, and for many years now have a fake acrylic fingernail. I don't use a guitar pick most of the time, and when we play night after night the nail on my right index finger used to get very sore. I mentioned it to Kelly one night after a gig, and she suggested the fake nail. It's not any longer than my other nails (which I keep trimmed extremely short), but it's twice as thick. Imagine the looks I used to get (back in the days before we had a manicurist on staff) when I would go into a salon and ask for "one nail". But it works like a charm. The biggest question that I was getting early on was how we were going to have actors switch from scene to scene rather quickly and still facilitate a costume change. The answer was easy. We hired twins as often as we could. Even once had a set of triplets.

The five of us sat at a round table in the middle of an empty shell of what was to become the main room in The Stitchery and said what we each had to say. Mike locked us in the room and said that it would be an hour before any of us could leave. We needed to get back to "that place." It had been a year and a half since the last time we sat foot in a studio together. It had been a year and a half of almost non stop touring. It had been a year and a half that seemed like both a minute and a half and a century and a half. And a lot had changed. A lot. I handed out a set of rough demos. Included were a number of songs that had been written either while we were on the road, on in a couple of quick spurts in Edinburgh and Okinawa. I still had a few more in the pipe, including one I was writing for Scotty. It was Tuesday. I suggested that we meet again on Friday and start working through the songs and seeing what worked and what everyone had come up with. R.L. and I had already talked about schedule (he had reviewed the demo as well, and I cut one song at his request), and how we couldn't let this get

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too casual. He upgraded his little “better than good” speech, changing it to “better than great”, and at the end issued the decree to:

“Make the best fucking record we have ever made.”

We wrote it on the concrete slab in big red letters with a magic marker. It’s still under the carpet in that room to this day.

Right after the holidays we got started in the studio, and things really ramped up once Tom arrived in early February, 1985. We had already sent some demos to Tom’s home in Florida, and I felt pretty confident in the approach we were taking. He spent a week with R.L. and Greg, and then departed for a session in Miami. We were amazed at the difference. The bottom end was sounding righteous. I sat and watched a good many hours of those sessions. Just watched. The mastery with which Tom Dowd could place a microphone on an instrument and always find the “sweet spot” for the recording was just amazing.

To my knowledge, there wasn’t a single issue with transportation on either the European or Japan tours. Premier Cart and Cartage, and there coordinator Ms. Leggio, appeared to be on top of everything. We quit looking for problems – as there just didn’t seem to be anything inappropriate going on. On the surface, Connie Leggio was a glorified bookkeeper for the massive road crew required for every city on every tour. Her rise to prominence in the present day organized crime business is nearly unprecedented. Depending upon the band and the objectives, these high tech Teamster’s operations were utilized by the mob to launder money, smuggle drugs, guns and other goods, and allowed access to persons and locations throughout the world. That’s where Connie’s “Coordinator” title was actually appropriate. But the scope of the operation had changed for this current assignment with ZigZag. There would be no illegal activities in the infrastructure of the operation. “Il nostro piccolo progetto” was being protected for a greater purpose. Concerts and sometimes complete tour agenda’s were being arranged for a singular purpose – political assassination. That was the latest assignment for this very sexy, very dangerous cougar of the rock and roll circuit. How she got to this point is a story unto itself.

It was suppose to be an easy score. Richie and his crew had set up an armored car heist through a contact with the Gambino family. The operation was projected to net somewhere around half a million dollars. And there was a twist. They weren’t going to just take the money. They were going to replace the real currency with counterfeit currency. A tack that they hoped would buy them a few hours head start on the authorities. They had an inside guy in the truck, and a road crew that was going to detour the driver to a secluded area of the Brooklyn docks. After they forced the truck to stop, killed the driver, exchanged the cash, and removed the body they were about to send the truck onto it’s intended destination – a replacement driver was dressed and ready to go. Suddenly there was a commotion back behind a large machinery crate. Two shadows appeared.

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Connie shot first and asked questions later. One barrel of the twenty gauge shotgun in the chest of each man. One of them was a capo in the Gambino family. They had come to make sure of their cut. Connie had just gunned down a made man. There were going to be consequences.

At the wedding reception, I got to actually “visit” with a number of folks that I don’t see very often, and to whom I don’t say thank you often enough. First Tiny and I had a beer and a detailed conversation about a car I was thinking of buying. Then Rick Daniels and I had a shot of Jack Daniels and a brief chat about running into town before we left and checking out what treasures might be found at Rockin’ Robin Guitars in downtown Houston. Specifically, I was in the market for a Fender Telecaster. Then I encountered Pee-Tee Brown long enough to be introduced to his nephew Edwin and inform them both that I was undoubtedly done driving for the day. Then Gladys Brown introduced me to a young awkward looking man. It was my very first encounter with the incredible Ollie Harrelson.

Ollie looked quite a lot like I had him imagined. Tall and thin, with glasses and a bad haircut. Everyone else was drinking wine or beer or a cocktail. Ollie had a Dr. Pepper in a Styrofoam cup from the nearby convenience store. Apparently, they didn’t serve DP at the Yacht Club, and Ollie refused to drink anything else. He had come to the wedding at the request of the Browns. Everyone else was leaving Topanga and heading for Houston. There was no reason for Ollie to sit in California by himself.

I pulled Ollie off to a side table and motioned for him to have a seat. As he did I moved into the chair across from him. This was gonna take a little bit. I summoned the waiter. First, I needed a fresh Shiner. Second, I handed him a hundred dollar bill and instructed him to go to the nearest store and purchase a case of Dr. Pepper for my associate. Ollie’s eyes lit up a bit when I said “associate.” The young Hispanic waiter brought my beer and was taking off his apron, car keys in hand, as he headed for the stairway. By the time he returned, Ollie and I were about done – for today. I insisted that the young man keep the change – which brought an incredible smile to his face. Probably more that he would make busing tables all week. I love it when I can do that.

Ollie and I had a little “situation”. Actually, there were a number of issues, but they all stemmed from “The” issue.

About a week after the rest of the engineering crew went back to their lives and careers, Ollie called his parents in Illinois to inform them that he was going to remain in California and not return to Terre Haute, Indiana for his final year of college. He had found his calling in the music business. Ollie’s father was furious. Ollie’s mother cried. The next day she started calling every “zig” and “zag” she could find in the entire Los Angeles area, finally getting through to an operator at Capital who got her to someone in the EMI tour group, who got her to Mike Bennett. I think we were in Philadelphia at the time.

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Now every other time we've had employee issues, Mike has taken care of them. And mostly without my involvement or input. But this was different. Not only was this the first and only time someone's mother had called to check up on a member of the crew, but it was the consensus of opinion from Simon, Leah, Mike, et cetera that we needed Ollie. In a few short weeks he had made himself indispensable to the Pop-Op production process.

With this advance knowledge, I began my discussion with our geeky teenage phenom. At first, Ollie looked at me as if he was sure I was going to be just like the Boy Scout camp counselor who sent him home to his mommy because he refused to fully disrobe to take a shower. And truth be told, that is what part of me wanted to do. I didn't need this situation one bit. But there's something about this kid that wants you to ignore all of his idiosyncrasies and just hug him like a Christmas puppy. I had joked with Leah just a couple of days before that perhaps we should adopt him.

I started the conversation by thanking Ollie for all of his hard work and dedication to both the production company and to the band, and that we certainly thought of him as a member of the ZigZag family. I then explained to him that I had been placed into the middle of an uncomfortable situation, and that "we" needed to find a mutually acceptable solution. Ollie stumbled through "anything you want, sir." Then I hit him with the bomb.

"I talked with your mother." It was all I had to say. Ollie's jaw couldn't have hit the floor any faster if a lead anvil had been dropped into his mouth, like Wile E. Coyote in a Roadrunner cartoon. He stumbled through a few more words of apology. I thought I might as well tear him all the way down, before we started the rebuilding process.

"Everyone thinks you should finish school." Fine advice from a college dropout turned millionaire. Ollie turned his head first left and then right, as if to see who else was in the proximity. I'm sure by this point he was envisioning that at any moment he was going to be bound and shackled, tossed into the hull of a cargo ship out in Galveston Bay, taken back up the Mississippi and the Ohio and deposited somewhere on the Indiana shoreline of the Wabash River.

I offered Ollie a Dr. Pepper refill. He declined. I was playing this out partially for my own amusement, and being a bit of a prick about it. Maybe that's why I don't get asked to be involved with staffing issues. The kid was starting to squirm. Ollie was probably saved at that point by a pair of beautiful brown eyes, which were telling me from the other side of the room that I'd better be good to this kid, or there would be consequences. The little voice inside my head reminded me that it would probably be a bad idea to piss off my bride on our wedding day. I heeded that advice and let Ollie slide off the hook.

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“I think we’ve come up with a way to work this out.” This nineteen year old prodigy, who only moments before was a being nearly void of hope now had a life raft to cling to. “But don’t get me crosswise with your mama again, ‘cause if you do I won’t be there to rescue your ass.” Mumbles of appreciation from across the table. And a big smile from me to my bride across the room.

The plan hadn’t been finalized, but preliminary conversations between Mike and one of the admissions staff at Cal Poly had us most of the way there. The school was the easy part. There wasn’t a university on the planet who wouldn’t admit Oliver Harrelson and his 4.0 GPA. Mike reported that after an initial negative response, Ollie’s parents were warming to the idea. They were also flying first class (on the ZigZag dime) to California the following week to get a first hand look at their son’s living and work environment. The corporation was also going to pay Ollie’s tuition at Cal Poly.

As I got up from the table, I told Ollie to talk with Mike about the details. In parting, I made one last statement: “Tell Mike that it’s time we put you on the payroll, too.” I got a very brief smile, and then nothing. I figured Ollie had probably already crawled back into his own little world, a place where none of the rest of us were smart enough to even visit.

Once we were back in Topanga Canyon, we tried to socialize Ollie a bit. Surprisingly, of all the folks in and around the daily operation, Ollie chose to befriend Tate. Ollie took pleasure in riding shotgun with Johnny and actually opened up with Tate a bit. In order for Ollie to finish his education, he was going to have to spend three days every week in San Luis Obispo, about a two hour drive from the complex. Johnny drove up with Ollie to help scout out an apartment and get the paperwork all processed at the school. Here’s an interest switch: Mike Bennett was insistent that Tate handle the finances. We gave him a stack of cash to open a local bank account, and Mike wanted Johnny’s name on the account along with Ollie. Perhaps the logic on Mike’s part was that if we ever needed to get somebody to SLO in a hurry, Tate was the man for the job. Tate and Ollie made that trip a few times that summer and fall. Of particular interest to Ollie was the midway stop in Arroyo Grande at the In-and-Out Burger stand. Ollie opened up a bit to Tate on these trips and told Johnny that he was in California and with ZigZag to get “The Entire Experience”. He probably confided in the wrong guy.

I had gotten mud on the side of the Mercedes one day while driving back up through the canyon to Fernwood for a lunch meeting. I was pissed when I got there and saw the spray from a truck I encountered at the last turn. Not pissed at the trucker, I was pissed at ME. I pulled up to that intersection and said to myself that I should just sit there and wait for the truck to go past. But I just didn’t listen to myself and instead cut quickly around the corner just as the truck was turning left across from me. One of its back rear wheels caught just enough of a pot hole partially filled with water to spray a nice muddy mess between the rear wheel well

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and the back bumper. So after lunch, I found a place up by where the campers and trailers park in the campgrounds that had a little self-serve car wash. I pulled into the bay and stepped out of the car. I needed change so I went around the corner to the change dispenser and put in a five dollar bill. Just as Abraham Lincoln disappeared into the casing of the machine, everything went into time warp. As those five dollars worth of quarters was being dispensed from the coin machine I counted the individual quarters as they each distinctly dropped into the tray. I could read the dates on several. And then everything went back to normal.

Being “famous” has many different facets. First, there is making enough money so that you don’t have to worry about money. I don’t even know what the limits are on my credit cards. I’ve never managed to max one out, though Lord knows Leah has tried. When we are not on the road, Mike and I usually have breakfast on Saturday mornings, and spend a few minutes talking financials. He has staff members who take care of paying the bills and keeping the books, and we mostly just look at the monthly statements (although I know that Mike’s attention to the details of the day to day operations are far, far greater than mine). He also manages the portfolios for both the corporation and for Leah and I personally. He’s made several of us (including himself) very rich men and women. Second, there’s the recognition. Winning Grammys, playing for Presidents and at Super Bowls, and having my image plastered on big and small screens, magazine covers, and billboards all make it difficult to go unnoticed in public. There’s almost always an interruption in restaurants and hotel lobbies, but I really don’t mind – as long as I get to eat in peace. There are some things that you just accept as “coming with the territory”. It does make for a perfect excuse to keep from having to go to the mall. Although I’m in a position where I can go anywhere and do almost anything I desire, doing so sometimes creates issues for the staff. I do feel badly when I keep staff from their families and personal lives. Sometimes it just can’t be helped. I don’t think that Pee-Tee and I have had a decent meal together in many years.

There are stereotypes we’ve all heard and read about regarding life on the road with a rock and roll band. Well I’m here to tell you that they are all pretty much true. As an inside joke within the band, we call life on the road “Alice’s Restaurant” after the Arlo Guthrie tune, where you can literally “get anything you want”<sup>21</sup>. ANYTHING. And although I’m sure everyone will quickly move to the “sex, drugs, and rock and roll” mindset, and for sure there is a ridiculous amount of the first two items as a result of the third, it really goes beyond the obvious – way beyond. We can get a steak cooked any way we want at 3:30 in the morning, make major airlines wait in line while we land or depart, request hotel rooms be set up to our liking (down to the minute detail), or get a business to close its doors to the public so we can shop in peace. Most of this stuff is all detailed in the riders to our performance contracts and very much under our control. But there are some byproducts of this “insanity in flight” that cannot be fully anticipated or controlled.

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First, there are the drugs. To be totally honest, I have no idea where they come from. Now that statement may sound a little fishy, especially coming from someone who has been smoking pot since the eighth grade. But I really don't. I don't buy drugs, I don't carry drugs, and I don't have to solicit drugs. If I want to smoke a joint, it just appears. No different than if I want a hamburger or a cold beverage. Most of the conspicuous consumption happens with the cast and crew. They aren't recognizable and are less sheltered. They hang out in the bars and clubs before and after the shows, while we all hole up in a hotel room.

Second, the women. I have no earthly idea why some woman would think that musicians can provide better sexual experiences than other men in other professions, but they do. Maybe they don't, and it just seems that way to me. We've had "groupies" almost since the beginning. It starts out with relatives and friends of friends of band members, and pretty soon you've got some girl named Betty who no one really knows hanging around. Unbeknownst to all, her current mission in life is to sleep with every member of ZigZag. I know, I know - everyone needs goals in life. And the sad thing is she probably succeeded. Guess that says something about me as well. There are plenty of stories, but I really don't see any reason to go there. But for those who need some facts: The entire design of the bread truck we used early on in our careers was engineered around the inclusion of the couch. The stories those cushions could tell... Above the couch was a set of cabinets that held boxes of cables and microphones and other small pieces of electronics equipment. The first thing that was permanently placed in the lower left cabinet was an economy sized box of condoms... During the early years on the big stage, most of the members of the band and crew were unattached (and some unfaithful). Let's just suffice it to say that the local delicacies were tasted and enjoyed by many of the group. But I'll not tell the stories of others here either... And lastly, yes, on more than one occasion I have had women rip their clothes off right in front of me. Sometimes it went further than that, other times it didn't. It's both a shock and an honor...

I think for the most part I've become immune to sexual come on's. It's happened too many times, and though I'm sure I haven't "seen everything", I've seen plenty. The first time a woman walked into the dressing room and started removing her clothing was a startling experience. The two hundredth time, not so much. Don't get me wrong, I still enjoy the company of beautiful women, and my libido is just fine. I see beautiful women all the time. I could probably score with many of them, if I wanted. If I tried. But I'm still madly in love with an East Texas girl who continues to take my breath away - even at the thought of her name. Why in the world would I want to screw that up ??? What is scary, and something that I will never get used to, is when a fan tries to remove articles of my clothing. It's a violation that I just can't tolerate. Even if it's a woman with the best of intentions. Believe it or not, after all these years I'm still not all that comfortable with Leah taking off my clothes. Now me taking off Leah's clothes, that's another story. Having her along on the road for most of these years was a very good thing for me. I wasn't opposed to having sex on the road. I just didn't

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need to have sex with a different woman every night. What Leah and I have is as good as it gets. I hope she still thinks so too.

My mother would have sorely disapproved of my behavior on a number of fronts.

Third are what I call “the perks”. The unfathomable things that happen because you are who you are. Like when I looked to my right at a show in Columbus, Ohio and saw Eric Clapton strapping on his Stratocaster and stepping on stage to join us for several songs one night, or sitting between Eric and B.B. King at one of Eric’s guitar festivals trying to envision what I might be able to contribute musically to “The Thrill is Gone”, or getting a call from Steve Van Zant one evening wanting to know if I’d be interested in “sittin’ in” with the E Street Band at a Springsteen show at Madison Square Garden. The first few times this sort of thing happened, I had to pinch myself to make sure I wasn’t dreaming and that this was really happening to ME !!! Two sets of events stand out amongst a host of wonderful experiences:

I’ve been on the Late Show with David Letterman many times. The first time we played Dave’s show was probably our “coming out” party. Over the years Dave and I have become good friends. I remind Dave now and again that I used to watch him do the weather on a local television station at my cousin’s house in Indianapolis back when he had hair. He also cooks one of the best veal dishes I have ever tasted. This particular trip to the Letterman Show I was going alone (without the band) and wasn’t planning to play. Dave was inviting me as a “favor”. Robin Williams was scheduled for that night, and I had never met Robin. We were also going to plan a sailing expedition for the following spring. We had a wonderful lunch with Robin and talked about our proposed Caribbean adventure. During the hour and a half or so we were together Robin regaled us with Captain Ahab, Gilligan, Bogart in “The African Queen”, and multiple preludes of “In The Navy” by the Village People. And although lunch with Robin Williams and David Letterman was quite the experience, four days and nights with them (and a small crew) off the coast of the St. Thomas is definitely among the highlights of my life. As lunch was ending, out of the blue Dave said that Paul Schaefer had changed the musical plans for the show, and would I mind playing a song with the band. He said that Paul had mentioned something about working on “Freedom Fighter” and did I bring a guitar.

This was at about 1:30 p.m. Taping for the show that night started at about 3:00.

I gave Dave that look that said “of course I’ll do it, but you’ve got to be kidding”, left he and Robin to take care of the bill, and grabbed Pee-Tee from the bar (which is where he tends to hang out while waiting for me – drinking ginger ale, by the way). He hailed a cab and we headed for Manny’s Music. I needed an instrument, as the only guitar I had brought along on this trip was an acoustic six string. On the way to Manny’s I called the studio and talked to Paul. This was the easy part – Paul and the rest of the Late Show band are pro’s pros. I love

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good drummers, and Anton Figg is among my absolute favorites. A five minute run through about 2:30 was all they would need. Then I called Mike. I couldn't go into Manny's alone. Certainly not if I planned on doing anything but sign autographs for the customers and pose for pictures with the staff. When we pulled up at Manny's, two of the stores assistant managers hopped in the cab, directed us around the corner and into the employee's parking area. We went in via the back door. Around forty-five minutes later I was back in the cab, headed for the Ed Sullivan Theatre, with a 1961 Gibson Les Paul Junior in tow. We ran through the song twice before taping started, I had a tech from Manny's who had accompanied us back to the theatre change the strings and the setup a bit, and headed back to the "Green Room" to watch the production until I was to go onstage in the second segment with Dave and Robin. After espousing my man-love for Robin Williams, dating back to the days of the dreaded Mork, an amazing HBO special where he pulled John Ritter out of the audience to do improv, and an endearing performance in "Dead Poets", discussion centered of our impending sailing excursion in the Caribbean (which Robin was insistent be entitled "A Three Hour Tour"), until Dave pointed toward my guitar and exploded with a question; "Why the hell is that thing yellow ????" (The "TV Yellow" Les Paul Junior was designed to look its best on black and white television sets in the early '60's). There was a thirty minute production break before recording the musical portion of the program. I was approached by a Late Show staff member and drug off to some office to sign something. Little did I know at the time what was transpiring on the set.

Once we got back to the studio, the "plan" was to just plug in and play as soon as Dave introduced the song. But something had changed. There was now a drum kit on stage, as well as a bass rig and an effects rack and pedal board connected to an old Fender Twin Reverb amp. Paul was standing with Anton Figg at the back of the theatre as we entered from the offices. All he said was that "some guys" were in the neighborhood and had dropped by to "help out". Tonight. About two-thirds of the way through Paul's little "script" I caught a glimpse of a recognizable Irishman with an old blonde Telecaster slung over his shoulder – The Edge. And then a few seconds later Adam Clayton walked on stage and picked up his P bass. Apparently, I was about to perform with U2.

Dave introduced me with "and Friends". I just chuckled, slung the strap from the Les Paul Junior over my head and into position, turned on the wireless, and started the song. After the first time through the chord progression, Adam and Larry Mullen, Jr. weighed in. It was as if a bomb went off in the theater. The Edge latterly "chimed in" with a chilling harmonic loop effect and we were off and running. I looked around to see if we were good to go and saw three sets of smiles. I started singing the first verse.

### Freedom Fighter

"Disgraced, boy what a waste,

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Torn and tattered from head to toe.  
Pipe dreams, coming loose at the seams,  
Never knowing which way to go.”

By the third line I was aware of an arm draped across my right shoulder. I looked up to see the bespeckled Irish grin of Bono who was standing next to me with a microphone. He and The Edge joined in on the chorus.

“Freedom Fighter, history writer,  
On a trail to right the wrong.  
Freedom Fighter, better hold on tighter,  
To the creed in your victory song.”

Bono sang the second verse and then we did another chorus.

“Outraged, I hate being upstaged,  
Think I’ll place this world into a trance.  
Lennon’s dead, now you heard what he said,  
But did we ever give peace a chance?”

Freedom Fighter, history writer,  
On a trail to right the wrong.  
Freedom Fighter, better hold on tighter,  
To the creed in your victory song.”

After an angst filled solo from The Edge, I sang the first half of the final verse

“Misaligned, quite hard to define,  
The worthless words of a once wise king.”

And left the final two lines for Bono.

“Passing glance, still poised in a stance,  
‘Cause you never know what tomorrow brings.”

We ran a final chorus.

“Freedom Fighter, history writer,  
On a trail to right the wrong.  
Freedom Fighter, better hold on tighter,  
To the creed in your victory song.”<sup>22</sup>

And then Adam and Larry led us out. When we finished, I just stood there motionless. I didn’t know what to think or what to say. I’d never met any of these guys before, and to have them show up and do this gave me incredible

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respect for them both as artists and men. These guys have become some of my favorite people and musicians.

Tom Dowd reappeared at The Stitch in May of 1985, and we went about the business of creating much of the music that was to appear on the “Architect of Light” album. Tom poked and prodded us. Cajoled, praised and berated. Whatever he thought it took that particular day or session. Most of the time he was spot on. In private conversations, the band often wondered how we had ever managed to record an album without Tom. We also knew that we never wanted to attempt it again. There were nights when I would listen to the rough mixes and think “did I play that” ??? Somehow Tom always managed to get the best out of us. He talked a lot about the blind musicians that he had been associated with over the years, including a long time relationship with Ray Charles. To these players, “hearing” was everything. And at regular intervals, he would quote Ray: at the end of the day, all of this equipment and these wires don’t matter anymore. “It’s what does it sound like.” So far, what we were hearing was pretty damn good.

My biggest memory from our initial Grammy ceremony was not winning “New Artist of the Year”, although that was a great honor. It was that night that I first laid eyes on Paul McCartney. Although all I got from Sir Paul that night was a recognizing look and a slight nod of the head, it was at that moment that I knew I had arrived. In the same room with a Beatle. Who could have ever dreamed it would get this good. The next time I met one of the Fabs, it would be a bit more informal and really quite unbelievable.

I’ve known Tom Petty since we opened for them during parts of the “Hard Promises” tour. We’ve run into each other in and around L.A. over the years at functions and music stores. I wouldn’t say we are “friends”, really more just professional acquaintances. I ran into Tom at a little bistro off Manhattan Beach one afternoon while having lunch with an old high school friend named Phil. Tom asked if I had anywhere to be and I told him I didn’t think so. Pee-Tee checked to make sure, and we headed off toward Malibu. I rode with Tom in his El Camino. Pee-Tee followed with the Bentley.

I’ve never told anyone this, especially not Pee-Tee, but I really didn’t have much choice about having him around all the time. Capitol Records had a substantial life insurance policy on me, and one of the stipulations in that policy is that I am never, never, never suppose to be anywhere alone. Guess they had visions of me dying in a bathtub in Paris or something. With his state police background, Pee-Tee passed muster with the insurance folks, and I had a trustworthy friend at my side, not a rent-a-cop. Most of the time it didn’t bother me. I’m sure just his presence has saved me a lot of headache and heartache. He was like my Guardian Angel and alter ego all wrapped up in a solid 225 pound frame. And Pee-Tee did it all so casually and effortlessly that it looked at times like he was hardly doing anything at all.

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Pulling down a narrow drive, we parked the vehicles, and went into a bungalow behind a very nice beach house. Pee-Tee stayed in the car. I recognized Jeff Lynne almost as soon as we got through the door, and before Tom could get “Hey Jeff” out of his mouth. Jeff was in the kitchen making tea. A woman entered the room, and Tom quickly moved to greet her and kiss her on the cheek. They whispered a few words in private. He then introduced me to Olivia Harrison, the wife of George Harrison. I was about to meet a Beatle.

We walked into the adjoining room, which was very large and open, with a high vaulted ceiling and a pair of cabaña fans slowly turning the air. There were a number of plants in the room; everything from a couple of large palms to a long flat tray covered with small cacti. There wasn't much furniture. At one end of the room, facing toward a large window wall that included two sets of sliding doors and looked out onto a patio and small garden, was a gigantic off white sofa. On the sofa, holding a ukulele sat “the quiet Beatle” George Harrison.

George did not look well, pale and a bit thin, but there was an aura of peace and comfort in his presence. It was amazing. And yet, somehow exactly what I would have expected. Introductions were brief and casual. Tom mentioned my name, and George responded that he quite liked the Pop-Op thing and that he and Liv had seen one of the video productions a while back. I thanked him and said that I had a need for a good sitar player on a new track, and did he know any. I couldn't resist. We both laughed. There was a small amount of chit chat until Olivia and Jeff returned with the tea. After a couple of sips, George simply said “So what shall we play”. Jeff and Tom got up almost immediately. Tom gave me a look that said “come with us” and I followed them into a walk-in closet that was down the hall in what appeared to be the master bedroom (although there was no bed in the room). The closet was filled with instruments. There were a dozen or so guitars, a number of boxes filled with various percussion instruments, and a bunch of ukuleles. Tom and Jeff obviously both had there favorites pre selected. They each grabbed a Martin soprano uke and began to tune them. The one George had in his lap was a little larger, and I was guessing an alto (later I found out that it was also called a “concert” ukulele). So I grabbed up a baritone thinking it would be easier to keep in tune and also so I could just hold down the bottom end and (hopefully) keep up with these guys. We played for thirty minutes or so. Everything from show tunes to Woody Guthrie. I could tell George was beginning to tire. Olivia got up and took the tea pot back into the kitchen. Jeff got up, followed by Tom and myself, and we returned the instruments to the closet.

As soon as we walked out the door, I turned to Tom and expressed my sincerest appreciation for the opportunity I had just been afforded. Then I told him I needed to make a quick call. Pulling out my cell phone, I found the number for one of my oldest and dearest friends Jarvis, in Milwaukee. Jarvis is probably the biggest George Harrison fan on the planet. But, of course, he didn't answer (and I wasn't

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surprised). I left a simple message – “You will never believe...” Then I did something totally unexpected – I ask Tom if we could take Pee-Tee back in and introduce him to George. I really felt that is was important to our relationship. Tom looked at me as if I was insane, but acquiesced. George and Olivia were understanding and cordial to Pee-Tee. To this day, Tom insists that I only took Pee-Tee into the house so that I would have a “reliable” witness. Pee-Tee has said that it is the proudest moment of his career.

I went over to George’s several other times at Tom’s request, and dropped whatever I was doing every time to make it happen. I would never tell anyone except Leah where we were going, and only recently have shared the stories of these wonderful glimpses into the life of a special, special man. I hold them too dear to use as dinner conversation or a “look what I did” prologue. What a tremendous opportunity to be able to spend time with not only a musical legend, but also a man that I had admired from afar. And I was now even more convinced that George Harrison was indeed a tremendous human being. Jeff Lynne was always there when I visited. Tom was the first time, but when he called the next two times he was on the road. I guess George wanted Tom to have the initial conversations. After our first visit, Olivia always made a point of making sure Pee-Tee was invited to come in. He often declined, but I could tell that my protector and confidant was touched by the gesture.

I guess I’d been there three or four times, just playing the role of a sideman and thumpin’ the snot out of that baritone uke, when George asked if I wanted to play something. Tom was there that time, because I distinctly remember his sarcastic response. At the time I thought, how dare he talk to George Harrison like that – but it was all in good fun. I got a guitar out of the closet (later I found out that it was the Martin that George wrote “Here Comes the Sun” on at Eric Clapton’s place in England) and dropped the tuning an entire step to align with the C tuning on the concert ukulele.

I thought of “Don’t Blame Me” for one simple reason. The ending. It was a Beatles’s ending. Playing the song in the key of C changed the feel dramatically. And the ukes added a different sonic voice to the piece.

### Don’t Blame Me

So you think you want to try your luck with somebody new,  
Prove once and for all if our love is true.  
But you’ve been bangin’ out those backstreet lights,  
While I’ve been sittin’ home alone at night.

So don’t blame me.  
Don’t blame me-ee  
Girl you’ve told so many lies,  
And given me some sad goodbyes,

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And left me in your world to wander free.  
So don't blame me.  
Don't blame me.

George stopped us for the first time. He wanted to try the chorus again. We did, and with Jeff and Tom along with George, the harmonies were incredible.

I've heard it said before that to love is like a walk in the rain,  
The more you hurt the less you live with the pain.  
So it never seemed to me untamed,  
For you to walk right in and state your claim.

Just don't blame me.  
Don't blame me-ee  
I was never one to wonder why,  
Or feel the need to even try,  
When you set your mind to nail me to a tree.  
Just don't blame me.  
Don't blame me.

This time I stopped. We talked about the bridge for a minute or two, and then started back up. Jeff and then Tom added an "ooh-la-la-la-la-la" under the vocals that sounded great. I told them afterwards that I was stealing that idea – and it became part of the ZigZag recording.

All of my life I've been waiting for the answer.  
For a girl to come to me and open my eyes.  
All of these years when I thought you were the one I could count on.  
It hurts so badly that there's just no need to cry.

Now it was Jeff's turn to detour us. He boldly declared that this song needed slide guitar on the solo, went into the back bedroom and returned with a Weissenborn lap steel and a little Pignose amp. He plugged in the guitar and checked the volume. Then he looked at George. "I'm not the slide player in this little group" was all he said as he offered up the Weissenborn and the glass slide that he held in his other hand. Jeff took the concert ukulele that George had been playing. I was about to be blown away. We ran the progression under the solo three or four times until George was comfortable. Then he covered the Pignose amp with a pillow to mute the sound a bit.

This is no time now to add up who was right and who's wrong,  
When you find what you have is when you see that it's gone.  
'Cause your love may be my death you see,  
Still I don't know how it all came to be.

But don't blame me.

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Don't blame me-ee.  
Tell your friends what they want to hear,  
Use my name in vain if it's worth a cheer,  
Then ramble on 'bout how I was supposed to see.  
But don't blame me.  
Don't blame me.

Don't blame me.  
Don't blame me-e-e.<sup>23</sup>

We talked about the “Beatle ending” and then played the song in its entirety. Three times. It sounded great. I was wishing I had a tape recorder.

From that session forward, George no longer asked if I had a song – he expected one. Aside from the moment when I first saw Leah and the birth of my children, if I were to be asked at the end of my life what were the best of times, I would unquestionably say that one of the very, very best has been the opportunity to spend a few brief minutes with one of history's most amazing men.

“Architect of Light” was scheduled for released in early December, 1985. It was the culmination of nearly a year's worth of work. I don't think we have ever made a better record. And much of that credit I give solely to Tom Dowd. “Who Cuts the Barber's Hair” was scheduled to be the first single. The record company hated it. It was blues, not “pop”. They wanted a hook, they wanted a chorus. We had an outstanding video already produced and ready for release. Then something unexpected happened.

Michael Mann approached us about using one of our songs as the backdrop for an episode of Miami Vice. After listening to some of the masters with Mike, Michael had already convinced himself that the right song was “Meet Me in the Moonlight” from our yet to be released “Architect of Light” project. It has a sweet reggae feel and nice solid hook. Greg had written a killer bass line and he and R.L. and the rhythm section were locked and loaded. Again, more of Tom Dowd's influence. The plot line was for Tubbs (played by Philip Michael Thomas) to fall in love with the daughter of a Central American drug kingpin who just so happened to be the target for Tubbs and Crockett's (Don Johnson) latest operation. We retracked the song to add an additional chorus at the beginning, an extended, laid-back interlude with the solo section, and extended the coda as well.

### Meet Me in the Moonlight

So we started it a cappella for the television production, and liked it so well that we've performed it this way ever since.

“Come on and meet me in the moonlight.  
You've got to do it if it feels right.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Down around midnight.  
Come on and meet me in the moonlight.

R.L. and Greg go off like a double barrel shotgun. And we added another twist. There was talk from the beginning of this project about adding percussion. In fact, when we first started rehearsing this song in The Palace, Scotty was playing timbales and I had the only guitar part. Tom had a better idea. He knew a guy...

A couple of hours later a small panel truck arrived and delivered a set of road cases. The name on the outside said "Tito Puente". The following morning, a silver Porsche Spider delivered "El Rey de los Timbales" (the King of the Timbales) to The Stitch. Another great musician. Another wonderful man. Another RIGHT answer. This just kept getting better and better. Adding Tito did several things. First, it freed Scotty up to focus on the guitar. Better for him, better for me, better for everybody. We knew we could have tracked additional guitars (and percussion for that matter) but we always want to try to present studio material that can be replicated live without too much technology. This solution was easier. We would just start traveling with an additional percussionist (Tito didn't go on the road with us, but did join us on stage for a couple of shows at Madison Square Garden the following year).

Now I know your daddy thinks I've come,  
From the wrong side of the tracks.  
No one a daughter of his should know.  
He thinks that boys like me,  
Can only give you a bad reputation.  
But I can tell that you don't see that it's so.

Come on and meet me in the moonlight.  
You've got to do it if it feels right.  
Down around midnight.  
Come on and meet me in the moonlight.

Having Scotty on guitar when we got to the second verse made it a lot easier to slide into another gear. By now the percussion patterns had become infectious and Eric has conjured up a sneaky little countermelody on the Mellotron. This was like sailing on glass.

From where I'm standing girl,  
There must be ground for negotiation.  
There's somethin' 'bout the way I think of you.  
Look deep into my heart and understand the situation,  
With your eyes like Caribbean waters so calm so clear so cool.

Come on and meet me in the moonlight.  
You've got to do it if it feels right.

## Long Live Rock And Roll

Visions of a perfect sight.  
Come on and meet me in the moonlight.

When we added the extended interlude, we needed a counter to Scotty's razor sharp lead in the first half of the solo. We tried keys, and Eric came up with a really nice part that we still use during stadium shows, but we (read: the wandering mind of Tom Dowd) was thinking something else. Steel Drums. Again, Tom knew somebody and made a phone call. Two days later a set of steel drums was delivered to the studio. Eric put them in the spare vocal booth and started working them over. We paid a studio musician for tracking this part. But by the time we started to mix Eric had it down cold. We retracked the part, and in my opinion Eric outdid the hired gun.

Put our lives back now like pieces to a puzzle,  
Take our time girl we can make them all fit.  
And even if the picture turns out to be a lie,  
At least we are the only ones who have to live with it.

Come on and meet me in the moonlight.  
You've got to do it if it feels right.  
Promise now I won't bite.  
Come on and meet me in the moonlight."<sup>24</sup>

We rode off into the "moonlight" if you will with everything going all at once. Once we got into that groove, we could play it all night.

Of all of places problems could come from, and all the things I was more or less prepared for, having an issue with Greg would have never been one of them. He walked into the studio one day and unloaded his tale of woe.

Greg's wife Patty hated California. Hated the lifestyle. Hated the people. Most of all, she hated being away from her family in Kentucky. It was pretty obvious – she was homesick. And she was making life a living hell for Greg. I knew what we all needed. A break. And a way to finish the year in a fashion that would strengthen the entire band family. So we went back "home".

Now of course, home for Greg and me in Kentucky isn't home for anybody else. In fact the band's "home" is Houston. But what we were needing was more of a revival atmosphere than a rock and roll show. I walked the streets of my hometown for a couple of days, and chatted with friends both old and new. I chased down a few old buddies and had a few beers. I shot some pool and played some poker. And I paid a visit to Greg and Patty and the entire Townsend/Neibauer family at Patty's parent's house. I had been there several times before during high school. I knew them well enough to go to the back door and leave my boots on the porch before coming into the kitchen. Family. I only had one plan. ZigZag NEEDED Greg. To move forward otherwise would be like lining the

## Long Live Rock And Roll

other four of us up and lopping off our legs at the knee in one sweeping blow. I told Patty I wanted her to be happy. I would do anything I could to make that happen. I was also convinced that life was going to be a little more stable with the advent of Pop-Op. At least we would be in one place for several days at a time. And they didn't have to live in California if they didn't want to. I knew for a fact that they had enough money to live anywhere they pleased. I did everything but cry. If I could play the freakin' violin I would have broken it out. I hugged Greg on the way out the door. He wasn't going anywhere.

We had another personal celebration of sorts while we were back in Kentucky. With Mike's help, we had managed to secure the mortgages of everyone in the family – mom and dad, my grandparents, my uncle and aunt. We paid them all. Janet and Jimmy Butler's mortgage was paid off as well. There were also discussions of college funds for the children and grandchildren, and an endowment to the University of Kentucky. And another for Kentucky Educational Television.

The auditorium at our high school wasn't great, but was what we had to work with. Three thousand seats, and not near enough backstage area. We planned to do three shows the week before Christmas. The first was "invitation only" – which meant that each of the band members (including Mike) got five hundred tickets each. Friends, family, whoever. R.L. took most of his to the radio station and had a call in contest. He actually sat in studio with the DJ and talked about our records as they were played on the air and chatted with the winners. More great public relations than we could pay for in a year. Scott and Eric each put a block of their tickets up for sale. Both were to benefit a local children's charity. I invited my entire high school graduating class. My mother insisted on handling those transactions personally. The other two shows were totally charity events. The United Way got the ticket sales for one evening, and the local YMCA got the other. ZigZag covered all of the costs.

We dispensed with the usual opening number for these shows, and played an old Thin Lizzy song that I thought appropriate for the occasion – "The Boys Are Back in Town".

I looked out over the audience and for the first time in a long time knew most of the faces. This was going to be a hoot.

"Guess who just got back today?  
Them wild-eyed boys that had been away.  
Haven't changed, have much to say,  
But man, I still think them cats are crazy.

They were asking if you were around,  
How you was, where you could be found.

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Told them you were living downtown,  
Driving all the old men crazy.

The boys are back in town,  
The boys are back in town...<sup>»25</sup>

We concluded the festivities with a ZigZag family tribunal dinner. I spread as much love as I could around the room that night, including some staff bonuses and other gifts. I praised the work of all and told them as honestly as I could how much I appreciated each and every one of them. In parting I also shared one new bit of news....Leah was pregnant.