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### **Kill the Music**

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# **KILL THE MUSIC**

Michael G. Plumides, Jr., JD

Edited By: Virginia Anne Saunders

## For Tyberius

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Author's note: The events described in "KILL THE MUSIC" are true, although some depictions have been fictionalized slightly, and some characters have been given fictional names and identifying characteristics. Some actual event dates may be subject to scrutiny, but the book is an honest portrayal of my life during the period of 1986 through 1992, and this story is a forthright account of those times to the best of my recollection. I have also used periodicals, magazines, newspapers and other literary material, as well as audio tape, internet sources, and conversations with individuals who had first-hand knowledge, to verify these events. Any persons holding themselves out as public figures are fair game. Let the truth to be told.

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## FORWARD

While some of the scenes and characters in **KILL THE MUSIC** seem straight out of some Hollywood script-writer's overwrought fantasy about what an underground punk rock scene should have been like back in the day — reality can't possibly be this colorfully tawdry, right? — I can assure you that Mike Plumides' depictions are deadly accurate. I should know; I was present for many of them (*ask me sometime about the Bad Brains and GWAR shows in the book*). In other words, "High Fidelity" or "Singles," this ain't.

And even though **KILL THE MUSIC** is a memoir, and therefore filtered through the Ray-Ban tinted lenses of the author, it's a remarkably clear-headed accounting of what was going on in and around Charlotte, NC, in the late '80s and early '90s, and how those goings-on dovetailed into the larger events of the nation and the music industry. The southern city's pinched-ass, Bible Belt mentality in regards to the arts, creative culture and personal freedoms was, in a very real sense, a reflection of the prevailing national mood. As the likes of Jessie Helms and the PMRC set their sights upon punk, metal, hip-hop and so-called "pornographic" art, so too was Plumides, as a maverick rock club owner intent on shaking up the increasingly tepid and homogenized local music scene, in the cross-hairs of the Charlotte establishment.

In that regard, his destiny was probably pre-ordained. But while reading this book you'll still be rooting for Plumides who, for all his arrogance, shameless skirt-chasing (*did I mention there's plenty of sex to go with the drugs and rock 'n roll?*) and occasional bloody-minded bridge-burning, still embodied that essential rebel-with-a-cause spirit that informs rock. When he opened up the 4808 Club, the circus officially came to town in Charlotte, and when he was finally forced to shut it down a few short years later, the circus pulled up stakes and left. And if you ask some of the locals who still live there, by some measures that circus has never come back.

### Fred Mills

Managing Editor- *BLURT Magazine*  
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## Table of Contents

1. Imagining Things.....	9
2. Shift Change .....	13
3. Lemmy.....	23
4. A Watchful Eye.....	28
5. Barbie.....	36
6. Production Room.....	45
7. Poser .....	53
8. Hootie .....	59
9. Selling Cars.....	73
10. 4808 Central Avenue .....	79
11. Club Wars.....	89
12. Brown-Rogers-Dixon .....	101
13. Politics and the Devil Himself.....	110
14. A Dark Underbelly .....	119
15. Alvin .....	126
16. A Mightier Wind.....	140
17. Jerry and Bob Weir .....	144
18. Club Wars 2: Electric Boogaloo .....	151
19. "Earache My Eye" .....	156
20. A Rock and Roll Wedding .....	167
21. Bullets and Hollywood Vampires .....	180
22. 509 West 5th Street.....	195
23. "The Salaminizer" .....	207
24. Aftermath and Dissent .....	216

“Shrewdly our legislators calculated that most people were too lazy to perform a real crime. So new laws had to be manufactured, to make it possible for anyone to violate them, at any time, day or night, which is one of the reasons why music was eventually made illegal.”

FRANK ZAPPA

## **Imagining Things**

My one hope was that I would get through this night. The minutes seemed to pass like hours, and with each tick of the clock, the stress factor increased. I hurriedly threw down roughly six thousand dollars in various denominations, laying my side arm on the table, as I fumbled through the series of crumpled bills. The office was dimly lit. I wiped the sweat from my eye, and tried not to lose my concentration, as the thundering sound of guitar riffs bellowed with the prehistoric might of a Tyrannosaurus.

It was September 18, 1990. The performance was intense; an onslaught of theatrical debauchery, of which, was the cause of my worry. The band had finally finished its encore, to the response of hundreds of screaming, blood-soaked fans, writhing in its apocalyptic, yet cartoonish essence. But I still had this overwhelming sense of dread that I just couldn't shake. Something was amiss. I could

smell it, like a fart in church.

It was kind of like sitting in the principal's office after you were apprehended taking a bong hit in your car, where you're convinced that something bad was about to happen, but to what severity? I tried to seal myself off from the world for just a few moments as the raucous stage performance dissipated to a low crowd noise. But the pulse-pounding sense of impending doom was disheveling me. Was it paranoia, or was there really a shit storm to the ninth power about to hit?

Was I imagining things? The show was over. Maybe I was home free. Maybe everything was going to be okay. I continued to separate the bills, trying to suppress each cascading thought that buzzed in my head. Then there was a knock on the office door.

"Who is it?" I asked.

"Officer Friendly," an authoritative voice replied, followed by a chuckle.

I asked again, "Who?" pressing my palms down on the cash. He beat on the frame again.

"Open the door now, before I kick the som' bitch down." I quickly scooped up the stack of bills, and the pistol and placed them in the desk drawer. I paused for a moment, took a deep breath, and cautiously unlocked the office.

There he was in all of his glory, David Sullins, Chief Detective of Alcohol Law Enforcement, coming to call once again. He stood there with a look of pure bliss on his face, ready to get in my ass. Sullins was a power hungry, pencil-

necked, pint-sized prick with a mustache and no chin, in his blue blazer and khaki pants, bullying his gun belt with the cocksure posturing of Barney Fife. The detective had a hard-on for me for months. And there was definitely no love lost between the two of us. All 140 pounds of him was more than happy to take me down.

Sullins brought in two-dozen police with him, some in riot gear. Vice officers as well. The cops were bludgeoning patrons with their nightsticks and flashlights, manhandling every punk and metal head in the city as they exited the show. Sullins saw his opportunity to lecture me. "You in a world of shit now, boy," Sullins barked as he picked through papers on the desk.

"What did I do this time?" I asked with a hint of sarcasm.

Sullins spat, "You best speak when spoken to, you hear me?"

I crossed my arms, and hung my head, as Sullins searched about the room with his flashlight, continuing to run his self-righteous mouth. I had to sit there and take it.

He poked and prodded around the office searching for God knows what, probably drugs. He pulled the desk drawer open to find the money and my Taurus .380-millimeter.

"What's this?" Sullins asked spryly, thinking he had hit the jackpot.

"It's the door money. You startled me, so I put it away."

Reluctantly, Sullins instructed me to deposit the cash and the firearm in the drop box.

"Get yer ass up against that wall, boy." He laughed while

he searched me, as another unidentified policeman looked on. And I promise you, that asshole was enjoying every grueling second.

Another blued constable, holding the red haired kid by the shirt, stuck his head in the doorway. He asked Sullins, “Is this the one?”

“Yeah,” Sullins replied. “Take him on down and git his info. I wanna talk to his parents.” Then Sullins turned to me. He sneered as he pointed a finger in my face, and exclaimed, “I’m gonna shut you down once and for all, you goddamned, punk rock troublemaker.”

Sullins reached in his belt, and produced a pair of handcuffs, and grinned like a cat who just swilled a goldfish as he slapped the bracelets on me.

“Now, take us backstage so we can arrest that singer, and that priest he was a fuckin’ in the ass,” Sullins demanded. He then grabbed me by the wrist and led me out the office door.

After all of my transgressions, the verdict was in. It was not going to be okay, as I had feared. The storm had finally hit landfall. It was then I knew that Sullins was correct. At that particular moment, I really was in a world of shit.

## Shift Change

It was shift change at WUSC-FM in Columbia, South Carolina. 6:00 P.M. on Sunday, January 2, 1988, to be exact. I was finishing up my weekly radio show as Sharon, the Program Director, stood in the doorway, her arms filled with albums. I was on the air.

“That was music from Motorhead, the title track off of their latest, aptly entitled *Rock and Roll*. They will be playing tomorrow night, opening up for the legendary Alice Cooper, at the Charlotte Coliseum, and I will be there. I’m Jack Corn and I’m out of here. It’s six o’clock. Sharon is up next. She’ll be taking requests at 777-4165, and remember you’re listening to music commercial-free from your friends here at 90.5.”

Sharon smiled as I gathered my effects. “You know you have to be there at six-thirty, right?”

“I know,” I responded as I threw my book bag over my

shoulder. "I've been reading liner notes for days. *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith*, *No Remorse*, magazines like *Rip*, *Kerrang*, *Circus*, and *Melody Maker*. Look at this."

I held up the latest *Sounds Magazine*, featuring Motorhead on the cover with the headline, "The Godfathers of Grebo."

"What's Grebo?" Sharon asked.

"I don't know. But I do know that they're England's loudest band."

"I thought that was *Spinal Tap*," Sharon commented. She walked past me and took a seat behind the console. "You have entirely too much time on your hands, anyway," Sharon quipped.

Defensively I reacted, "Listen. I don't want to sound like every idiot deejay out there in radio land, posing the same stupid questions to a god. So you guys are Motorhead, huh? So how did you come up with your name? Super! Bob Seger's up next! I'm taking this a little more seriously."

Sharon laughed as she prepared to go on the air.

"I want Lemmy to know that we're not just a bunch of yoyos down here in the south, and that some of us watch *The Young Ones*. Even a few of us know that he banged Samantha Fox."

As I exited the studio, Sharon asked, "Who? The Page Three Girl?"

"That's the rumor," I responded.

She put on her headphones. As I walked down the hall, Sharon shrilled, "Hey, six-thirty!"

I passed Lorna's office on the way out. Lorna was our husky and brooding Music Director who always wore black, as if that would shield her obesity from onlookers. I felt her eyes on me as I passed. I saw Lorna scowl as I quickly glanced into her office. The smell of her clove cigarette had resonated into the hallway. She poked her head out for a moment, like a restless tortoise, and muttered to herself. I hit the exit, down a flight of stairs and stepped out into the student parking lot.

As I approached my car, I reached into the front pocket of my book bag, grabbed my keys, then opened the hatch to my Celica. Campus was bustling with students on bicycles, and in cars looking for parking spaces. The spring semester was about to begin. I deposited the book bag, slammed down the hatch, and noticed a ticket on the windshield. I retrieved it and threw it into the floorboard with the other tickets. I started the engine, and proceeded to drive home.

In case you're wondering, I was Promotions Director at one of the top college radio stations in the country, WUSC-FM, located in the Russell House at the University of South Carolina. I went by the handle of Jack Corn. Some thought it was a reference to Tennessee Williams. I wasn't that much of a literary high brow in those days. "Jack my corn" was actually a phrase that my Wrightsville Beach surfer buddies used affectionately toward one another. If you were an asshole, they would say something like, "Jack my corn, dude."

WUSC-FM had been featured in the *Rolling Stone* college issue the year before, with an interview with our then Program Director, Johnny Fish, along with several others:

WUOG-FM in Athens, Georgia, Emerson University in Boston, and Ohio State. We were the new taste-makers. The industry kept watch on what was going on in college radio, tracked what we were playing, and followed the trends through *College Media Journal* and other trades. It was because of college radio you now have South By Southwest in Austin, TX (SXSW), and similar big media events. It was an exciting time for music, and I was really dug in deep.

As I drove passed two cute coeds, they smiled and waved. I said to myself, "God Bless America," as I examined them in the rear view. Anyway, you see, I loved alternative music. It was one of my passions. There were two things that I loved most: music, and pussy. Now don't take me for a total pig. My attraction to the opposite sex was more like a curse. When I was six, I fell victim to the kindergarten kissing team, and basically was cheated out of my latency period.

Plus, Michael Sr. owned the first topless nightspot on the east coast back in the late sixties, called the "C'est Bon Club" in Charlotte. Take that for what it's worth. I spent New Year's Eve there when I was four because my parents couldn't find a baby sitter. I was sleeping in Dad's office on a chaise lounge, when I awoke to the crowd noise and loud music. I wandered out in my underwear, t-shirt and socks, and remember women in beehives with their hands on me. My father asked me, "Do you want to stay up and see Morganna's show?" I opted to go back to sleep, and Dad rubbed my back until I dozed off. He loved his children.

Over the years, the authorities tried to shut the club down, but since he was an attorney, Pops usually prevailed, until the Alcoholic Beverage Commission finally had enough infractions to revoke the C'est Bon's alcohol permit in 1970. Before the ABC Board had the satisfaction of closing its doors for good, someone mysteriously torched the building.

I remember the night my father lay drunk in foyer of the mansion my parents had just recently bought on Carmel Road that spring. My mom sat at the top of the steps, with me there next to her.

She informed my father, "Mike, the C'est Bon is on fire." My father responded in a low gurgle, "Let it burn."

There was an underlying madness that ran in my family. There often is.

Subsequently, Dad won his Supreme Court case against the ABC the following year that would allow lawful brown bagging and topless dancing. This decision was the precursor to 1973's *Miller vs. California*, which opened the south up to exotic entertainment everywhere. In addition, Dad introduced me to all of my first music: Tom Jones, The Mamas and the Papas, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Three Dog Night, Steppenwolf, and Chuck Berry.

My college digs were right at the bottom of Barnwell and Greene. It wasn't the most beautiful house on campus, always with an empty keg and *Brady Bunch* couch on the front porch. But my place was cheap, centrally located, and close to everything and everyone. I inherited the house when

Cliff graduated in December of 1986. At the time, there was also a guy named Kip living there, and in a sense, I inherited Kip as well.

Throwing the “Gods at 1800 Greene Street” parties was how I first learned to promote. The first one we threw was in October of 1986. Cliff was a tall, good-looking guy from Hilton Head, who’s now Vice President of Pinkerton. Back then, Cliff was also the President of the Young Republicans which incited many a debate between him and me.

One evening Cliff and I were having a discussion in regard to some random female who had blown him off, and he was a little down about it. I suggested, “Let’s have a party.”

“What’s the point?” Cliff bemoaned.

“Fuck that chick, man,” I told him. “If she can’t see your quality, then the problem is with her, and not you! Cliff, you are a god. We are gods. We are ‘The Gods at 1800 Greene Street’ and don’t you ever forget it!”

“I like it, Michael. Let’s do it.” Cliff responded.

I drew up some fliers, printed a hundred or so at Kinko’s, and went around in my car, my bike, or skateboard, putting them up all over campus with the greatest promotional tool ever created: the staple gun. I learned which staple guns were good, which ones sucked, and the best staples to use, and which ones not to.

Kip was like Pig Pen on the *Peanuts*, and rarely washed his clothes. Kip was slightly cross-eyed, with red hair and pale skin. He worked as a bus boy at Yesterday’s in Five Points, and his room always smelled a little funky. He also

had a stack of porno magazines three feet high next to his bed. There was a sweat spot against the wall where he would rest his head, to scrutinize the lovely ladies on his sheet-less, weathered old mattress, while beating it. When I moved in, I brought maybe a handful of various issues of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* with me, for reading material in the can. Eventually, one by one, they all disappeared into Kip’s room. He did leave me one in the bathroom, with the pages all stuck together.

After I transferred the lease to my name, I had a whim to look under Kip’s mattress. Not shockingly, I found several kiddie-porn magazines, so I had to let the potential pederast go. I replaced Kip with Brett and Rob-O, a couple of good ole’ boys from Mullins, South Carolina.

I had been living there for two years, and when I had “The Gods at 1800 Greene Street” parties, all walks of life would come: frat guys, sorority girls, hippies, punks, rastas, jocks, death rockers, geeks, and cheerleaders. Sometimes the crowd got so big, it would stop traffic on Greene Street. The beer was always cold, and the music was always loud.

I ran the parties like a business and I never lost money. We’d tap kegs around 7:00 P.M., and end around 1:00 A.M. or until the cops showed up. I would walk on a sticky floor with a pocket full of greenbacks. Going on twenty-three years old, I loved the college life. It was incomprehensible to me that people could ever say they hated school, and that’s the reason they never went.

College was a unique and enlightening experience. Plus, there was always a multitude of girls, of all shapes and sizes to choose. With close to thirty thousand students, I can promise you I had my pick of the lot. I had my womanizing down to an art form. To give you an example, I was waiting in line to register for classes that semester, and I ended up having sex with the beautiful, big breasted, twenty year-old blonde who just happened to be registering in front of me that afternoon.

I had sex a lot in college, with my youthful good looks, and the stamina of Ron Jeremy. I'm not trying to suck my own dick or anything, as "The Hedgehog" would. That's just the way it was. My popularity went hand in hand with my convenience of living just a rock's throw from campus. Sometimes I would have two or three girls a week over. Sadly, I was graduating in May.

I entered my apartment, turned on the TV, and sat down on the couch. A story was running on CNN. There was a clamor to control artistic license from both sides of the political spectrum. Senators Fritz Hollings of South Carolina and Jesse Helms, of my home state, North Carolina, and distant relative on my mom's side, were incessantly pontificating on all the networks about federal funding and the censorship of art and music.

In 1988, Reagan was a lame duck, although the "legislation of morality" was still on the forefront of the Conservatives' agenda, right up there with Star Wars, and the Communists. James Watt, then Secretary of the Interior,

protested even the likes of the Beach Boys playing at the White House. Several years before, Congress had initiated the "Music Rating System Hearings" at the behest of the "Washington Wives" led by then Senator, Al Gore's wife, Tipper, who spearheaded the Parent Music Resource Center (PMRC).

The PMRC was a watchdog service for concerned mothers, hell bent on rescuing America's children from the gyrating hips of heavy metal, punk, and rap music, specifically targeting the genres. The group even commented on the vulgarity of teen idols such as Tiffany, and Debbie Gibson; the precursors to Brittany and Christina.

The old ladies were concerned with offensive lyrics, and sexual innuendo, considering they weren't getting any, married to a bunch of no-dick politicians. This new age of music video had them targeting MTV as well. They called for a label on releases that contained language unsuitable for children. Unbeknownst to the moms, their attempt at censorship would only leave the kids wanting more. Inadvertently, all the "Washington Wives" really accomplished was making the artists and record companies excessive amounts of money by slapping a "Parental Advisory, Explicit Lyrics" sticker on their shit. Kids sought out the music that was forbade them, as any curious, healthy-minded American teen would.

I continued to watch the piece in disgust. Then I pulled out a few albums from my book bag, and a clipboard, and began taking some notes for my forthcoming interview with Mo-

torhead. The University only paid me eighteen dollars a week but I took pride in my work. I was only taking eight hours that semester, so I had plenty of time to fuck off. Anyway, it wasn't really like work because I enjoyed it. And as a pseudo-professional media journalist, I didn't want to show up, and look like a total jack-ass.

## Lemmy

It was January 3, 1988 at the Charlotte Coliseum. Growing up, I had seen everyone there: Heart, Black Sabbath, Billy Idol, Judas Priest, Van Halen, Robert Plant, Billy Squire, Aerosmith, ZZ Top, and AC/DC. When I was a kid, others my age were going to see Barnum and Bailey. I was going to see KISS. And now, I had all access to this familiar venue, a testament to so many of the cherished memories of my youth. And there was always a police presence outside.

I entered the Charlotte Coliseum through the press gate, with my clipboard and tape recorder. The security guard ushered me to Motorhead's dressing room. After some pleasantries meeting the other band members, the representative from Profile Records sat me down in a small room, with a table and some folding chairs. On the table sat a phone with a rotary dial next to an ashtray filled with cigarette butts. I was a little apprehensive, as I waited.

After a few minutes, Lemmy Kilmister emerged. He was wearing a wife beater, flared black polyester slacks, and white patent leather zip-up ankle boots. He had long brown hair, a mustache and chops, and pronounced moles on his face, resembling one of the Federalis in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

Lemmy, a bit irritated, sat down and rubbed his eyes. He smoked his cigarette, and stared into the ashtray with his palms to his forehead. He spoke with a gravelly British accent, "All right. Let's get this over with."

Nervously, I set up the tape recorder and microphone, produced the pad and paper, and began the interview.

"My name is Jack Corn from WUSC-FM, and this is an interview with Lemmy Kilmister of Motorhead. So, Lemmy, tell me a little bit about your latest, entitled *Rock and Roll*. It sounds like the songs are more about women than they are about rock and roll."

Interestingly, Lemmy gave a laugh, as if he was just called out, "Well, rock and roll is about women, and the songs are about women, so you could probably say that, I suppose."

"You are familiar with the British 'Grebo' movement. This month's *Sounds Magazine* proclaims that you're the 'Godfathers of Grebo.' How do you feel about that?"

Lemmy was indifferent. "We're not the godfathers of anything. We play what we play, and that's it."

At first, I could tell that Lemmy didn't want to be there. He figured that I was just another moron with no grasp of how influential his band was to the Brits.

Motorhead wasn't that well known in the US, like some of the English flavors of the month such as Whitesnake, but among the hipsters in the college radio crowd, bands like Motorhead, Slayer, Anthrax, and Metallica, were at the top of the food chain. Today, these same bands have been glorified more so than the others, and now adorn today's video game soundtracks such as *Rock Band*, and *Guitar Hero*, exposing a whole new generation of listeners to their music.

Lemmy spoke a little about how Motorhead had missed the first wave of metal and punk, and was in tandem between the two. He said that the band wasn't Led Zeppelin, or the Sex Pistols. He likened Motorhead to The Ramones. They had, in a sense, carved their own niche, because of two reasons: one reason was that the music was heavy, but not easily categorized, and the other because none of the band members, Bill Campbell, Wurzel, or "Filthy Animal" Taylor were poncy or attractive, in the same fashion as the other touring gits in their tight knickers.

"What is Grebo?" I asked.

"I dunno, really," Lemmy responded. "It has something to do with motorbikes. Biker metal or something." Lemmy dismissed it as a fad.

"Like maybe The Cult?" I inquired.

"That's more like Bad Company, isn't it?"

I continued. "Zodiac Mindwarp? Gaye Bykers on Acid?"

"Gaye Bykers? A bunch of shit there. Queens aren't they, the lot?"

"Do you dislike homosexuals?"

Matter of factly, Lemmy responded, “I don’t mind faggots, as long as they’re not swishing, screaming faggots.”

A number of years later, there was an internet rumor that Lemmy was indeed gay, but I knew it wasn’t true from his candor in the interview. Later *Out Magazine* had to retract it.

I changed directions a little. “I had read that you believe in reincarnation. What are your thoughts on the subject?” Lemmy examined me for a moment, as if he thought I was clever, and offered me a cigarette. Lemmy placed his hand on the back of my chair, as he responded.

“I believe that I was reincarnated from an SS Officer of the Third Reich.”

He leaned back, and took a draw off of his cigarette. The coal brightened, and as he exhaled, he flicked the smoke into the ashtray, then continued.

“It makes the most sense, you know, reincarnation. I think souls are recycled. If you die a good person, you get upper wrung, and if you’re bad you get backer wrung.”

“I read in the liner notes of *No Remorse* that Motorhead had a reputation as ‘England’s loudest band.’ That’s quite a title to have.”

Lemmy shook his head, and retorted. “No. We were truly England’s loudest band at one point. I’m sure that there have been louder bands since that was printed. There was this one time, we were playing in Detroit...”

I quickly followed with, “At a hundred-twenty decibels, and...?”

“Yeah, in this theatre. The plaster started falling from the

ceiling. Big chunks of it. We were afraid the building was going to come down on top of us.”

After forty-five minutes of interview, I asked my last question. “I read recently, that you had considered having your moles removed. Is that true?”

“No. These are in too deep. I’m getting old. I’m forty-two. I’m no spring chicken.”

Lemmy continued, “I went to a plastic surgeon, and he told me because of my age, if I had them removed, the scar tissue would be worse than the moles, and that was it. I had all my teeth done. They’re not mine. But they don’t come out at night or anything. I’ll admit, I’m no day at the beach, you know.”

We laughed together. We talked back and forth, as if we had known each other for years. I did have one last request. “Before I go, would you be kind enough to give me station identification for our radio station?”

Lemmy grabbed the microphone, and read the call letters from the side of the recorder, and brashly spoke, “Hello, sons of bitches! This is Lemmy from Motorhead and you’re tuned to WUSC-FM. Keep listening or I’ll come around and saw your face off, all right!”

So there it was. Lemmy was as forthright, honest, and as offensive as I had hoped. Needless to say, I was ecstatic. When I left the Coliseum that night, I was as jubilant as a horny Catholic school girl.

## A Watchful Eye

The following Monday, I was sitting at my desk in my bedroom studying and listening to The Smiths, *Meat is Murder*. My roommates were in the other room, taking bong hits and watching *Andy Griffith*. When interviewing potential roommates, I had three rules: One condition was to pay the rent and utilities punctually; the second was if you drink my Michelob Light, don't replace it with a Milwaukee's Best, and lastly, no bongs in the house; only because they get kicked over and stink up the place.

Although Brett and Rob-O agreed to my terms, they religiously tuned in three times a day to WTBS in Atlanta, to watch the hi-jinx of North Carolina's favorite sheriff. And the bong got kicked over weekly. Smelled like rotten tomatoes, and ass.

I was reading Justice Berger's opinion on *Miller vs. Cal-*

*ifornia*, as Morrissey's crooning soothed me. "Sex, a great and mysterious motive force in human life, that has indisputably been a subject of absorbing interest to mankind through the ages, must be accorded a high level of constitutional protection."

There was a knock on the front door. I passed the two stoners enthralled in Opie's exploits, paying no heed to the repeated raps, and stepped into the hallway to answer the door. When I opened it, Sharon stood there holding a piece of paper in her hand. She was staring at the words "The Gods at 1800 Greene Street," in black letters stenciled across the white painted door.

"So, what do I owe this dubious pleasure?"

Sharon was hesitant and nervous as she spoke. "I've got some bad news."

Bracing myself I asked, "All right. What did I do this time?"

"Lorna was listening to your show on Sunday, and she says you said, 'goddamn' on the air. She called Juliet. They called me, and then they rounded up everyone for an immediate Director's meeting. I'm sorry Michael, but you're suspended for a week."

Sharon handed me the notice. As I read the letter, Sharon gazed at her shoes, with her arms crossed, almost embarrassed.

The University of South Carolina accepted me as a student in 1983. At the time my older brother George, was attending UNC Charlotte. I never thought of us being in com-

petition, but upon my acceptance to USC, my brother insisted on transferring there for his senior year, obviously to prove he could get into Carolina as well.

After my freshman year and George's graduation, Dad was complaining about paying out-of-state tuition for me, so I transferred to UNC-W the following fall. After driving four hours to Wilmington, I called back home to tell Mom, I arrived in one piece. When I asked where George was, my mother responded, "Oh, he's in Columbia registering for classes."

In the fall of 1986 after two years, I transferred back to Carolina, as I felt cheated out of my alma mater by some sibling skullduggery. But while I was in Wilmington, I was involved in the fledgling college radio station, WLOZ-FM, so when I transferred back to Carolina, I already had my FCC license and knew my way around a control room.

Sometimes I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere. I was always a little different. I did love David Bowie, though I wasn't gay. I was voted "most unique" of my senior class in high school maybe because I wasn't easily categorized into a sub-group. People like me were the blunt beginning of the GenXers. We had no heroes. At my high school, our Homecoming Queen dropped out, and Mr. East Mecklenburg was one. A queen, I mean.

My dad went to Law School at the University of North Carolina, so I was from an educated family. Maybe that's why I was argumentative and rarely lost a debate. That created some dissension. I was kind of artsy, but not primarily.

I was athletic, well-rounded, intelligent, vocal, and likable, or at least I thought. The attributes that I perceived as virtuous stuck in the craw of others.

Some of the deejays, namely Lorna and Juliet, thought of me as an outsider. They didn't like me around, especially Lorna. She saw me as a threat to her control of the universe. Lorna kept a watchful eye on me, insistently.

Since I transcended the typical label, it always seemed like someone was fucking with me. That's why I had to stand up for myself and appear to be confident. Maybe that's just the way life is. Either you liked me, or you hated me. And believe me, Lorna hated me for no apparent reason really. Maybe, I was too free spirited for her taste; and I didn't fit neatly into her mold of oddities.

Lorna and the others would often commiserate amongst themselves, like witches peering over a cauldron of defiance and absurdity, conjuring and plotting against their adversaries, as if college radio was *Macbeth*. They were Wicca types. I always kept a close tab on my hairbrush.

"As you have violated FCC regulations by using inappropriate language on the air Sunday, January 9, 1988 at 3:45 P.M., you are hereby suspended for one week."

I objected. "I didn't say 'goddamn.' I didn't say it." Sharon defended the decision.

"Lorna says that she heard you clear as day."

"What's her problem?" I posed. "She's worse than the fucking Gestapo. You know it's because of her, that Mark Bryan quit. She wouldn't let him play Hootie on the radio.

How, fucked up is that? That's his band, for Christ sakes. What kind of police state has this turned into?"

I stood there for a moment, and pondered. Then I remembered.

"Wait a second. I've got that show on tape! Come with me."

Sharon followed me into my bedroom. I unzipped the front pocket of my book bag, and produced a tape with the date written on it, 1/9/88, and handed it to her. Sharon raised an eyebrow.

"You taped the show?"

"I always tape my shows. I'm a narcissist."

Sharon joked, "That's a polite word for what you are."

"Oh, come on Sharon. You tape your shows. How are we going to improve if we don't learn from our mistakes? Besides, I'm not the neo-fascist here."

Sharon remarked, "Fine then. Let's hear it."

I popped in the cassette. It was evident that I had not said "goddamn," but "God, man."

After listening several times to the recording, Sharon decided, "Well, I'm afraid you'll have to bite the bullet on this one."

"Why? There's the proof!"

"Because it'll make them feel better," she said.

I was confused. "Who"?

Sharon crossed her arms, and leered at me. "Who do you think?"

I was livid. "Fuck them! I'm not in this life to make them

'feel better.' You can go ahead and let them boss you around, but I won't allow the 'fat chicks in black' to bully me, like they do everyone else at that radio station!"

Sharon was making excuses for them. "Well, they're concerned about the FCC. You know how things are these days."

"Don't kid yourself, Sharon," I disagreed. "That's not what this is about. Lorna and the others are a bunch of introverted, elitist control freaks, and the last thing on their minds is the FCC."

Sternly Sharon asked, "Then what's this about, Michael?"

I argued, "This is about Lorna using what little executive power she has to get rid of people who don't look like carnies. Lorna typifies a 'face for radio'."

Sharon snickered.

I continued, "Think about it. Every semester we train students who are eager to be a part of college radio, and every semester, Lorna and her circle of cronies treat the trainees who may have a modicum of attractiveness, or normalcy like shit until they quit."

Sharon giggled again, but tried to keep a straight face. "Well, look at it from Lorna's perspective. I think she's resentful towards you because you came on the scene like a wrecking ball, and all the other jocks liked you."

"So? Get over it. Anyway, that's why they nominated me for Promotions Director. Because the other jocks felt emasculated by Lorna, they knew she couldn't control me, and I'd stand up for them. Come on Sharon, admit it, they even boss you around and you're the fucking Program

Director! This nonsensical game of politics you play with them is total bull shit.”

There was silence.

“Well, I don’t get it either. You work as hard as anyone else at the station. Maybe the problem is that it was easy for you and it wasn’t supposed to be. Lorna and the others resent you for that.”

“Well, fuck them,” I said. “Tell them to get some anger management. Counseling. EST, or some shit. There are programs.”

Sharon tried to analyze the situation. “Lorna’s like Nurse Ratchet in *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. Lorna wants to maintain the status quo, and she certainly doesn’t want any newcomers creating dissension amongst the ranks. You’re like Jack Nicholson’s character who challenges her authority.”

I was puzzled at her comment.

Sharon shrugged, and said, “I took film appreciation last semester.”

I joked, “But doesn’t McMurphy strangle Nurse Ratchet in the end?”

We both laughed.

“Anyway, I’m not a newcomer. I’ve been there for two years and I hate bullies. Always have.”

Sharon was in thought for a moment. “All right, listen. I’ll make a deal with you. Take the week off, and this Thursday, I want you to drive to Charlotte, and interview Dave Mustaine of Megadeth.”

I was a little surprised. “Huh?”

“I need someone to interview Megadeth, and I want you to drive to Charlotte on Thursday. You can edit the tape, and play it next Monday night on Massive Metal. Cal Young needs a replacement, and you’ve filled in for him before.” I scratched my head. “Nobody said that you can’t use the production room, so in all practicality you really only miss a day. Deal?”

Sharon, thinking she had a compromise, stood there waiting for my answer.

I went over to shut the door to my room, while my roommates continued to watch TV, and munched on big bag of Doritos. After shutting the door, I sauntered up to Sharon and stood really close to her. Sharon was blonde, cute, and much shorter than I. She was surprised, and a little doe-eyed, as she bit down slightly on her lower lip in anticipation. I put my hands on her hips and pulled her close. As I leaned down to kiss her, I smugly said, “Deal.”

## Barbie

On January 14, 1988, I drove up to Charlotte to interview Megadeth. I got my pass and entered, once again through the press gate. Metal heads abounded, whooping and hollering. I was ushered through security and escorted backstage to the dressing room area.

Sharon arranged through Capitol Records, an interview with Dave Mustaine, the legendary ax-man, and founder of the group. They were touring with Dio to support their follow-up to *Peace Sells But Who's Buying*. After all, my college radio station was the only airplay Mustaine got within a hundred miles, so I drove back up to my hometown to interview Megadeth at the Coliseum. I was late.

I spoke with Dave Ellepson, the bass player, momentarily and then entered the shower and bathroom facility directly behind the stage. The room was long and rectangular, with the feel of a Kubrick film, with the slight smell of

pee and sanitizer.

I called out for Mustaine. "Dave?"

"Be with you in a minute," he answered from one of the stalls. Mustaine flushed the toilet, and exited the loo.

Mustaine was a little over six feet, with long red hair, freckles, skintight jeans, muscle tee, and white leather high-tops. He had a boyish bounce, in a McCauley Culkin kind of way, if Culkin had been brought up working on El Caminos and GTOs. As I fumbled for my recorder, I asked, "I know I'm late, but do you still have time for the interview?"

Mustaine responded, "Nah, we're about to go on, man." He primed in the mirror for a moment, flipped his hair about, and looked at his G-Shock. He had time for a quick station I.D.

Afterward he said, "We'll be done with the set in about an hour. We're gonna blow Dio of the fuckin' stage, man! Why don't you meet me at the hotel bar across the street? We'll have a beer and talk. Is that cool, man?"

I nodded in agreement.

Minutes later, I went into the Coliseum and watched their set. Mustaine was an amazing guitarist. Afterward, as I was exiting the back stage area, I spotted Ronnie James Dio about to go on stage. Dio wore a frilly white blouse, black spandex pants, and what appeared to be women's high-heeled boots. He resembled Tiny Tim, up close. I threw horns and stuck my tongue out, as Dio passed. He smiled and gave me a "thumbs up."

I didn't hang around for Ronnie James, but I probably

should have. I had seen him a number of times with Sabbath in the *Heaven and Hell*, and *Mob Rules* era. I was more pre-occupied with my forthcoming interview with Mustaine. I walked across the street to the Holiday Inn after Megadeth's set, and grabbed a seat at the bar.

Roughly an hour or so passed, and Mustaine had not shown. I was a little pissed, but I tried to make the most of it. As the bar slowly filled up with rockers, I started interviewing fans. There was a short, drunk redneck with bad teeth that kept bumping into me, as I recorded the house full of metal heads.

As I continued my random interviews, this drunken redneck took a swing at me and hit me in the ear. The tape recorder and microphone fell to the floor.

Holding my ear, I turned around and yelled, "What the fuck did you do that for?"

The unidentified redneck looked surprised, as if he wasn't the culprit, or possibly he had forgotten as soon as he threw the punch. The other folks in the crowd all pointed at him.

I threw him down and started to beat his head on the floor. As I drew up his shirt around his chin tightly, he gasped for air, and exclaimed very much like *Donald Duck*, "You're choking me! You're choking me! You're choking me!"

All the while, a hot blonde chick with big tits was standing close by watching, as if the fight was turning her on. A security guard broke up the fight, and gave the redneck the bum's rush, opening the door with his head. Chairs and tables were put back in place.

I picked up the tape recorder off the floor, noticed that it was still running, and took a seat at the bar. Then the sultry blonde approached me.

Dizzily she inquired, "Aren't you that guy from the radio station?"

"Yeah, matter of fact, I am. I'm Michael."

We shook hands. She had a total porn star look, with long fingers and black nail polish.

"Hi. I'm Barbie."

Barbie was a bombshell, with big hair, black t-shirt, tight jeans, and black stiletto heels.

"I overheard you say that you were waiting on Dave Mustaine."

"I was supposed to meet Mustaine down here for an interview about an hour ago, but he hasn't shown up yet."

"I'm going up to his room in a minute," Barbie replied, "Do you want me tell Dave that you've been down here waiting on him?"

I was a little distracted, as I listened to the tape, "Oh, yeah. Would you?"

Barbie flirted, "Of course, I will. See you in a few." She then winked at me and proceeded up to Mustaine's room.

So there I was, waiting on this prick, having to fend off the natives, and Mustaine was partying up in his hotel room. I was really pissed off by this time, and my ear throbbed with pain. There was still no sign of Mustaine. Then about twenty minutes later, the phone behind the bar rang.

The bartender answered, and then asked me, "Are you

Mike from the radio station?”

I nodded.

The bartender handed me the phone. “It’s Dave Mustaine.”

“Hello?” Mustaine excitedly spoke, “Heard you got in a scuffle down at the bar, man. I feel bad. I fuckin’ forgot about you, but I heard you kicked that guy’s ass pretty good, man!”

“Yeah,” I said. “I even got it on tape.”

“That’s awesome! I can’t wait to hear it. Come up to our hotel room, and have a Heineken with me. We’re in 217.”

Cool. A bar fight, and now I’m hanging out and partying with rock stars. Too bad this hotel was a total dump. As I walked up a flight of stairs and past the Pepsi machine, I could hear Mustaine’s raised voice from yards away as I approached his room. I stood outside for a few seconds and knocked. Finally, Mustaine answered the door with a grin and welcomes me with a Heineken.

“Come on in King Kong! Ha-ha! You beat the shit out of that guy and you got it on tape? How fucking rare is that, man?”

Obviously, this was years before Rodney King and hand held video was an every day occurrence. I played the tape for Mustaine and he laughed heartily, especially when I choked him. I didn’t really mean to choke the guy. It just happened that way.

Dave laughed out loud. “That’s classic, man! Fucking classic!”

Mustaine spoke about when he played with Metallica, his new album, and a lot about the band’s clothes on stage, which

he didn’t seem to think were cheesy; a shtick he obviously lifted from James Hetfield, from the *Kill ’Em All* days.

“See man, when we go out on stage, we don’t wear fucking spandex. We wear our jeans and high tops when we rock. These are our street clothes. Fuck those posers and their spandex, man.”

While I sat on the hotel bed, I had an obvious view of Mustaine’s cock bulge, due to the tightness of his jeans, as he continued his animated opinion of spandex. I thought it was a bit ironic. Come to think of it, they all had “armadillos in their trousers.” Mustaine was a trip. He had a lot of energy. His nose was a bit irritated around the nostrils.

There were a couple of crew guys there, Dave Mustaine, Barbie, her friend, and me. We were all standing around a table.

Mustaine asked me, “Are you cool, man?”

I didn’t know what I was supposed to be cool about so I just answered, “Yeah, I guess.”

He then turned to the females and asked, “You girls wanna do some coke, man?”

The girls’ eyes lit up and they gleefully nodded in the affirmative. Mustaine paused, and then stuck his hand out with his palm up.

“All right. Gimme ten bucks each.”

I bit a hole in my lip.

The chicks didn’t take Mustaine seriously at first. Once they realized he was, they both went into their purses, and proceeded to dig out a few crumpled dollar bills and some

change. Shortly thereafter, more people entered the room. Mustaine, preoccupied, turned on a boom box playing his tunes, and entertained the other party guests. Barbie snuck over and grabbed me by the hand, and led me out of the hotel room.

Outside the hotel room door, she pulled me close and kissed me.

“Do you mind giving me a ride home? I don’t live very far from here.”

“Sure,” I replied, a little caught off guard. “What about Dave?”

Barbie replied, “He’s too busy with those other people, and he talks too much anyway.”

Barbie and I got into the car, and I put my beer between my legs. Barbie was all over me. I was covered in lipstick by the time we arrived at her place. As I parked the car in front of her apartment, she began to kiss me again as I shut the engine off.

“Do you want to come in and meet my husband?” She asked me, batting her eyes.

I spit out my beer all over the dashboard.

“What?”

“I’m married to B.A. Selleck,” Barbie informed me. “He’s the TV Tag Team Champion. I thought I told you already?”

Then it all began to make sense to me. That’s why she was turned on during the brawl. She was married to a fucking wrestler.

I imagined what our meeting would be like. Barbie would

first introduce me to B.A. Selleck. Selleck and I would shake hands, and then I notice that he is wearing his wrestling attire: White leather wrestling boots with tassels, and white tights with a “B” on one ass cheek, and an “A” on the other. Selleck would then lift me up over his head, and body-slam me through the coffee table to Barbie’s delight.

“No,” I said. “I’m afraid you left that little detail out of the equation. I’m sure B.A. Selleck, your husband, the TV Tag Team Champion of the world, is a great guy, but I must regretfully decline.”

Barbie looked cross-eyed.

“What does that mean?”

“I’m not coming in.”

Barbie then started kissing my neck and rubbing my crotch. I leaned back in my car seat, enjoying her advances for the moment, as she put my hand on her breast. They were silicone.

“We’re swingers,” she whispered in my ear as she purred.

I then imagined sitting in bed between Barbie and B.A. Selleck. We are all underneath the covers, and the three of us are topless. I’m uncomfortable, like an “A” cup, sandwiched between two “Double D’s.” Slick Rick, Selleck’s tag team partner, enters the room wearing his wrestling outfit and a blue feather boa, ready for a gang bang, with me as the pivot man. Then Rick, drops his drawers and bellows, “Whoooooooooooo!”

As I pushed her away, I shook my head. “Oh. That’s even better.”

Barbie replied, “Really?”

“No. Not really.”

“My husband’s very nice,” Barbie pouted. “What? You don’t think I’m pretty?”

“Honestly, I think you’re gorgeous, Barbie. This just really isn’t my thing. I’ve had about all the fun I can take for one night.”

Seductively, she pushed up her boobs and asked me, “Are you sure?”

I smiled and said, “I’m sure. Good night, beautiful.”

Barbie kissed me on the cheek, and got out of the car. She turned, looked over her shoulder and waived goodbye, rummaged through her purse for the keys and unlocked the door. As the apartment door shut behind her, I couldn’t help but say to myself as I drove away, “My life is so fucking weird.”

## Production Room

The following afternoon, I was in the production room at the station carting up the station identifications I had gotten on tape from Mustaine. The audio playback was “This is Dave Mustaine of Megadeth and you’re listening to WUSC-FM. *So Far. So Good. So What!*”

As I was editing the tape on reel-to-reel, Lorna charged into the production room. She was furious.

“You are not supposed to be in here! You are suspended for a week! Oh, boy! I’m gonna make sure you fry for this one!”

“What are you talking about?” I responded. “It says nothing in the reprimand about using the facilities. It only refers to ‘on air privileges.’ You see? It’s written right there.”

I handed the reprimand to Lorna, and she snatched it from my hand and began to read it. Lorna’s face turned crimson red.

I asked politely, “What have I ever done to you, anyway? I mean, why are you on my ass all the time?”

She growled, “Because I don’t like you! I’ve known people like you all of my life. You’re cruel and insensitive, just like the rest of them. You’re always snickering and laughing behind people’s backs. You think you can come in here like you own the place and take over, just like that. Well, it’s not going to happen. Not on my watch. I’ve got my eye on you, buddy!” She frisbeed the paper back at me, and stormed out.

I remember going back to my apartment that night, sitting on the couch alone watching, *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest* on VHS. I had a big bowl of popcorn and the lights out. My roommate Brett had just come home from a couple of hours playing basketball. He turned on the light, right as Jack Nicholson was strangling Louise Fletcher.

“What are you doing?”

“Shush!” I responded. “Turn the light back off! This is the best part!” I rewound the scene and played it again, saying to myself, “If life were only like this.”

As in any organization, our college radio station had its politics. The state of South Carolina’s was another story entirely. There was a lot of shit going on. The right-wingers and the left-wingers were embattled over the Confederate flag flying at the South Carolina State Capitol. And, as I had mentioned before, the United States Congress was attempting to censor music from both sides of the aisle, if it was “subversive,” or contained “sexually explicit content.” They were

also proposing to discontinue federal funding for the arts due to a few scandalous galleries.

“You might ask shockingly, a flag, what’s that? A stick with a rag on it? No sir, a flag is much more. With a flag, you lead men. For a flag, men live and die. In fact, it is the only thing for which they are ready to die in masses, if you train them for it,” the professor projected out into the auditorium, as students furiously took notes.

“Believe me, the politics of an entire people can be manipulated through the imponderables that float in the air. That is a quote from Theodore Herzl.”

Jesse Jackson won South Carolina that year as the Democratic nominee, over front-runner Michael Dukakis. Jackson had many protests at the South Carolina State Capitol Building, where the flag was affixed at the dome, as Klan and Neo-Nazi members protested him. Further, two pieces of art irritated many a southern politician: one being Robert Mapplethorpe’s *Self Portrait* in his S&M outfit with a bull whip shoved up his rectum, and the other was called *Piss Christ*, a controversial art piece, where an artist had submersed a crucifix in a glass jar of his own urine.

Both pieces hung in federally-funded art galleries. These two depictions single-handedly brought down federal funding for almost everything artistic sanctioned by the government, right down to music programs in public schools. And there I was watching the Flaming Lips perform “Jesus Shooting Heroin” with Hayne, John Pierre, and “Woe Is Me” Dave, at Rockafella’s. The political climate at the time made me feel

compelled to do my part in supporting live theatre.

I had seen a number of shows in Columbia and elsewhere in the Carolinas over the years: Soul Asylum, Meat Puppets, Screaming Trees, The Clash, Duran Duran, The Cult, Fishbone, Drivin' and Cryin,' Del Lords, Dead Milkmen, Faith No More, Flesh Eaters, Translator, R.E.M., Camper Van Beethoven, Mojo Nixon, The dB's, 10,000 Maniacs, B-52's, Mike Watt and Firehose, Tommy Keene, Let's Active, Swimming Pool Cues, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Love Tractor, The Bodeans, Jason and the Scorchers, The Smithereens, Beastie Boys, Guadalcanal Diary, X, The Del Fuegos, Black Flag and The Replacements, just to name a few. I interviewed a lot of them.

In March of 1987, I went to pick up Colin Abrahall, the lead singer of the English hardcore punk band, G.B.H. (Grievous Bodily Harm), from the Government House, a fleabag hotel in Columbia. G.B.H. was playing Rockafella's that evening for an early all-ages show, in town promoting their latest entitled, *No Need to Panic*.

I pulled up in the hotel parking lot to find Abrahall, a punk rocker with spiked blond hair standing there waiting for me. Colin climbed into the car, wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket, tank top, black jeans, wallet chain, Doc Martins, and Wayfarers.

"How you doin', Mike?" he asked politely.

"Great, Colin, and you?" I then rolled down the car windows, as it was a pleasant day.

Lethargically, Colin turned to the window, and began to roll it up and down, momentarily glancing back at me, and then again at the window.

After about a minute of this behavior, Colin spoke. "Wow." Then he continued to roll the window up and down.

"Am I missing something?" I asked.

Colin pressed the button for a few more moments, and then looked back at me. His amusing response was simply, "Power windows."

I agreed. "Yes. Power windows."

Colin slouched down in the seat, and smiled.

I thought to myself, "What little it takes to amuse the mindless." Power windows were obviously not a luxury that he was accustomed.

He told me two interesting facts about himself during the interview: one was that his biggest influence was Iggy Pop, and the other was, "I got hepatitis from dirty living."

I caught Sharon staring at me through the glass of the control room as I conducted the interview. I knew that look. I had seen it before, but only behind the closed doors of my bedroom. She then turned away, embarrassed.

Rockafella's used to be run by Steve Gibson, and Eddie Blakely, recently deceased. The club always struggled in the early days. I saw Soul Asylum there with seventeen people. Sometimes there weren't enough folks to support the underground in those years, and when there was, they all couldn't pay cover no matter how cheap it was.

The room was long and rectangular; similar to that toilet

where I met Dave Mustaine. Rock's had a bar running down the right side, a stage on the other end, and a brick tile floor. I was always there. Either there or at Group Therapy, another shit hole I frequented, that is still a fixture in Five Points to this day.

My boys, Hayne and John Pierre were insane. They were a couple of thrill seekers from the Mountaineering Club with one foot in their graves. When we first met, they were on their way to the top of Bates Tower to throw pizza boxes off the roof, during a Category 2 hurricane.

John Pierre was an Australian who looked like a cross between Pete Townsend and Mel Gibson. With Gibson's hair, and Townsend's nose and wild blue eyes, he was tall and vascular with a surfer's build. Hayne, on the other hand, was a boyish stoner, about 5' 9", with white blond hair, and blue eyes. Hayne had broken his neck cliff diving while drunk, and was fastened to a halo for a few months.

"Woe Is Me" Dave lived across the street from me. He was handsome and all the chicks were in love with him, but Dave had his head way up this one chick's ass. Her name was Shannon. She was a hottie, but she wasn't that hot.

During the show, John yelled over the music. "I love the Flaming Lips. I saw them open for Black Flag last summer."

Dave had been sulking the entire night.

I asked John, "What's wrong with Dave?"

"Shannon got back with her ex-boyfriend. He's been like that for days."

"Again? The frat guy? Dave, you are such a pussy."

John was giving Dave a little abuse.

"He's in love with that girl, mate. He wants to get married."

Dave responded, "Fuck you, John."

Then John turned to me, "I heard that interview you did with Motorhead the other night. Splendid job."

I thanked him. "What happened to Hayne?"

"He broke his neck cliff diving over Christmas break in Hawaii."

I asked Hayne if it hurt. Hayne replied, "Yeah. This thing's a real pain in the neck. Buh bum chi! I have to wear it another two months."

I pretended to grab him by the frame.

"Don't even kid around, man!"

"This total asshole grabbed me on New Years Eve. I was fresh out of the hospital. He thought I was dressed as *Frankenstein*. I said, 'Why would I dress like *Frankenstein* at a New Years Eve party, you jerk off?!' I do feel a little like Boris Karloff. I'm certainly not getting laid any time soon with this thing riveted into my head."

Hayne and I laughed.

"Well, you got to heal up before Spring Break, mate. We're gonna go swimming with Great White Sharks in South Africa, and hang out with Winnie Mandela."

An odd factoid is, the last I heard, Pierre was shooting underwater photography in Australia, for *National Geographic*.

"Look at all these fucking posers. There are no hot girls here. It's just a bunch of fat chicks. Let's get out of here,"

Dave said with an eagerness to bolt.

Then John suggested we go to a party at Barefoot Harry's. We all spilled out of the side door of the bar, laughing and drinking beer as we walked over the gravel parking lot.

John said, "And that's why I'm never doing acid again."

We proceeded to the party, which was several blocks over. As we approached the gathering, a car engulfed in flames, coasted down the hill and into the side of Harry's house. We all looked on in amazement as they put out the blazing vehicle with an extinguisher. The crowd cheered.

Pierre then exclaimed, "I want some of what these guys are on, mate!"

Hayne replied, "No fucking shit!"

## Poser

Living at the intersection of Barnwell and Greene had many advantages. I was close to most all my classes and the radio station. People constantly passed the house as they came back and forth from campus to Five Points. I had a great bunch of neighbors. "Woe Is Me" Dave, and Matt lived across the street. Debbie and C.J. lived next door in the old Georgian. Julie, a girlfriend of mine, lived down the street. She eventually moved into "The Gods at 1800 Greene Street" mid-semester because I had an empty room. She needed somewhere to go after a huge cat fight with her roommate, which left a scar on her cheek. Her friend Matthew was another local that hung around a lot.

One girlfriend, Sloan, a Chi Omega, and one of my bang buddies, lived at the top of the hill, across from Capstone. Another girlfriend of mine, Sue, used to ride her Radio Flyer-type bicycle over, and circle in front of my house,

singing the Wicked Witch's tune from *Wizard of Oz*. Randy, an SAE, and Chris lived two doors down. We were all huge party monsters, and everyone was friendly.

Two of my classes were in Gambrell Hall, just at the top of Barnwell. I would walk to class, and every day that semester like clockwork, this really hot Asian chick would be walking home from class at the same time. Sometimes I would see her coming from up Greene Street as I was coming down the hill. I would rush home to watch her walk past, but would try to do so unnoticed.

I remember one day I was attending a guest lecture on Nietzsche. The lecturer said that Nietzsche believed that recent developments in modern science and the increasing secularization of European society had effectively "killed" the Christian God, which was the basis for meaning and value in the West for the previous thousand years.

Nietzsche claimed the "death of God" would eventually lead to the loss of any universal perspective on things, and along with it any coherent sense of objective truth.

In Nietzsche's *Will to Power*, he points out that all humans are driven by a primordial will to live, thus resulting in all creatures' desire to avoid death and to procreate. Nietzsche suggests that people and animals really want power. In defense of his view, Nietzsche appeals to many instances in which people and animals willingly risk their lives in order to promote their power, most notably in competitive fighting and warfare for want of power, glory, and greatness.

When I walked home from class that day, I came across a small Jack Russell Terrier puppy with no collar covered in red clay mud standing on the sidewalk in front of my house. I thought to myself, even if God was dead, I still had a weakness for the more helpless and innocent things in life. The puppy looked up at me lost, sad, and hungry. I took the puppy inside to give her a bath. The puppy was sweet and affectionate. After towel drying her, I decided, "I'm going to name you Poser. Poser the puppy!"

Holding her up, as if offering her to the gods, I dried her little bottom, took her into the kitchen and fed her a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I didn't have any dog food, so that was the best I could do.

I remember shortly thereafter watching MTV. Jello Biafra, of the Dead Kennedys, was interviewed after his case dismissal for distributing pornographic material inside the cover of the album, *FrankenChrist*. H.R. Giger, the science fiction surrealist, had painted the art piece. Giger was more famously known for his art direction on the *Alien* films.

Biafra ranted, "Tipper Gore and the PMRC are operating as a front for the likes of Jesse Helms, and Phyllis Schlafly in order to drive their arch conservative wedge into the mainstream."

He claimed there was no justice in America when musicians are targeted by law enforcement in violation of their constitutional rights. According to Biafra, it was the new McCarthy Era.

That night, Poser slept with me underneath the covers.

It was some time in March when I was sitting on my front porch with Poser, waiting for the Asian girl to walk past. Then she appeared, like she did every other day. She had long dark hair, tanned skin, a slender and statuesque physique, big pouty lips, and green eyes. As she traversed the path across the street, she looked up, smiled, and waved at me. I picked up Poser under my arm, and ran across the street to introduce myself. Her name was Lisa. She was a Vietnamese exchange student majoring in French. It must have been the puppy that closed it.

I really don't remember what had transpired from the time Lisa and I first spoke, to the time we were having sex. I do remember lying on Lisa's bed, smoking a cigarette after our tryst. Lisa was standing nude, admiring her body in the mirror that hung on her closet door. She was drenched with sweat. Columbia was always hot with no respite, even in springtime.

Lisa wiped the sweat all over her body. I was vexed. Then she turned to admire her backside in the mirror.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

Lisa replied, "I'm looking at myself."

I was curious. "Why?"

Then she stated confidently, "Because I like the way I look."

She continued to run her hands all over her body, caressing her breast, and looking over her shoulder at me. She was mesmerizing.

I pleaded, "Why don't you come over here?"

Lisa turned back toward me, walking on the balls of her feet across the hardwood floor, and climbed back onto her brass-framed bed. I pulled her close on top of me. Her lips were as luscious as a pomegranate, and sweeter still, as we kissed. As I walked home that evening, I was euphoric. I thought to myself, nowhere else but college does this sort of thing happen. It was almost surreal. Those were crazy times indeed. In the face of AIDS, the college seemed to be immune from its menace.

It was the end of March and everyone was broke, or had gone back home to do laundry. That Friday around dusk, Randy and I scraped up enough between us for a six-pack at the Circle K. I sat in my car as Randy went into the store on Devine Street, next to the Subway. I noticed a girl approaching out of the corner of my eye.

As I sat in my Celica, I examined her. She was an attractive blonde, around nineteen or twenty, wearing what appeared to be a hunter green formal dress with the lace ripped at the bottom, and white scuffed-up pumps. As Randy got back in the car, she approached us, a trifle inebriated and off-balance. I thought it odd for her to be parading around Five Points in that particular outfit.

The girl leaned down into the car window and said, "You guys are cute. I want to come with y'all."

"What are you dressed for?" I asked.

"Oh," she replied, "I just started working for an escort service."

Both of our jaws dropped, especially due to the fact we were broke.

“Don’t you think that’s a little risky these days?” I posed.

She reached into her purse, and pulled out a handful of condoms. “The woman I work for gives us lots of these. She says we have to practice safe sex to get return business.”

“How many times have you done it?” Randy inquired.

“This was my third date. He was this weird old guy who wanted me to go to some school function with him. I was bored, so I just left.”

“Well, if you’re expecting us to have any money, you approached the wrong two guys,” I said.

Randy and I laughed.

“Oh, I wouldn’t charge you anything. Y’all are good looking.”

Hesitantly, I said, “Okay. Get in.”

The following Tuesday, Randy came into my house excitedly, with *The State* newspaper in his hand. “Mike, you’ve got to read this. It’s so fucking weird!”

He handed me the paper. In the local section, the headline read, “Co-ed Prostitute Ring Busted on Campus, Parents Commit Daughter.”

Randy then informed me, “She just lived up the street at Columbia Tower.”

## Hootie

Darius Rucker, the lead singer of Hootie and the Blowfish, and now a platinum country star, used to work as a bartender down on Greene Street. The place was right across the railroad tracks at the mouth of Five Points, a joint called “Stickeys.” In Darius’ absence, Mark Bryan, Dean Felber, and Hootie’s old drummer, Brantley Smith, and I would buy a keg and occasionally jam at my house. Mark Bryan and I had become fast friends when we met at WUSC-FM in 1986. We were both just regular, girl-chasing college guys who loved football and alternative music.

Back then, before the age of personal computers, and even though it was a university atmosphere, everyone had to fit neatly into a category. Neither of us did. I guess that’s why we represented a threat to the college radio strange-o’s. The more normal and extroverted you were, the less Lorna and the others liked you. Mark had sort of been run out of WUSC for

a short time, due to their idiotic, self-imposed regulations; yet another casualty of the “fat chicks in black.”

Lorna kept reprimanding Mark for playing Hootie and the Blowfish on the radio. She thought it was inappropriate to play their music since they were primarily a cover band, although she gladly afforded Chuck Walker the opportunity to play his band, Bedlam Hour, at his leisure. But Mark only played Hootie’s poorly produced early originals. When he played songs like “Calendar Girl,” and “I’m After You,” it would drive Lorna up the wall. Lorna then assigned Mark some shitty 3:00 to 6:00 A.M. slot, and he said fuck it. Finally, Mark got fed up with the bull shit and quit for a while, only filling in occasionally that semester.

What I think was interesting was that Lorna’s tyrant-like posturing inadvertently encouraged Mark and Darius to write some solid originals so the band would achieve college radio airplay, although it was the natural progression. Little did Lorna know that Columbia, South Carolina would name a street after the band, and Hootie would have one of the biggest selling releases ever, to the tune of sixteen million units.

Years later when Hootie hit it big in the 90’s, Lorna was working for *College Media Journal*, and contacted Mark while they were recording their follow up to *Cracked Rear View* in San Francisco. Lorna was singing the band’s praises, and claiming her support over the years. She was just a total creep.

The jocks had to deal with this tyranny constantly at

WUSC. We were even forbidden to play songs with any colorful language. *Family Guy* would have had us all executed. Behind the control panel were three record bins for light, medium, and heavy airplay; all the albums and compact discs had a review and log taped to each cover sleeve. We weren’t allowed to play any release that had been played in the last three hours, period. Even if an edit was getting airplay elsewhere, sometimes we couldn’t play it, and the song was marked through with the words “Do Not Play” inscribed on the cover.

Since I was Promotions Director, it was my duty to put together *The WUSC-FM Program Guide* for February. Lorna raised the issue of content, and what would go on the cover of the spring edition. I had already transcribed the entire Motorhead interview, which took me three days, and I planned a radio special with Lemmy et al, for the cover. Lorna and Juliet insisted that Robyn Hitchcock and the Egyptians should don the face of the guide. Lorna had just taped a fifteen minute phone conversation interview with Hitchcock, exclaiming that her interview was more important than mine, obviously because she had conducted it.

My argument was that Motorhead would withstand the test of time, as Robin Hitchcock would be residing in a “Where are they now?” file in a year or so following. The “fat chicks in black” were so-called “purists” who believed WUSC-FM should only reflect “alternative” music, and not the other genres. So Lorna insisted we put it to a vote. Luckily for me it was a landslide, with Motorhead as the victors. At the time,

all my people were involved at the station. I felt unstoppable in the face of adversity. Twenty years later, Motorhead's song "Ace of Spades" was recently featured on an AT&T commercial in 2008. Robin Hitchcock? I have no idea.

As the semester came to a close, I figured it was time to have the last "Gods at 1800 Greene Street" party, to go out with a bang. But after the semester was over, what was I going to do then? I was living the life. I didn't want to leave college and grow up. So Sharon suggested that I call Art Boerke, Program Director over at K-95 Rock, to see if he had any deejay openings. The job wouldn't pay much, but it would give me an excuse not to go home.

Art was a legend around WUSC, as the Program Director before I got there, so I called big Art. Art was rude and bluntly rejected the idea.

"I think you talk too much while you're on the air. I also heard that you're an arrogant smart-ass. I wish you the best of luck." He then hung the phone up on me.

I didn't even know the guy at the time. A lot of good that call did me. I was running out of options.

The last "Gods at 1800 Greene Street" party was a total blow out. Between Stoneburner's hippies next door and my house, we had four kegs. The gathering was a little more intimate, as people went back and forth between the two buildings. "Woe Is Me" Dave, John Pierre, and Hayne, without the halo by this time, and all my neighbors were there. Chip, Dwayne, and Adam, my boys from WUSC, Kevin Oliver and

Sharon also showed up. I remember Hayne screaming in my ear over the music, "Anybody who says college isn't cool is a fag." Very much like the old Hoodoo Gurus' song, the gathering was "Bittersweet."

Everyone was having a blast until these two goons showed up in a white 1983 Corvette with t-tops, wearing jeans and muscle tees. One had a *Joe Dirt* mullet, and the other resembled Mr. T. These two guys forced their way into the party, started drinking off the kegs, and asked some weird questions as I watched from my front porch. They repelled everyone from them with their inquiries.

As the two muscle heads approached me, I walked inside my house, and shut the door. They knocked. I reluctantly opened the door again. "Do you know where we can get a nickel bag?"

I was stymied.

My response was, "What the fuck is a nickel bag?"

I wasn't stupid. I knew they were looking for the cheese, but no one buys a "nickel bag," or a "lid," or a "reefer cigarette," especially not from me. I didn't smoke pot. They were obviously cops.

After an hour or so of avoidance, the two undercover policemen broke out their badges, and began hassling the partygoers, and since they had many a keg beer off the tap, they were slurring their words. A thin young girl, with dark hair and a pleasant smile was strumming her guitar on my front porch all night. The two policemen asked her for identification. She was irritated by the harassment, as was everyone.

“Hey man, this is bull shit, man. What we’re doing here is beautiful, man. We’re just a bunch of people listening to music and enjoying each other’s company. Why do you guys have to come down here and fuck with us, man? Why don’t you just leave us alone? We’re not bothering anybody.”

No one would stand up to these jerks hiding behind their badges. But here was this young girl, less than a hundred pounds, confronting these two dick heads. She really had some balls.

The policemen, with the combined weight of four hundred plus pounds, grabbed the petite brunette, and slung her by the arm into the front of my house, cracking a piece of antiquated asbestos siding off with her head. Then one of the officers handcuffed her, as the other retrieved a police radio from the Corvette to call for a squad car. The crowd looked on in horror.

Later that night, some of the other partygoers held a candlelight vigil at the police station demanding the girl’s freedom. I was there also. The authorities finally released the young, yet vocal, peace-loving revolutionary. She had achieved legendary status that night and the respect of hundreds, for standing up to a couple of assholes when no one else would, not even me. Her name was Danielle Howle, the now celebrated, and beloved South Carolina songwriter and performer.

The following week, the charges were dropped against Danielle for “disorderly conduct” and “resisting arrest,” and the two overzealous, inebriated Vice policemen were asked to

hand in their resignations. Within three weeks, we had two incidents make headlines on the local page of *The State*, first the “Co-ed Prostitute Ring” and now Danielle’s unlawful arrest, and the subsequent resignation of the two Vice officers. The incidents that took place at Barnwell and Greene, named after two Revolutionary War heroes, contributed to the hotbed of controversy that year at USC. As Sandra Bernhardt would say, “I felt like a mole on Marilyn Monroe’s face. I was just happy to be there.”

Commencement was the following week. Working through my dilemma, I came up with a brilliant idea.

I called Sharon, and excitedly informed her, “I’m going to run for Program Director!”

“Michael, what are you doing?” Sharon squirmed. “Aren’t you graduating?”

“I’m going to register for summer classes and firm up for the LSAT.”

“Okay, what do you want me to do?” Sharon sighed.

“I just want you to be there. I need you there. You know, for moral support.”

“Michael, I don’t really think me being there is going to help you any.”

“Come on. Just promise me you’ll be there.”

Reluctantly, Sharon agreed. I was a bit nervous about it, but I thought with Sharon’s support, I had a chance.

Lorna and Juliet were graduate students, and they had been at WUSC for years, longer than anyone. Lorna wasn’t about to give up her Music Director chair, and Juliet was Station

Manager. Several years before, they had passed a resolution so that graduates could no longer work at the radio station. If you weren't registered for classes, you couldn't spin records.

That's how they got rid of Art Boerke. They specifically passed the resolution for the purpose of giving Art the boot. As I said, they would remove people one way or the other in any nefarious fashion available to them. Back then there was "payola" for the higher ups, which violated new Federal Communications Commission regulations, and was in fact illegal. Perks were secretly given to some of the directors, and not others. That's why the Music Director's position was so coveted. You got a lot of free shit from the record companies if you pushed their wares.

It was May. As I walked up the Russell House steps, I noticed a sign, with glittered lettering on poster board that read, "We are electing officers today at 1:30," with an arrow pointing down the hall. I entered the election room. Unbeknownst to me, Lorna was in charge of the election. I felt awkward being there, as all of my friends at WUSC were graduating. But Lorna's cohorts wouldn't miss it for the world.

Lorna asked in an unpleasant manner, "What are you doing here?"

I was unnerved. "I'm running for Program Director."

"But you graduated. You can't run."

I spoke confidently, "I'm registering for classes tomorrow. Where's Sharon?"

"Sharon couldn't be here," Lorna smirked. "She had some things to take care of before graduation."

My heart sunk.

I looked around the room. I felt like, I had been written into a story by H.P. Lovecraft as the shuffling, demonic, caricatures of college radio closed in around me. No one wanted me there.

"Oh, well then. Good luck!" Lorna snidely commented.

Steven was also running for Program Director. He was very feminine with his long blond bangs, and horn-rimmed glasses. He was knock-kneed and slinky, and he swished about wearing his Robyn Hitchcock t-shirt with the machismo of Carol Channing. Needless to say, the election was terribly lopsided. Lorna and her minions all voted for Steven. They believed him to represent the radio station's true ethos. Lemmy would have hated him.

Lorna approached me after the election was over. Sarcasically, she commented, "Michael, maybe radio just isn't your thing. I think you should try selling cars or something."

As she sashayed over to give Steven a hug, I asked myself, "What the fuck am I doing here?" I felt an overwhelming sense of shame, as if I had just stepped into a big pile of dog shit at the bus stop.

Lorna proceeded over to a table and uncovered a tray of cupcakes. She sat down and helped herself to one with vanilla icing. Lorna sat in her chair quietly enjoying her cupcake with a smile on her face, radiating with a sense of accomplishment. She had icing in the corners of her mouth as she stuffed her face. With each bite, it was almost as if she were devouring my very soul.

I snuck out of the room. I didn't even say goodbye to anyone. There was no one to say goodbye to. Anyway, I didn't want to hang around and give Lorna the opportunity to gloat.

That night I went to sing one last song with Hootie at Greenstreet's. I put on a wig and came out during their second set to do my best Bon Scott impersonation. We did "Highway to Hell." How appropriate.

Later as I was getting a drink at the bar, I heard a familiar voice in the crowd. A large fellow with long hair and glasses was talking loudly over the music, with a thick New York accent.

I shouted over the volume, "Your voice sounds familiar to me."

"I used to be the Program Director at K-95," the behemoth responded, "but I got fired today. My name's Art Boerke."

I leered at Art for a moment.

"Well that's ironic. I just ran for Program Director at WUSC and got crushed, sacked, pummeled, by your compatriots, Lorna and friends."

Art raised his eyebrow. "Jack Corn I presume?"

I nodded.

"How are they my 'compatriots'?" Art objected. "I hate those fucking bitches! You know I trained all of them. I taught them everything I know. I made that station what it is, and you know what they did to me?"

"Yeah, I heard."

Art, a little drunk, then asked, "How's that for a kick in

the nuts? Luckily, the K-95 job was open, but guess what? I forgot to take the bull's eye off my nuts, and the same stupid politics got me canned at K-95."

"Really?" I asked. "Well, knowing what you know about them, why didn't you give me a chance instead of busting my fucking balls?"

"I don't know. Lorna called me, and insisted that I shouldn't hire you. She's got this weird pushiness that caught me off guard."

"You're a big pussy? What?" I jested.

Art couldn't hear me over the music and asked, "What? I can't hear what you're saying."

"Nothing," I said. "Go on."

"So I didn't bring you in." Art continued, "For that I apologize. That was wrong of me."

I stared at Art for a moment, not satisfied with his response.

Art then said, "Okay! That's no excuse. Truth is, I listened to your show a couple of times, and you reminded me of me. I didn't think that we needed two of me at K-95." I remember Art and I standing there facing each other. Art was gargantuan. I was not. We looked and sounded nothing alike.

But Art had some advice.

"Just remember that in life, there's always somebody trying to fuck with you. They don't want to work things out, or negotiate. They want you out of the picture. They'll do anything they can to get rid of you. You see, some people are so egocentric and self-absorbed, that they have no sense of moral obligation. They're ready to do anything in their power

to bring you down.”

I listened intently.

“But if you know in your heart that you’re right, and you believe in what you’re doing, nobody can take that away from you, ever. That’s why you have to keep on fighting.”

I thought for a moment.

“Stay hardcore, huh?”

“Absolutely. Stay hardcore!”

We raised a toast, and then sat down at the bar for a moment.

“Well, what are you going to do now?” I asked.

“Well, me and my partners are looking into buying out Steve over at Rockafella’s.”

I thought that was interesting. So we talked the rest of the night. We’ve been friends ever since.

It was May 10, 1988. I was packing the last of my things into a Ryder truck. Sharon approached as I pulled the roll-up door closed.

“Thanks for your support yesterday.”

Sharon was embarrassed. “I came to apologize.”

“Don’t you think it’s a little too late for apologies? What exactly are you apologizing for, anyway?”

“For being such a coward. I know you needed my support, and I went into hiding.”

I was disappointed. “So you just blew it off. You didn’t have things to take care of before graduation, huh? Well, that’s typical.”

“Michael, I don’t know what to say.” Sharon shyly

responded.

“You don’t have to say anything, Sharon. It doesn’t really matter, anyway. I’m going home.”

Sharon tried to smile, but it looked like her face hurt when she did.

“Well, if you’re ever in Chicago, here’s my phone number. I’d really like to hear from you, and I don’t want you to hate me.”

Sharon reluctantly handed me the piece of paper with her phone number and address written on it. Then she went away silently slightly hanging her head as she walked up the street. As I watched her turn the corner, I looked down at the phone number for a few seconds. I then crumpled the paper up and dropped it on the ground.

Shortly thereafter, I went inside to retrieve my little baby girl, Poser. I walked up to the top of Barnwell, with the dog under my arm to Sloan’s apartment. Sloan adored Poser and had agreed to take her back to Hilton Head with her. She was putting her belongings in her car as I approached.

When I handed Poser to Sloan, Poser licked her all over her face.

“Posey, you’re such a sweet girl. Yes you are! You’re coming home with me, precious! My mom will love her!”

“Okay,” I said. “You guys be careful.”

Sloan put Poser and the last few items in her Saab. As I stood there, Sloan backed out of the parking space, and drove down the street. As I waved goodbye, a tear welled up in my eye, as I saw Poser looking back at me through the dirty rear

window of Sloan's car. I felt as if I was abandoning her, but at least I knew that Poser was in good hands.

A sense of melancholy overtook me, as I stood there in the street. My college experience had finally come to an end. I felt an overwhelming sadness in my heart, knowing that the future was uncertain. I would now be leaving this life behind me and would be starting a new one. I acknowledged this truth, as I wiped the tear from my eye and walked down the bricks of Barnwell Street. It was time for me to go.

## **Selling Cars**

In the summer of 1988, I took a hiatus for a couple of months to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Dad and his law partner and brother, John, had just closed a big land deal with the North Carolina Highway Department, and sold the property they owned on Highway 74 to make way for the Matthews Township Parkway to Mint Hill. Dad had a stroke in 1975, and thinking that a warmer climate might do him some good; he bought a house and four condominiums in Myrtle Beach and retired there. Dad also bought an adult entertainment venue named "The Satin Club" in Atlantic Beach, where the "Crazy Horse" is today.

Mother had since divorced Dad many years before, and she got the house in the settlement. They had purchased the ten thousand square foot Georgian Colonial in 1970, but shortly thereafter the city had built the connector to SouthPark, and now Mother's property had a Fairview

Road address.

My father called my mother's house, "the house that Morganna built," referring to the strip teaser also known as "The Kissing Bandit," who performed nightly at the C'est Bon in the late sixties. Dad was a movie buff, and owning a exotic nightclub gave him the opportunity to hob knob with a few Hollywood types. My father used to drive us to Salisbury to visit with Sidney Blackmer, who starred as Roman Castavet in Roman Polanski's horror classic *Rosemary's Baby*.

At our residence in 1973, my father produced a film entitled, *Night of the Cat*. This film is still available on Something Weird Video, a company owned by Mike Vraney, who oddly enough founded Alternative Tentacles Records, known for releases by The Dead Kennedys, Bad Brains, and Jodie Foster's Army among other punk greats.

My father mortgaged the house in order to produce the movie. Some believe Earl Owensby started it all, but *Night of the Cat* was North Carolina's first independent film, heralded to be "the worst film ever made in NC" by the local film critics. *Night of the Cat* was so bad that thirty-five years later, the film *Taken*, released in 2009 starring Liam Neeson and Famke Jansen, borrowed its plotline.

Similar to Gloria Swanson, Mother still lives there amongst the many pictures of herself. Although my mother was a beautiful woman, she has become more reclusive in recent years. But even back then, I referred to the house as her "Fortress of Solitude." In 1978, my brother George and his friends had wreaked havoc in an expensive condo in Myrtle Beach, and she

was called to chaperone the group of reckless teenagers. Ironically, she then took us all to see the Rolling Stones, who provided a sea of fans on the "Redneck Rivera" the opportunity to witness the legendary, impromptu Civic Center show, promoted by Wilson Howard. While there, she met a fellow with the band, and continued a relationship with him that spanned generations.

After months of partying and soaking up the sun at the beach, I ventured back to Charlotte, and went job-hunting in late summer. Not that I was taking Lorna's advice, I just happened to spy a job in the want ads at Superior Nissan on South Boulevard, that boasted a six hundred dollar weekly draw, which wasn't too bad in those days. Needless to say, I lasted there about three weeks and never sold one car.

I remember the Sales Manager calling me into his office. "Mike, I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go. You're just not our type of salesman. Maybe you should try Town and Country Ford."

"Are you fucking crazy? I hate this job. Do you think that I want to sell cars for the rest of my life, like you?"

Hey, he was firing me. I was compelled to tell him the truth. I was determined to do something other than what I was doing.

As fate would have it, I went out that evening and ran into one of my best friends, Bill, at a bar called Spring Garden. Bill and I had gone to junior high, high school, and two years of college together at UNC-W. Bill was the reason I went to Wilmington in the first place. It was good to catch up.

In 1987, the summer before my senior year at South Carolina, I applied for a deejay position at the “Pterodactyl Club,” a new alternative dance club that would occasionally host live music. The club’s owner was this Ohio State carpetbagger, named Jim O’Leary. O’Leary had a nasally voice with an irritating fake laugh, a fishy handshake, and he could never look me in the eye. He was gangly, with big elbows, and thin villainous lips. Imagine Crispin Glover meets Jack Nicholson’s “Joker,” but without the lips. But he did hire me, and suggested I go to meet Matt, the other deejay, that afternoon.

Subsequently, after my meeting with Matt, O’Leary called me that evening at my mother’s house, and fired me before I had spun one record. I remember the conversation with O’Leary.

“Yeah Mike, I’m really sorry but I don’t think it’s going to work out.”

I hung up the phone in astonishment. Maybe I was a little provincial when I thought: “This guy comes to my home town, and opens an ‘alternative’ club and doesn’t include me? Fuck him, and the Buckeyes.”

I later found out that O’Leary had done the same shit to Kenny Kokenes, now a legendary club owner, and my friend to this day. In retort, Kenny began making some moves himself, and opened a club called “The Park Elevator.” Possibly, O’Leary’s rejection may have inspired Kokenes, as it would me.

As Bill and I had conversation over many beers, he mentioned that his stepfather, Bob, was opening a bar on Central Avenue, in an old Picasso’s Pizza location. The place was to be a juke joint and pizza parlor, with video games, pool tables, and would sell draft beer. Bill then informed me that Bob was interested in hiring me to run the place for him. Feeling a little awkward about Bob stepping over his stepson to offer the job to me, I suggested Bill be my right-hand man.

I also had the idea to open a college bar that would play alternative, rock, and punk music, instead of a jukebox. There were no bars at all between Charlotte proper and UNC-C. At least there were none like I had frequented in Columbia, like Group Therapy, or Rockafella’s. At the time, the inner city artery to the university was Sharon Amity, running by the now-defunct Eastland Mall, and then to Newell-Hickory Grove Road, not too far from the once popular nightspot, “The Dixie Electric Company.”

Also, during that time period, the students had no places to hang out at the college, with the exception of Gus’ Forty-Niner, and the Sandwich Construction Company, both owned by Greeks. The UNC-C area was desolate back then; before a Starbucks stood on every corner. There was one exception: The Chi Phi House which was a Mecca in its own right, but they only threw their open house parties twice a year, and that was about it.

The Picasso’s location was right around the corner from Eastland in a strip mall, so it was prime for college business, as well as the working class after-five crowd itching to play

some pool, drink some beer, order a sandwich or pizza, and listen to some U2. Back then we didn't need a "Se Habla" sign in the window.

I met with Bob the next day. We discussed everything, and came to some terms. Finally, there was an issue about the name. Bob wanted to call the place "CAMS," after his newly acquired Charlotte Amusement and Music Service, Inc. I thought the moniker was a little dainty. My suggestion was that we name the bar after the address, which was 4808 Central Avenue. Bob agreed. We started on the build-out the following week.

## **4808 Central Avenue**

Charlotte had a few, out-of-the-way hipster nightspots over the years. There was "P.B. Scott's," currently "The Men's Club" on Tyvola, where I saw Modern English and the Psychedelic Furs. Viceroy Park, in the Richway Shopping Center before they leveled it to build Costco, hosted Joan Jett, and Malcolm McLarin's discovery, Bow Wow Wow. Another frequented venue was a place on Old Pineville Road, called "Kidnappers," where I saw Jason and the Scorchers, Red Hot Chili Peppers and Faith No More, among others. But the "Milestone" was the granddaddy of them all. A guy named Bill Flowers opened the bar in 1969 on Tuckaseegee Road. Flowers converted an old house owned by his mother into a punk rock shit hole that hosted legendary shows by R.E.M, and The Police, as well as every punk act from The Jam and The Violent Femmes, to Husker Du and Minor Threat. Over the years, the Milestone had fallen into disrepair, was terribly

mismanaged, and finally closed. O'Leary approached Flowers in 1987 about reopening the venue, which he did.

O'Leary then opened up the Pterodactyl Club. I was at the Pterodactyl one night, and a friend of mine was unknowingly making out with a transvestite on the dance floor. When the lights came on, shim had a five o'clock shadow. It was definitely a different crowd than folks were use to in Charlotte. O'Leary was operant and pro-active in revamping the underground scene. Flowers then opened up the short-lived "Hall to Fame Club," where I saw G.B.H. in late spring of 1987, following their Rockafella's show.

Shortly thereafter, Kenny Kokenes opened "The Park Elevator" in South End. It wasn't called "South End" then. I don't know where they come up with this shit sometimes. Kenny was making a name for himself, mostly as a deejay at gay clubs, such as "Offshore Drilling Company" in Myrtle Beach. I saw The Red Hot Chili Peppers for the second time at Park Elevator in 1987. A little competition was healthy, I thought.

Opening the first 4808 was a grand opportunity for me, and with my promotions experience, I was certain it was going to be a huge success. 4808 Central was in East Charlotte, on the other side of town opposite the Pterodactyl, and was to be a college bar, not a disco. We never planned to do live music, so we wouldn't be stepping on anyone's toes, and so what if we did? Charlotte was big enough, or was it? After all, it was about the music, or at least that's what I thought. Oh, and of course, there would be lots of girls to choose from

on any given night. I wasn't some shoe-gazing introvert. I loved women. That's just how I was at twenty-three.

Against my direction, Bob wanted to paint all the walls and ceiling tiles a hospital white. The interior was sterile and too bright, so I covered the walls with dry mounted band posters, beer signs and memorabilia. What I used to love about Group Therapy in Columbia was that the bartenders spun the music while slinging beers. So underneath the bar at 4808 Central Avenue, I had one Technics turntable, a JVC Compact Disc Player I bought from Will's Pawn Shop, a mixing board from Radio Shack, a Yamaha receiver from Circuit City to accompany the wall mounted Cerwin-Vega speakers.

The grand opening of 4808 Central Avenue was in September of 1988, the same month Kitty Dukakis spoke on her husband's behalf at my Uncle John's house. All of us partied in the back bedroom, while the Secret Service roamed around the premises.

We drew a couple hundred people opening night, with Bill and I, along with Christi Derreberry, a high school girlfriend of mine, who was a junior at UNC-Charlotte. "Chrusti" as I called her, had a lot of friends who were into alternative music, and she was an awesome connection to the college. Her nickname didn't mean she was filthy or anything; it was an inside joke and we all got a lot of mileage out of it.

The crowd was a combination of east side yokels, college kids, and high school friends. While the Pterodactyl was busy playing Siouxsie and the Banshees, and The Communards, we were playing The Long Ryders, Rain Parade, The

Waterboys, mixed in with Creedence and The Allman Brothers. The place was an overnight success with our cheap beer and loud tunes.

Bill and I got an apartment down on Seventh Street for four hundred dollars a month; a building owned by his aunt and uncle. The only problem was that it was several doors down from the Seventh Street Center, a city funded halfway shelter for transients, junkies, and drunks. Our apartment was a crime-o-rama. The first casualty was two weeks in: An Akai dual cassette portable that I bought the summer before. Someone was eager for it, and broke out the back porch window. One night, Bill woke to find a black man rummaging through his bedroom closet at 4:00 A.M. When Bill confronted him, the vagrant threatened to stab him with a screwdriver.

Those were lawless times. I remember being followed home one night, after we had done some decent business at the bar. I was convinced it was either a jealous boyfriend, or someone planning to rob me. Regardless, it scared the shit out of me. The following day, I went Uptown to my father's law office and had his partner, David Caudle, walk a gun permit through the Sheriff's Office for me, so I could wear a firearm on premise immediately. I went down to a sporting goods store on Independence, and purchased a Taurus .380-millimeter pistol, and a shoulder holster. Yippie-ki-yay.

And there were always plenty of girls. It was almost like a continuation of college for me and "Gods" parties but I had a business license this time. The bar did well for the first several months, and at the end of the night we would close the

doors, and keep little honeys in there with us.

Every Thursday I would take the checkbook and receipts to meet with Bob and our accountant. Sometimes, I would have to meet Bob up at the Central YMCA, to drop off the books. I used to hate to go up there. I would always see old naked men parading their uncircumcised penises about in the locker room. They would be all hunched over, with long gray pubic hair, just walking around nude for no particular reason. It was frightening. I was never much a fan of the bathhouse, and it's one of the reasons why I stopped working out.

By November, George Herbert Walker Bush had won the presidency. That's about the time we noticed business was starting to dwindle. I would be there sometimes waiting on customers, and no one would show until 8:00 P.M. I took advantage of it occasionally. I used to have sex with my wine distributor salesperson. She would bring a case of Heineken, a box of White Zinfandel, and bang me, which was always a welcomed plus, especially after being stuck there all alone for hours. Talk about customer service.

But when business really started going south, and the crowd showed up later and later, the window to make money grew smaller.

"What are you doing wrong?" Bob kept asking me. "Maybe people don't want to hear that loud music. You ever think of that?"

I was determined to prove that it wasn't my choice of music that kept folks away.

So a few of the regulars got together one afternoon, and I opened the doors. Bob took his truck to H&S Lumber to pick up some building materials. We had a keg of Guinness that we couldn't sell because it needed metric hardware to pour, and we couldn't find any to fit. So much for "World Class Charlotte." With a pipe wrench and a tank of nitrogen, we rigged the tap, drank the entire keg, and built two eight by eight feet platforms, that were held together by toggle bolts, and wood covers for the pool tables. We now had a stage. I had to get some folks back in the door somehow, and that's when 4808 started doing live music. From these meager beginnings we put on our first live performances.

I hired this biker named Keith, a Navy vet with tattoos and a long beard to work the door. Keith was always there hustling pool anyway, after he painted cars all day. By this time, I had hired two other bartenders; Craig, who looked like Bono from U2 and the other, Danny, was a biker friend of Keith's.

I also made friends with the Eastland Mall Record Bar crowd. Eric Tucker, the assistant manager, had a band called Helpless Dancer, named after a song by The Who. Eric and his band mates Scott and Bobby started hanging out at the bar. They brought in some more music people, and all the hot rocker chicks as well, which I grew a taste for. And like the cad I was, some of them were their girlfriends.

I started out employing cover bands mostly, like The Megaphonics, then worked my way up to regional bands with some notoriety from Raleigh and Chapel Hill, and elsewhere in the Carolinas: The Bad Checks, Ugly Americans, Johnny

Quest, Dillon Fence, Eight or Nine Feet, Bachelors of Art, and Bazooka Joe. Snatches of Pink was one of my favorites. Michael Rank and Sarah Romweber, formerly of Mitch Easter's Let's Active, would play about every two weeks. Fred Mills, the Music Editor of *Creative Loafing*, and I were about the only people that got Snatches' sludgy brand of Keith Richards, Jack Daniels-induced rock and roll. They were my friends. Sarah convinced her brother Dexter, to play at my club as well. The Flat Duo Jets were the two-piece precursor to bands like Jucifer and The White Stripes. Sarah and Dexter are now touring as the Dexter Romweber Duo. I went to see Sarah recently at Snug Harbor in Plaza Midwood. She looked exactly the same as I remembered her.

But my bread-and-butter was the local bands like Helpless Dancer, The Phantom Tenants, The Hardsole Poets (who later became Jolene), and Antiseen, who brought enough folks to start a cool little scene on the east side of town. Matter of fact, many of them lived in the area. Business was booming again.

I went around Charlotte and made friends with all of the record stores: Record Bar, New World Records, Sounds Familiar, Camelot, and Repo, and gave their employees free entry as long as they hyped the shows. Along with Fred Mills, I also made friends with Kevin Morgan, the local music writer for *The Charlotte Observer*. I'd visit with Kevin at New World Records, and I would pop in on Fred when he worked as the Sales Manager in the Belk Shoe Department at SouthPark, while he moonlighted as Music Editor for *Cre-*

*ative*. I would also occasionally visit with Fred at his house in Dilworth. Fred and I had a mutual friend in Keith Bullard, now deceased. He was a guy who used to dress like *Punky Brewster*, when he deejayed at WUSC-FM. Debby “Jet” Jennings, and Kathy Haight, both with the *Observer* also contributed. These folks gave 4808 substantial press for supporting the North Carolina music scene. I would also call in to WUSC-FM weekly, to give them the band schedules, as they would announce all of the area performances a couple of times a day. I was creating a grass roots movement.

One afternoon when I was cleaning up after a especially good night, I noticed a beautiful blonde step out of her red Porsche Carrera, wearing Ray Bans, Tony Lamas, and an authentic World War II bomber jacket. She was totally out of place as she strutted down the sidewalk, tossing her long blonde hair about with the confidence of Cher. She entered the hobby shop several storefronts down. I stopped her as she exited the shop and introduced myself. Her name was Jillian.

Jillian wore too much lipstick for my taste but other than that, she was magnetic. She was the sort of girl who provoked looks at the stop light with her expensive car and chic attitude, always fixing herself in the rear view mirror, trying to look sexy, and pouting her lips. But if she ever caught men looking at her, she would scream obscenities at them. She had a particular distaste for the working class. She would say something like, “What are you look-

ing at you bunch of sick assholes? I ought to smash your smug faces in. Fucking perverts! I hope you die!”

Jillian and I had some small talk. “What are you doing in that hobby shop?” I asked.

“I’m trying to find some beads for my nieces to make bracelets out of,” Jillian responded nervously.

I told her that I thought she was beautiful, and after some conversation, I asked her if she’d like to go out sometime. Of course, I used the “4808 Owner” rap.

“I’ve heard of 4808 Central, and I’ve been meaning to come up here. I heard that y’all have been getting some cool bands.”

She then invited me over for dinner later that week.

Jillian was an animal lover, with two Scottish Terriers, and was a big PETA supporter. She owned a ski shop near Garinger High School, which was kind of misplaced. It wasn’t that she hated all blue-collar types. Matter of fact, she was especially fond of Shorty, her gardener. My consensus was that she liked very few people. But Shorty made Jillian laugh.

While I was visiting Jillian one afternoon, she invited me out back as Shorty was working in her yard. As the two Scotties frolicked, Jillian stood over Shorty as he spread pine needles in her boxwood beds. She whispered to me, “Listen. This is great.”

Then she asked, “Shorty, did you see on TV that NASA sent the space shuttle in orbit today?”

“I’m afraid that space shovel is goin’ to poke a hole in

the ozone layer, Miss Jillian. That'll be the end of all mankind.”

Jillian laughed heartily. Jillian was from a good family, had a great sense of humor, and an eclectic taste in films and music. She was everything a guy could want in a girl. So Jillian became my girlfriend, and I started staying at her house more and my apartment less. That fact would become a problem.

## **Club Wars**

Now don't get me wrong. I patronized the Pterodactyl as much as I could. The door guy usually let me in for free. There were a number of great shows at the P Club, and I loved all the new music. I saw a Jane's Addiction show there on February 14, 1989, promoted by Chris Buyonovich.

In late 1988, I road-tripped down to Columbia to see Art at Rockafella's for a Suicidal Tendencies show, and to steal some more ideas. Charlotte and Columbia were only ninety miles apart, but they might as well been a million miles from each other. At the center of Columbia was The University of South Carolina, offering all the diversity of a major learning institution, including a NCAA football team. The rest of the town was a slum. Charlotte, on the other hand, was a beautiful city, for the most part, with no major university in the center, but commerce and banking thrived in its stead. Columbia was steeped in southern tradition and Charlotte

was less identifiable as such. But Charlotte did have the “Billy Graham Parkway”; ‘nuff said. Charlotte also lacked identity – and a true college radio station.

Possibly that’s why it was easier to brand Charlotte as the centerpiece of the “New South” and why it thrived more so than Columbia. Charlotte was viewed as non-exclusive in some respects, and much of Columbia’s woes came from its antiquated blue laws and persistence to fly the Confederate flag at the state capitol. But in regard to the underground scene, Columbia was Charlotte’s daddy. I was going to change that fact.

As I entered, big Art was standing in the doorway with hundreds of dollars in one hand and a slice of pizza in the other.

“What are you doin’ here, Hugh Douche?”

He hugged me, and when Art hugged you, your feet didn’t touch the ground.

“I’m here to meet this guy, Buyonovich. We may be working together. Point him out to me.”

Buyonovich was a little abrasive and a lot shady. He attended Clemson on a wrestling scholarship, and was a scrappy, punk rock motherfucker. Chris told me a story about when he lived in New York City, where he and his friends would go to gay bars and pick up men, only to lure them away, beat the shit out of them, and take their money. Chris was working on a deal with Cecil Carroll, the biggest and most crooked promoter in the southeast, and was looking for new venues to promote some shows.

Buyonovich was leaning up against the bar watching the band. He was a good-looking guy, at 6’1”, 190 pounds, with dark hair and dark eyes. He wore a beret, leather motorcycle jacket, white v-neck t-shirt, jeans, crucifix necklace, and Na-Na wing tips.

Art pulled me to the side and said, “If you’re going to do any business with that guy, just watch out. That’s all I’m saying.”

The first Jane’s Addiction appearance had been several months earlier, when the band opened for Iggy Pop, at the Pterodactyl. On Valentine’s Day, I remember Jane’s Addiction performing “Mountain Song.” The band was loud, and hypnotic: A combination of swirly, processed vocals, soaring guitars, and thundering bass. It was apparent that Jane’s had successfully stolen the mantle of Led Zeppelin away from The Cult, according to *Rolling Stone*. Perry Farrell, the lead singer of Jane’s Addiction, was wearing a white patent-leather bustier and mini-skirt, white fishnet stockings, and fourteen eyehole white Docs. He had raspberry red dread locks in his hair, smeared lipstick on his face, and mascara running from his eyes. Farrell was smacked-out looking and sweaty.

The band finished their set and all piled into a tiny dressing room off of stage left. O’Leary didn’t know that Buyonovich and I were friends. That fact worried him, as he watched Chris and me from a distance. I felt his eyes on us as Buyonovich and I stood shoulder to shoulder.

But I was always friendly to O’Leary. He would ask me

questions, but would never answer any. I have to admit, I envied O'Leary. He was banking it. But he was a sneaky fuck, and suspicious of everyone. That's why he had very few friends, and the ones he had, he imported from Ohio. Unknown to me, this O'Leary character hated competition, and was super-paranoid as well. He felt like he had created the scene, and therefore he owned it. Sounds a little like Richard Nixon's philosophy, but that's just the way it was.

Chris said to me after the show, "If your place were a little bigger, we could have done this show at 4808 instead of with this O'Leary creep. That guy is strange. Hey, you want to go back stage with me and meet the band?"

"I'd love to meet Jane's, but I'm not a star-fucker or anything like that."

"I should hope not." Buyonovich said.

"I didn't mean that literally."

I had met most of my heroes over the last few years in college radio, so it took a lot to impress me. I recall the dressing room was small and tight, with a dirty couch, a square coffee table, and mismatched chairs strewn about. The Record Bar employees were all crammed into the dressing room.

I watched the front man from a few feet away. A self-proclaimed male prostitute, Perry Farrell, was slinky and stood about 6' 1", but he hunched, in a gangly posture, and held himself as if he were a sickly tree, waving in a storm of pot smoke, cigarettes, and alcohol.

Farrell gazed over the scene. This was his universe. It was as gritty and real as L.A, but it wasn't. With a Cheshire

grin, he hiked up his patent-leather mini skirt, tugged at his fishnets, and laughed to himself, as if he knew something that no one else did. He was a dirty street urchin, and enjoyed being so. He raised a bottle to his lips, and swallowed a small blue pill that he held between his teeth. As his eyes rolled back into his head, it was as if agony and elation had run into each other head on, he swayed as they crashed behind his eyes.

Buyonovich called Perry over to introduce me.

"Perry, come here for a minute. I want you to meet a good friend of mine. Perry, this is my partner, Mike. Mike, this is Perry."

Farrell was a little sedated.

"It's a pleasure to meet you Mike."

"Likewise, Perry. I really dig *Nothing's Shocking*. It's one of my favorites."

"Thanks, Mike. I love compliments." Farrell saucily responded.

As his eye make-up ran, Perry wiped the sweat from his brow with a towel laced with lipstick and mascara.

"Chris and I are having a little after-party at my place, and I'd love for you all to come."

Perry smoked his cigarette as the other guests occasionally knocked him off balance. As Perry was gently tussled in a dressing room overgrown with idol worshipers, frothing musicians, and sultry molls, he answered me in an almost surreal voice.

"Thanks for the invite Mike, but we're having a little soiree

of our own, back at the hotel, if you know what I mean.”

As he winked and turned away from me, I knew exactly what he meant. A scene best left unimagined and unsaid. My guess was that they were going to smack themselves to Palookaville.

I don't know why, but I felt a tad uncomfortable in this microcosm of transvestitism, as the band mates kissed each other on the mouth.

Then Buyonovich whispered into my ear, “These guys are pretty fucking weird.”

I looked at Buyonovich, and then we turned away from the crowded dressing room, and chuckled quietly. I thought I was the only person present who was creeped out. Buyonovich put his arm around my neck, and we then laughed out loud as we ushered ourselves out of the club.

The opening of the Park Elevator by Kokenes and Conrad Hunter pissed O'Leary off, a lot. They were doing some great shows: Psychic TV, King Diamond, Gang Green, and The Swans. The Park Elevator was a rock's throw from the Pterodactyl; an old warehouse where they originally manufactured elevator parts. Kenny, Conrad and another guy, Bob Okamoto spent their last nickels getting The Park Elevator open. But O'Leary wanted a corner on the market, didn't like any competitors, and was determined to have the monopoly.

I started doing some small stuff with Buyonovich. One of them was a band called Dark Angel on Metal Blade Records. The long hairs came out en masse, drawing around a hun-

dred-fifty people. Buyonovich was pleasantly surprised. Everyone made money, and that was a good thing.

Not that everything was hunky dory. We had our fair share of problems. 4808 Central Avenue was right next door to a country redneck joint called “Horsin' Around.” There were fights occasionally between the patrons. Also with a young crowd, there's always underage drinking. We were popped once for that, where Alcohol Law Enforcement sent in an underage kid to buy alcohol, and then came in afterward to hand me the citation and the fine. Sounded a little like entrapment to me. Bob just paid the four hundred dollar fine and shook his finger at me.

Alcohol Law Enforcement had an issue with video poker. Since Bob owned all the machines in the place, a good bit of our business came from the pool tables and video games. The ALE allowed you to operate the poker video games, as long you didn't payout in front of them. It was like this cat-and-mouse game that the authorities played with the bars. They would send in two undercover officers, usually in sweaters, and always with mustaches.

They would ask the same questions, “What are your drink specials, and do your machines pay off?”

Our boilerplate answers were, “Our prices are so cheap that every beer's a special, and the video poker games are for amusement only.”

It was total nonsense.

There was some tension growing between Bill and me. One of our favorites songs was “Where the Hell is Bill?” by

Camper Van Beethoven, because Bill was either late, somewhere else, or smoking out back of the 4808. The more time I spent over at Jillian's house, the less time I spent with him. And he was dating a girl seriously who I had slept with a few times.

We were really crowded one night, and I couldn't locate Bill anywhere. After looking for a few minutes I finally found him in the walk-in cooler, swilling a Bartles and Jaymes.

"What the fuck are you doing, Bill? We're slammed!" "You're not the boss of me!" He turned to me and said with anger. "This is Bob's place, Mr. Big Shot! Fuck you!"

He then took a swing at me, and as he was in flip-flops, he slipped on the slimy black muck, and fell into the puddle of gunk that had gathered around the floor drain.

There was also a burgeoning problem with O'Leary. Kokenes didn't have a long term lease agreement with his landlord, instead paying on a month-to-month basis. O'Leary, like the back door man he was, caught wind of this. As he was determined to send his rivals to the infernal regions, O'Leary leased the building out from under them by offering more money. There was an unwritten code of honor between club owners. O'Leary had just wiped his ass with it. The carpet-baggers had arrived.

Luckily, Kokenes found a spot before The Park Elevator's closing. It was publically announced the Park Elevator was shutting its doors, but on their last night, Kokenes announced, "Fooled you! We are only moving!" He then gutted the place

before O'Leary moved in and carted everything over to the new location on Cedar Street where he re-opened. This caught O'Leary by surprise. The new Park Elevator dance club would appeal at first mostly to the gay, raver, and goth crowds but eventually attracted the curious freak-watchers, and preppies to the underground dance scene.

The most significant show I had done to date was on May 24, 1989. I promoted a show with Widespread Panic, supporting their release entitled, *Space Wrangler*. I paid them five hundred dollars for their first area performance. Even noted Charlotte attorney, Bill Diehl, best known for his representation of Jim Bakker of the PTL Club, was in attendance. The band drew a couple hundred people to 4808 Central Avenue. I remember them playing J. J. Cale's "Travelin' Light," as the hippies twirled about, which was amazing. Hey man, I know Schools. The set list is still on [Everydaycompanion.com](http://Everydaycompanion.com).

Many years later, I saw a press photo for a band called Widespread Hispanic, hanging out in a joint called "Fuzzy's Place" down Atlanta way. I always got a kick out of that one. I used to call it, "Fuzzy's, where the ugly people go."

I was loyal to both the local and the North Carolina scene, and always kept an ear out for the up-and-comers. I would also give newcomers a shot. The kids respected me for it and supported all the shows, regardless of genre. I was just a few years older than a lot of them. O'Leary, on the other hand was irreproachable and wasn't supportive of the local scene until I started competing for their favor.

The bands all hung out at the 4808. I was building a rapport with the scene, and therefore became a threat to O'Leary. Since the 4808 had carved a little niche of its own, O'Leary named his new place, "13-13," to confuse people between the two numbers.

O'Leary opened the 13-13 with a show by The Replacements and I remember attending that show to see "The Mats." In 1986, I had interviewed Paul Westerberg for WLOZ-FM at Skate Town in Raleigh, where Westerberg sat on the skating rink floor with a crumpled Busch beer can between his legs and complained how "Southerners mispronounce the word 'house'." Somehow or another, Jillian and I ended up with Tommy Stinson, now the bass player for Guns N' Roses, in the back of my new Cherokee after the show.

O'Leary hadn't changed the Park Elevator much at all. The 13-13 was grim, even more so due to how O'Leary acquired the club. He was a shameless, but shrewd businessman. To accentuate O'Leary's sinister intent, Kokenes told me that Jim had the unmitigated gall to proposition him about spinning records at 13-13 on dance nights after stealing the building from him. That's like buying someone's house in foreclosure, evicting them, and then asking them to mow your lawn. Kokenes didn't give a fuck how much the pay was. He refused wholeheartedly and on principal. You could argue that O'Leary was aloof, and he wasn't aware how offensive his scheming and underhandedness was. The truth was that O'Leary was prideful about it.

Since Bob and I were subletting the 4808 Central from Picasso's, and the place had become so popular among the college kids and rockers, the landlord opted to not renew the lease to 4808 Central Avenue. His decision was based mostly on complaints from the other tenants in regard to beer bottles and other trash in the parking lot, and the rise of police activity. The lease was up May 31, 1989. We blew it out with local favorites, Sloppy Joe and the Random Rhythm Section, and the show drew our biggest crowd yet. Too bad it was to be the last show at 4808 Central Avenue.

At this juncture, I was faced with yet another dilemma. I wanted to move the 4808, but we were left with few options. I felt I had developed something that shouldn't end so trivially. Bob on the other hand, after eight months, was done with the bar business for the time being. So I opted to buy the name of the corporation and its assets for the valuable consideration of one dollar. The purchase included the licenses. Bob would move the video games and the pool tables to my new location, and we would still split the money they generated. I just hadn't figured out where I was going yet, but I was determined to find a place.

I went to my banker at First Union, and borrowed five thousand dollars through the 4808 Central Avenue account. It wasn't nearly enough, but it was all I could get unsecured. I then approached Buyonovich, and he kicked in another fifteen-hundred bucks. Chris and I were now officially partners. Silent partners. I needed what he had and vice versa. Few people trusted Chris and even fewer liked him.

Maybe that's why he and I got along so well.

The way I saw it, Buyonovich was a shadowy reflection of me. I was a southern skater-punk, and he was a snott-nosed Jersey punk. We were positively a match made in hell. I had two weeks to find somewhere to move 4808. Buyonovich had already booked the first show: The Cro-mags, Destruction, and Elvis Hitler.

## **Brown-Rogers-Dixon**

With The Cro-mags show coming up on June 13th, I drove around Charlotte for a week looking for somewhere to move the 4808. I was thinking Uptown. I was also thinking that now that I had Buyonovich in my corner and Cecil behind us, I needed to find a big place; a room with an industrial mystique where I could build a sizeable stage similar to the "Metroplex" in Atlanta. No more of this piddly-shit, strip mall nonsense. I was all on my own at twenty-four years old, and I didn't have Bob to back me up anymore. O'Leary had his monopoly with The Milestone, The Pterodactyl, and 13-13, and Kokenes had gone total disco.

But O'Leary had his particular musical tastes: Drivin' and Cryin', The Cramps, Dream So Real, and Love Tractor. I had to think outside the box and focus on music he wasn't doing or wasn't interested in. What was to be the appeal? I decided

to develop hardcore punk, metal, and white boy funk; music for the most part which O'Leary steered clear. Maybe I had delusions of grandeur thinking that I could pull a off a coup by going "Mano a Mano" with O'Leary, and start an Uptown live music club scene. But I was ambitious, and there was nothing down there.

I felt an obligation to the scene. I also thought to myself, "This is my city. I was born here. My father was born here. My grandfather opened the first "colored" pool hall on Brevard Street in the late 1930's. Dad's law practice has been here on North Myers Street since the 1950's. My Uncle John is the President of the Greek Church, for Christ sakes! I'm not going to be threatened by the likes of some 'home-steader.' Fuck him. He was encroaching on my territory, not the other way around."

The Brown-Rogers-Dixon Building, down the street from Dad's office, was an old textile warehouse built in the late 1800's. Owned by Levine Properties in Uptown Charlotte, it was located at 209 East Seventh Street. Levine would occasionally lease the building out for big benefits and parties. The building was also smack in the middle of a Section 8 Housing District, known as Earle Village, which was a little sketchy back then, with nightly gunshots and stabbings.

Daniel Levine took me over to look at the place. A block over from the now-leveled "City Fair," and directly across the street from the Levine Museum, the space was monstrous, and had men and women's facilities that worked, kind of. The room had no heating or air conditioning. It was dank, and

cavernous with twenty-five foot ceilings and huge wooden pillars throughout. It was perfect. Levine agreed to let me lease four thousand square feet from him for fifteen-hundred dollars a month, the money that Buyonovich kicked in paid for the first months rent. The Cro-mags show was upon us in three days.

Two tenants occupied either side of the space. One was a labor service, with a sign on the door plainly stating: "Need One Hundred Men." They would employ vagrants, and winos to perform menial labor. On the other side was Silbury Hill Incorporated, a stone masonry business storehouse, run by this guy with crazy Albert Einstein hair. There was a loading dock, big metal overhead roll-up door, and a gated fence surrounding the building. One thing the building was not: Handicap accessible.

The day of the show, Danny, Keith and I had barely enough time to finish building the stage. The place was filthy. It had limited electricity, and no air conditioning. When the bands arrived, we hadn't even built the bar yet. I hadn't figured out how to transfer the licenses, so I figured what was the point of building a bar anyway? I bought a couple of trashcans, several cases of Coca-Cola, and two five pound bags of ice.

Danny grabbed two sawhorses, and laid an old door across the top of them and said, "There's your bar for the time being."

We both laughed. Necessity is the mother of invention.

We probably had a hundred-fifty people or so to see The Cro-mags, mostly punks and skins. It was so hot that evening,

the only respite from the heat was to submerge your arms, and head in the ice-filled trashcans. Alpha Sound and Light provided the PA system, and would throughout the next year. The production was hurried but the new 4808 was a success. At least people were able to find the new location, and Buyonovich covered the bands' guarantees. I remember at the end of the night, speaking with Harley Flannigan, the lead singer of The Cro-mags. He had a winged demon tattooed across his chest. Possibly a hint of what was to come? Harley spoke candidly about his recent video with David Bowie.

The following day, we started moving the rest of the equipment from the now defunct Central Avenue location. After loading the beer coolers and pool tables, I went outside to smoke a cigarette and walk the grounds. I was excited. As I stood in the gravel parking lot, inside the fence, I watched a man approaching up the sidewalk. As he passed me on the other side of the perimeter, he pulled a pistol from his pants, fired it down Seventh Street directly in front of me, and then stuck the firearm back in his drawers. He continued on as if nothing had happened. I remember saying to myself, "I'm going to get killed down here. This place is a fucking war zone." The Earle Village folks were already sending us a message.

It took us several weeks to finish painting and the rest of the build out. The entire time, I was trying to orchestrate the transfer of the beer licenses to the new location.

I called Levine and asked him, "How did 'The White Trash Ball' sell alcohol without an alcohol permit?"

"I think they applied for a temporary alcohol permit and it

was granted." Levine responded.

So I went through a box of papers and found the ABC manual. The bylaws clearly stated that I could transfer my license from Central Avenue to a location as long as the new address had held a license in good standing, regardless whether it had been temporary or not. I called the Alcoholic Beverage Commission, and was forwarded to David Sullins, Chief of Alcohol Law Enforcement.

"Plumides? Didn't yer daddy have a strip club years ago?" Sullins asked in a condescending tone.

Obviously the ABC officials were still haunted by the memory of my father kicking their asses, all the way to the North Carolina Supreme Court.

"Yes sir."

"Well, you can't transfer your license under any circumstances," Sullins said with authority, "Yer gonna have to reapply, and that's gonna take several months before you'll git it, if at all."

Then I read him the codicil I had found in the manual. "Hold on a minute. Let's see what you got there."

He then retrieved a copy of the manual himself, and read the citation. Abruptly, he said, "I'll have to call you back."

It was July 18, 1989. Sullins entered the building as an electrician installed the new "Art Deco" neon 4808 light over the roll-up door.

"I have to do my inspection." Sullins stated as he approached. "The bylaws require me to make sure your restrooms are operational before I give you your license."

“Please, be my guest. They’re over there around the corner.”

After his inspection, Sullins handed me the license.

“Well, I see you’re pretty busy so I’ll get out of your hair.”

“Thanks, Mr. Sullins.”

“Detective Sullins,” he responded. “Detective Sullins or sir.”

Taken aback, I answered, “Thank you, Detective Sullins.”

As Sullins exited the club, I examined the new license and asked myself, “Exactly how many assholes are there in this city?” I then called all of the wholesalers to order beer, on the newly installed telephone. We could open for business.

That night I worked really late, hanging the speakers and running wires for the house sound system. I remember trying to drill holes into the pillars in order to mount the speakers. The wood was as hard as concrete, leaving me in a sweat. Once the speakers were hung and connected to the amplifier, I placed The Cure, *Disintegration*, into the compact disc player, and turned the volume way up.

As the low hum of the most dark and dreamlike of The Cure’s releases washed over me, amongst the smell of fresh paint and saw dust, I was overwhelmed by the sheer reality of opening my first club. The sense of personal accomplishment was numbing and inconceivable. I was almost in disbelief. I had no idea what I was doing and I had played it all by ear. I just followed my instincts, and had to grow up quick. I still had a lot of growing up to do.

My thoughts quelled momentarily, as I was overtaken by the power of the music echoing throughout the empty hall. I

turned out the lights and grabbed a beer out of one of the coolers, then put it to my forehead. The beverage was as cold as frost in February. I took a seat at the bar, cracked open the beer, smoked a cigarette, and pondered what to anticipate the next day. With each song more intoxicating than the next, as if the melodies were aural Absinthe, I realized at that moment, I was the most peaceful I had ever been.

The following week, after a few local bands had played to warm the place up, I received a call from Buyonovich about the grand opening with the legendary Glenn Danzig. After the conversation, I rounded up everyone: Danny, Eddie, Craig, Keith and myself. Eddie was a new addition, an out-of-work steel welder, with tattoos and a ponytail down to his ass; a biker friend of Keith’s. Bill and I had fallen out after I bought the business, and he had since lost interest. Christi, the daughter of a “Miss Georgia,” felt the company I was keeping was a little too rough for her “southern belle” sensibilities, and the area too criminal for a nice girl, noting that the “heavier” bands were not her forté. She described the whole situation as “scary”; it had lost its college appeal to her. She was probably right.

Buyonovich was coming in with the band. He was never there anyway, because he lived in Greenville, or somewhere. To tell you the truth, I didn’t know where he lived. I never asked.

We had a local Reggae act coming up that Friday night called The Uprising, but I was more concerned with Saturday

night's show. And when the band loaded in, I recall feeling jipped because they didn't have dreadlocks. The new t-shirts came in that day. I opened a box full and handed one to each employee. The t-shirts said "4808 STAFF" on the front, and "Stay Hardcore" on the back. Everyone tried on the shirts to make sure they fit.

"Why didn't you mention us in the newspaper article?" Craig asked.

Irritated, I responded, "If anyone had asked about you, I would gladly have mentioned you. When you open your own club, and spend your last nickel doing it, then you can talk about you all you want."

"I grow tired of talking about myself, Mr. Reporter." Craig smirked and said under his breath. "Tell me, what do you think of me? Fucking prick."

Employees often think that they are irreplaceable.

"Listen up. I got a call from Buyonovich. He says that Danzig will be here at 4:00 P.M. tomorrow for sound check. He wants a barricade, so we're going to have to build one."

Danny spoke up, "But we ain't got enough materials left after building the stage and the bar, Mike?"

"Well, we'll just have to find some materials then, won't we? Danny, Eddie, Keith, ya'll come with me. Keith, bring that hammer."

Keith grabbed a hammer off the bar. I lead everyone outside to the padlocked roll-up door next door.

"Keith? Will you do the honors?"

Keith grinned and gave me a salute. He then looked left

then right and said, "Cover me."

Everyone shielded Keith from open view with their bodies. With this crowd, I'm sure this wasn't their first rodeo. Keith smashed the lock open with the roofing hammer. The lock popped open, but was still in working order. We then rolled up the door, and quickly rolled it down behind us, then spread out to find some building materials.

"Find enough shit for us to build the barricade only, and let's get the fuck out of here."

As everyone gathered lumber, Keith found a brand new piece of carpet that appeared to be the same dimensions as our freshly built stage.

"Hey Mike," Keith said as the cigarette hung from his mouth, "Look at this. Brand new from Dalton, Georgia." Keith then smiled big and unrolled the piece.

"The carpet capitol of the world? Bring it."

We grabbed the materials we needed, and carried them out through the roll-up door, pulled the door shut behind us, and replaced the lock. Keith and I unrolled the carpet onto the stage. It was a perfect fit. The guy next door at Silbury Hill, Inc. must have hated us. We were always swiping materials out of his warehouse. I eventually had to pay Albert Einstein fifty bucks for the carpet. "Long live rock."

## Politics and the Devil Himself

It was July 29, 1989 and Jimmy Buffett was playing at Memorial Stadium. It was one of Cecil's shows. There were several thousand "Parrot Heads"; mostly frat boys, and sorority girls, all drunken and scandalous. There was obviously a multitude of under age drinkers. But the big crowd of "Young Republicans" partied on, seemingly without concern, and the police made no effort to harass anyone, as far as I could see. I went up to the concert to meet Buyonovich briefly, to give him the money from the advanced ticket sales. We stood on the scaffolding behind the stage, in awe of the rowdy Buffett crowd.

Ozzy Osbourne had just played next door at the Grady Cole Center the week before. The police had beaten some fans and made some arrests that hit local news. Ozzy, after biting heads off winged creatures, and pissing on the Alamo,

not only had PETA up in arms, but had created some dis-sention among law enforcement personnel nationwide. He was not as beloved then as he is now, as this was many years before his television show. Ozzy was viewed as a menace by "decent" society. But the Parrot Heads' sinful, orgy-like behavior had not caught the attention of the police that sweltering Saturday, possibly because they were distracted by a sudden thundershower, which exposed many a breast through the female attendees' t-shirts.

I thought it a bit unfair, but governmental bodies were targeting the heavy-metal types. Not only had a music ratings system been implemented, a sea of recent litigation against Judas Priest, Osbourne, and others for their influence over the weak-minded, colored the pages of the news media. Two families had brought a joint civil action against Priest for the suicides of their two teenagers, who shot themselves after listening religiously to their brand of music, spurring nationwide concern over heavy metal.

More so, the incomparable advocate of illicit drug use, Hunter S. Thompson, the father of "Gonzo Journalism," was Buffett's close associate after years of hardcore partying together in Aspen, where Thompson even ran for Sherriff of the town on the platform of legalization of their party favors. Bill used to see Thompson, Buffett, Jack Nicholson, and Don Henley hanging out in Aspen together on his yearly family skiing trip in the 1980's. Thompson often wrote of his avid drug use in his books, and later would be domiciled at Buffett's estate in Florida. This fact didn't seem to have any ef-

fect on the local law enforcement. Maybe they weren't privy to such trifles. The subversives were cleverly disguised hiding behind a "Cheeseburger in Paradise" that sunny July day.

North Carolina's politics of late had gone medieval. Jesse Helms almost single-handedly erased "Federal Funding for the Arts" off the planet, due to the Mapplethorpe scandal, and even today, at the incept of the Obama Administration, advocacy for funding still struggles. Through Helms' influence, the North Carolina Legislature also enacted a "Disseminating Obscenities" Statute, *N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-190.1*, in 1985, during the pinnacle of the Reagan years, for the sole purpose of eradicating pornography in the state, faulting dirty pictures for society's woes.

The Supreme Court Decision put forth by my father in 1971, *C'est Bon, Incorporated vs. The North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Commission*, that set the precedent for nude performances in the state for over a decade, had been overthrown. The authorities were now afforded carte blanche to bust every strip club, and jack-shack in the state. Then Mayor of Charlotte, now NC Congresswoman, Sue Myrick, used the statutes' authority to close down all of Sal Macy's "Joy Adult Book Stores," which Sal named after his wife, who I recall incidentally was a big Frank Sinatra fan.

I headed back up to the 4808 to make sure the barricade was finished, and check on a few things. I was also to meet Buyonovich, and the band at 4:00 P.M.

Danzig was touring in support of their first release on Def

American Records produced by Rick Rubin. I was a little nervous about meeting Glenn Danzig. He was very much a myth. The word-of-mouth tales that chronicled the lead singer of The Misfits' rise to cult stardom had me edgy. Would this devil-spawn live up to my expectations? Glenn's hulking physique and brooding aura were things of legend.

A few minutes after four, Buyonovich entered the club, followed by a menacing crew. With the Tour Manager, Mark Workman along side him, Buyonovich was followed in by two very tall men with long, black hair and goatees: John Christ and Eerie Von, the guitar and bass players for the band, both clad in black leather and motorcycle boots, then Chuck Biscuits, the band's legendary drummer, with sandy blond hair and sideburns, and finally Glenn Danzig, all in single file.

Glenn Danzig approached the stage in a saunter, wearing all black and a sleeveless shirt, flaunting his muscular arms. He had shoulder length black hair, and mutton chops. He was thick and defined, but his height seemed odd, as I had heard stories of his massive physique. Glenn was much shorter than the rest of his crowd, but what he lacked vertically, he made up for in attitude. Danzig leaned over against the freshly built barricade and examined the stage set up, grimacing as he looked on, as the stagehands loaded the equipment.

Buyonovich introduced me to Glenn. A little doe-eyed, and fumbling, I eagerly shook his hand.

"It's so cool that you're playing here, Glenn." I excitedly expressed, "I've been a big Misfits and Samhain fan for

years.”

Danzig shook my hand with little enthusiasm, and replied in an unpleasant tone with a thick Lodi accent, “Yeah. Good to meet you.”

“This is my club and we just opened. This is our first big show here. I’m really excited! What do you think of the place?”

Danzig’s eyes wandered about the room.

“Well, you know kid, this place is just another punk rock shit hole. We’re supposed to be playing theatres and for whatever stupid fucking reason, they keep booking us in these punk rock shit holes.”

Buyonovich snickered, but tried to keep a straight face, noticing my reaction to Glenn’s blatant honesty.

Although saddened by Danzig’s remark, I then inquired, albeit sarcastically, “Well then, how could I make it better for you, Glenn?”

He noticed that I was offended by his comment, and was sympathetic.

“Hey, hey... don’t take it to heart, guy. I don’t know. The place needs somethin’. I got it.” He paused. “Maybe you should paint the walls red. Yeah. That would be better. That’s what you should do. Paint the walls red.”

“Sounds like a great idea,” I replied. “I’ll get on it next week.”

Danzig half-smiled and turned away.

I had just painted the entire place teal, and it was a total pain in the ass. I wasn’t about to change it regardless of the

opinion of Lucifuge. I thought to myself, “So much for evil genius.”

Workman approached me to ask if there was somewhere for Christ to play his guitar to warm up without being bothered. I lead Workman and Christ into the labor service next door, where Christ set up his rig, pulled up a bar stool, and played guitar, looking very much like the popular Jimi Hendrix poster. Christ gazed at the floor, closed his eyes and began to tune his guitar, his long black hair falling around his face. I remember him playing “Little Dreamer” by Van Halen. I watched him for a few minutes, then chimed in with my best David Lee Roth impersonation. He smiled, and got into it. We had fun with a couple more tunes, and then I went back into the club.

At about 7:00 P.M., the kids started lining up outside the entrance: Punks and metal heads mostly, and a lot of teenagers. When we were ready to open, Buyonovich and I manned the entrance to take door money, and check kids for their identification. If kids didn’t have any, or were under 21, our standard operating procedure was to give them a big “X” on either hand with magic marker, which symbolized their status. Some kids were “straight edge,” meaning that regardless of age, they didn’t drink, and wanted the “X” on their hands, as a noble reminder to other punks.

As the opening act Raleigh’s, Confessor, performed I noticed this really young-looking kid standing in line. He had long red hair and freckles, wearing a Danzig t-shirt, leather wristbands, Levi’s, and Chuck Taylor’s. He was more excited

than most, as he presented to the door to pay entrance.

“It’ll be ten dollars, kid.”

“That’s all? I thought it would be a lot more expensive than that!”

“Well, I guess it’s your lucky day.”

“No shit! I am so psyched!”

“How old are you, anyway?”

“I just turned sixteen today.”

I looked carefully at the kid’s identification, and marked an “X” on each hand.

“Then Happy Birthday! No ins or outs.”

“Yes, sir!”

As the kid ventured into the club, I said, “Hey, stay hardcore, kid, but I don’t want to ever hear you cursing in my club again. You hear me?”

Skittishly, the red haired kid stuck his hands in his pockets, and looked to the ground. “Yes, sir.” Then he scampered into the venue.

I laughed to myself and said to Buyonovich, “Fucking kids these days.”

Moments later, walking up in a giant stride through the parking lot gate was Art Boerke. I was pleasantly surprised.

“Ah! I love my dead gay son! What the fuck are you doing here, Jabba?”

We hugged.

“Fuck you! Anyway, how could I miss it? I’ve been driving around half an hour trying to find this place.”

I invited Art into the club to look around.

“So, what do you think?”

“I think... it’s a punk rock shit hole.”

“Hey, that’s just what Glenn Danzig said!”

“Well, he should know better than anybody.”

We both laughed.

Before set time, we were required to provide a deli tray, beer, various snacks, and ten gallons of spring water for the band. John Christ, who was now wearing a “Dice Man” t-shirt with cut-off sleeves, and Eerie Von wearing a “Samhain” t-shirt also with cut-off sleeves, both poured a gallon each on their heads prior to their performance. The club was packed as Danzig took the stage, opening the show with “Twist of Cain,” a version more up-tempo than on record, playing it loud and menacingly as a huge slam dance pit formed in front of the band. The set was mostly comprised of songs from the new album, and they played crowd pleasers like “Mother,” “She Rides,” and then The Misfits’ “20 Eyes” and “I Want Your Skull.” The bartenders all stood atop of their posts to get a bird’s eye view, as the punks, skins, and metal heads created a vortex of bodies.

It was the first night, and it was amazing. The people. The music. The pit especially was a healthy display of aggressive energy. As one person would fall, he would be picked up by his brethren to soldier on. There was a method to the madness. You could feel the static in the air. The charge of it was most electrifying. The scene I had hoped to create Uptown

was finally coming to fruition. It was happening right before my eyes, and it was all my own. As Danzig performed, “Am I Demon,” it was apparent to me that Glenn and his boys came to town for a singular purpose: to paint the whole town a hellish red, until hell ran out of paint.

## **A Dark Underbelly**

With the first big show at 4808 under my belt, I had incurred some additional costs that Buyonovich said he’d pay. I supplied beer for Danzig, extra stagehands, and security people. Of course, I got stuck with the bill. It happened a lot in our partnership, but he kicked in money in the beginning when I needed it, so he probably did have an excuse to fuck me. Art had warned me. But I was learning all of this on my own, and a lot of the time I learned the hard way. The dark underbelly of concert promotions was yet to expose itself to me fully, but occasionally I would get a glimpse of its ugliness.

Dad had a number of life slogans. Among his many colorful diatribes were, “You lie down with dogs, you comes up scratchin’,” and “We have met the enemy and they is us.” These phrases resonate in my head more so than the many

others. They were the most appurtenant and applicable. Those phrases not only recognize the adversity which comes from outside the circle, but also from within it.

Michael Plumides, my father, was one of those geniuses who teetered between light and darkness. He was a tortured man; his dissolution and frustration were due to an untimely illness, brought on by alcoholism and an excessive lifestyle. He struggled for peace of mind and happiness in the wake of it. One way he coped was to live vicariously through his three sons. He was an incredibly witty and charismatic man, with an uncanny, comedic persona. My dad was a fighter, and he had some balls. He told you what he thought regardless of your opinion. He didn't tip toe around people like so many others do, and he despised hypocrisy. Tennessee Williams once wrote "Mendacity is the system we live in." My father's world was one of "lies and liars," and so was mine.

My father was many things; a scoundrel and a philanderer, but he was not a defeatist. Ironically, he was eventually subdued by his own mortality. I look back on my father's life often. But I believe that he was a multi-faceted man who was sometimes demonized justly, other times unjustly. I believe he felt cheated; perhaps he was confident that he had cheated himself. Sometimes we think we will live forever, but we won't. We try to be good. He tried to be good as much as his provocative nature would allow him to be. The nightclub business killed him many years before his actual death. The shadow of his specter germinates inside me, and I sometimes fear that I suffer from his madness.

While in the nightclub business, my father surrounded himself with unsavory types, and partook in villainous and devious behavior. Like him, I was already doing the same. When I was a fresh out of college I was clean cut, wearing my Polo tennis shirt, bucks and Guess jeans. A year later, I was unshaven, had grown my hair, and wore Doc Martins. I was also wearing a gun as did the other employees, in the most depressed part of Uptown, surrounded by bikers, punks, skins, and metal heads, and partying late night. There was never a shortage of women. College girls, high school girls, metal chicks, and cute punk rockers, would come one after the other; the glamorous life of a club owner. Madness indeed and I enjoyed every waking second of it, sometimes not getting home until sun up.

Mom used to chase Dad around all night when he was carousing. She found him one evening with another woman; he was covered in lipstick, with his head thrown back, in some seedy sixties speakeasy, laughing at her as the lady friend hung around his neck. Mother grabbed the brown-bagged liquor bottle off the table and busted him over the head with it. Then she drove him to the hospital.

By this time I had moved out of the apartment on Seventh Street and moved to Plaza-Midwood with Jillian, many years before the Thomas Street Tavern, Little Vietnam, and the Thirsty Beaver, or any of the pseudo-area gentrification. It was, and still is, a high crime area. The closest thing to civilization on Central Avenue in 1990 was Repo Records, and

Will's Pawn Shop. I had put everything I had into the club, and was a little strapped, so Jillian insisted on my cohabitation with her. She was aware that I possessed a wandering eye, and she wanted to keep me close. Did I choose a similar fate?

It was tempestuous being a sexually-charged twenty-four year old man watching young attractive women run around all night, only to go home after closing with a hard on. If I tried to give Jillian a gentle nudge and wake her up, she would elbow me in the ribs. Possibly I wandered out of necessity, picking a young chick out of the crowd, almost nightly, and getting my freak on before going to Jillian's after closing. I would shower off the night and climb into bed. I thought it the right thing to do.

But I can promise you, Jillian owned the house and she wouldn't let me forget it. I remember watching a local news report about law enforcement that summer, targeting "Skin Heads in North Carolina." The news reporter inaccurately boasted her feeble knowledge on the subject.

"Be aware of Nazi insignia, and literature. Law Enforcement today released a statement regarding the rising skinhead problem, as a matter of public safety."

I laughed. They had it all wrong as usual. Not denying that there were skinheads in the state, with bands like Patriot to pitch the propaganda, but there was no "Skinhead Problem." I knew all eight of them. They were harmless. It was more "Yellow Journalism," striking fear into the hearts of the locale in order to provoke them to consume, so they could sell cars,

aftershave and what not; a point that Marilyn Manson would make in an interview for the film, *Bowling for Columbine*. It was comedic.

But North Carolina did have a speckled history regarding violence amongst the neo-political factions. I was aware of the incident in Oxford circa 1970, where three white men had lynched a black man in broad daylight, and were acquitted. There was also an incident between Communists and Neo-Nazis in Greensboro that left two dead, sometime in 1980. But if there were some rise in skinhead activity, or a plot to overthrow the local government, I would know about it.

Jillian was cooking in the kitchen and sipping her Chardonnay, as she often did.

"I don't like them. I don't think you should let them into your club."

"You don't know anything about those people, Jillian. All skinheads aren't Nazis. Some are SHARP skins, and some are straight edge."

"I don't have the first idea what you're talking about. Sharp what?"

"Skin Heads Against Racial Prejudice."

"Oh, that's clever. They can spell. Just don't invite any of your skinhead friends over my house, Adolf."

I bit my thumbnail.

"Yeah, that's fine talk coming from a Republican. What are so you angry about?"

"How can you possibly defend skinheads? They're terrible people! They killed six million Jews, for God sakes!"

“Did you not hear anything I just said? This isn’t Nazi Germany, and I’m not defending anyone. I was just pointing out that one: There’s no skinhead problem in Charlotte, and two: They are not all goose-stepping, doing ‘siege heils’ and wearing swastikas, with bobble-head Hitlers on their dashboards. It’s just more media bull shit to get people to fear what they don’t understand.”

I continued, “And another thing, I’m not going to start picking and choosing who can and can’t come to the club. That mentality flies in the face of everything that I stand for. The 4808 Club is the only place they’re going to see the shows they want. It’s not exclusive. Everyone’s invited. It’s the ‘Great American Melting Pot,’ like on *Schoolhouse Rock*.”

“You live under my roof, so I have a say in who can come in and who can’t. And I certainly don’t want my nieces and nephews around that element – melting pot or not..”

“This is stupid.”

“You’re stupid,” she hissed.

I don’t know why, but she loved to push my buttons. I was so pissed off, I got up off the couch and stormed out, slamming the door behind me. I climbed into my Cherokee, and sat, fuming. I lit a cigarette, all the while shaking my head, and biting my lip. She really chapped my ass sometimes. She was providing a roof over my head and paying all the bills, and I hated her for it. I couldn’t tell you who I despised more, her or me. I was now a kept man and had to do as I was told, perhaps, another reason for my many infideli-

ties. And when Jillian would give me a blowjob, she would hum. It drove me nuts. Maybe I’m rationalizing.

The crickets chirped loudly as I stared into the sun over the tree line. The sky was bright orange, the color of an inmate’s jumpsuit, as it set in the late afternoon sky. The lightning bugs flashed like hundreds of Polaroids. I was a fool to think I was calling my own shots. I deluded myself into believing that I wouldn’t have to answer to anyone. Who was I kidding? In life, you always have to answer to someone. I just wanted to leave. Go somewhere. See some people. The problem was I had nowhere else to go. That’s just the way it was in Charlotte on Sunday.

## Alvin

I was dead asleep when I got a call from Buyonovich around 4:00 A.M. at Jillian's House. She wasn't pleased.

"Hello?"

"Mike. It's Chris."

I turned on the light and wiped the sleep from my eye. Jillian grunted and put a pillow over her head.

"Yeah, man. What's up? Is everything okay?"

"No. Everything is not okay. The Bad Brains' bus broke down in Virginia and the band didn't show up at the 'Cat's Cradle' until a little after 2:00 A.M."

"So they didn't play the show?"

"Yes, they played the show, but they brought this psychotic tour manager with them named Alvin."

The Bad Brains, originally from D.C, were icons, considered pioneers of the hardcore punk genre; although the band

rejected being part of the movement. They had caught the attention of Ric Ocasek of The Cars, and recorded their legendary album *Rock for Light* which Ocasek produced, drawing nationwide attention to the band. Combining a mixture of reggae, punk and metal, The Bad Brains were the most influential band of the last twenty-five years, encouraging numerous acts such as Living Colour, Atlanta's Follow for Now, and Fishbone, as well as Minor Threat, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Faith No More. I was excited knowing that The Bad Brains were slated to play at the 4808, to support their new release on Caroline Records entitled *Quickness*, along with Corrosion of Conformity, and Leeway the following evening.

Amazingly, the fans were still waiting around for The Bad Brains until late at the Cradle. Upon their arrival, Bad Brains tour manager, Alvin, demanded the band's beer from Frank, the Cat's Cradle's owner, but he refused, noting the lateness of the hour, and state law. After 2:00 A.M., Frank padlocked the coolers for the night. Incidentally, the Cat's Cradle was another legendary venue in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, which had to move several times over the years.

I listened carefully to Buyonovich, while Jillian snored loudly. I could hear the concern in his voice.

"So this Alvin character goes out to the tour bus, and comes back in the Cradle with a fucking crow bar, busts open one of the beer coolers, and helps himself to a couple a cases of Red Stripe."

"No way."

“Yes, way! Frank is a little bit of a pacifist, so he didn’t call the cops or nothing. But let me tell about this Alvin creep. That prick is a fucking sociopath. If that marble-mouthed, nappy-headed asshole even looks at me wrong tomorrow, I will beat the shit out of him right in front of his entire crew. You watch me.”

“Listen. We’ve sold six hundred advanced tickets and Sullins from Alcohol Law Enforcement has been snooping around asking questions about all-ages shows. They’re watching me, so let’s try to keep the chaos to a minimum. Square?”

“Square. See you tomorrow.”

As I hung up the phone, I was convinced the show would be an absolute debacle. I sat on the edge of the bed, thinking, and then grabbed the remote and quietly turned on CNN. There was a story running about sex scandals and politics. Rob Lowe was a keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, July 19, 1988. Lowe disappeared into the Atlanta night after his speech, and ended up at the mythical Club Rio, a venue so decadent, the lunar activities of its sultry patronage would make Caligula blush. I loved Atlanta back then. Atlanta was the first city I ever witnessed hot girls kissing in public, way before the Clinton Administration, when it became fashionable.

Lowe had sex with two females, one of whom was underage. The news story also covered Gary Hart’s tryst, Jimmy Swaggart’s sexual misconduct, as well as Jim Bakker, expos-

ing them as the false prophets they were. I thought, what better spot for Lowe to dive into some late night sexploits with teenagers than right around the corner from CNN?

I watched the story for several minutes, and then turned the TV off to go back to sleep. A conversation with Lonny Friend, then Editor-in-Chief of *Rip Magazine*, painted Lowe in a different light, as he had viewed the second, lesser-known video in Larry Flynt’s possession. We dare not speak of the other video’s contents in this forum.

It was August 17, 1989 and Corrosion of Conformity was the first band to arrive that day. I had some history with C.O.C., as I interviewed the band back in 1987 when they released their *Technocracy E.P.* and had become friends with the band. Simon Bob Sinister, who left his band The Ugly Americans, for a short time, sang for C.O.C. during that period. It seemed like there was always some inner turmoil with the band. Simon Bob had since been replaced by Karl Agell, and with him, Corrosion of Conformity would record their critically acclaimed *Blind* album, which incidentally they were kind enough to thank me on, although they misspelled my name.

Simon Bob had this great tattoo of Dean Martin, holding a martini glass, on his arm. The depiction was so inspiring, that Bobby and Scott from Helpless Dancer, along with Fred McFarlin from WRFX-FM, and I formed a band called The Pleasure Kings, and we hung a poster of Dean Martin behind us. We only played one show. I think we covered The Goo Goo Dolls, “James Dean,” and Jason and the Scorchers’

“White Lies.” I can’t remember. We were awful.

I used to visit with McFarlin when he did his “Fox Exposures” show on Sunday nights. Fred also moonlighted for me as a bartender. As I was waiting in the darkness to be buzzed in, a man wandered up out of the blackness and was standing next to me, wearing sunglasses and dreads. Upon further examination I noticed it was Lenny Kravitz, in town to open for Tom Petty. He was stopping in for an interview.

The new line up for Corrosion of Conformity consisted of Karl on vocals, Woody Weatherman, and Pepper Keenan (now of Down) as the dual ax attack, Phil Swisher on bass, and the incomparable Reed Mullin on drums. After waiting around for The Bad Brains for nearly two hours, Reed and the others were restless, and had heard about the prior evenings problems in Chapel Hill. C.O.C. insisted on knocking out their sound check instead of sitting around with their thumbs up their asses.

“Well, go ahead and set up, but leave enough room for their back line,” I instructed.

Around that time, Buyonovich and Dana Malvo, an Italian, tattooed biker chick with a broken front tooth, both came in wearing their leathers in mid August. It was about 3:00 P.M. and The Bad Brains had still not arrived. Buyonovich was pissed, and you could tell that he hadn’t slept at all. It was rare that The Bad Brains were playing down our way. The Brains had a tendency to break up on a whim, and had notoriously canceled shows. There were always rumors, but this time they were actually showing up, or so

we hoped.

“I’m not putting up with any shit from this Alvin creep,” Buyonovich declared as he approached me. “No more bull shit. Hey, did you see? There’s already kids lining up outside.”

I took a gander out the front door. There they stood, already fifty or so; punks, skins, and death rockers were all cuing. A Ryder truck was parked outside the gate.

“Well, somebody’s here,” I yelled to Buyonovich. “I think it’s your boy.”

The truck backed the tailgate up to the dock, and several men exited the vehicle.

Alvin entered the club. He was scruffy with light brown skin and green eyes, a Bob Marley t-shirt, jeans, tennis shoes, with a brown communist-style cap. Corrosion of Conformity was doing a sound check. Alvin was full-on militant.

“You muthah fuckahs better get C.O.C.’s shit off the stage, right now! Brains is sound checkin’ first.”

Buyonovich was defiant. “Sorry. C.O.C. is doing their check. You’re late again.”

Alvin noticed that I, and some of the other employees, were wearing side arms. Alvin was taken aback.

“What ya’ll got guns fo?”

Charlotte, in many respects was a lawless southern town.

“Peace through strength,” I responded. “This is a bad neighborhood.”

“Y’all’s guns don’t scare me! I’m from the Bronx, I ain’t afraid a no guns! Fuck you crackahs and yo’ guns!”

“There’s no call for that, man.”

“Listen,” Buyonovich then interjected, pointing his finger in Alvin’s face. “I’ve had about as much shit as I’m gonna take from you!”

“Fuck you then, Chris! The Brains ain’t playing then. How you like that, muthah fuckah?”

Buyonovich whimsically reached into my shoulder holster and grabbed the pistol and lunged toward Alvin, swinging the gun in an attempt to strike Alvin in the head. I blocked Buyonovich with my body.

“Are you out of your fucking mind? What do you think you’re doing?”

“I was gonna pistol whip ’em.”

“I told you that I didn’t want any problems today.”

Alvin was infuriated.

“Bunch a North Carolina redneck, cracker muthah fuckahs can stick they guns up they ass. Fuck this! We ain’t playing this show. Pack all the shit up!”

“Hey, I’m from Jersey, asshole!” Buyonovich yelled.

“That’s even worse! Malcolm, y’all put the shit back on the truck! We ain’t playing this show. Fuck this!”

The crew wouldn’t respond to Alvin’s demands, and all looked to the floor, shaking their heads.

“You’re tripping, Alvin,” Malcolm spoke up. “We’re playin’ this show, man.”

“Oh. Y’all against me now, huh? Well fuck you too! I’ll do this my damn self.”

Alvin began to jettison the crates into the Ryder truck, off of

the loading dock. Malcolm pulled a stainless steel lock-blade from his pocket, as Alvin continued to load the equipment.

“Don’t do this, man. You’re fuckin’ up.”

“What you got to do with it, muthah fuckah?”

Alvin and Malcolm had a stare off for a moment. Then Alvin looked down and noticed the knife in Malcolm’s hand.

Alvin’s eyes were glassy as if he felt betrayed.

“What’s yo’ plan, fool?”

“This.” Malcolm responded.

Malcolm jumped down from the loading dock, and stuck his stainless steel lock-blade into the left rear tire of the Ryder truck. The tire went flat in seconds. Buyonovich’s crony Dana, excited by the conflict, then produced her own stainless lock-blade and punctured the right rear tire. The truck was completely disabled.

I remember the red haired kid standing idly by, along with another hundred or so punk rockers in full punk regalia, looking on in astonishment.

Almost simultaneously, a raggedy tour bus pulled up Seventh Street, blowing out black smoke as it proceeded slowly around the corner; reminiscent of George Roy Hill’s classic hockey film, *Slap Shot*. But it wasn’t Paul Newman arriving with “The Hansons.” It was The Bad Brains. Alvin was livid, all geared up to go over everyone’s head.

“Oh! I’m gonna straighten all y’all’s asses out right now!”

Alvin rushed out to the tour bus with Buyonovich, Dana Malvo, and I in tow, as he waited in earnest for the doors to open. Out stepped Darryl Jennifer, the band’s bass player,

smiling as the door closed behind him. Darryl was a tall man, with dread locks, wearing a white collarless dress shirt, blue jeans, and Chuck Taylor's.

"We ain't playin' this fucking show, man," Alvin jeered, "I ain't like none of these muthah fuckahs."

"Of course we're playing the show," Darryl replied, "Look at the line. The kids are here to see us. We're not going to let them down, man."

The bus doors swung back open, and pot smoke billowed from inside, as the members Earl Hudson, Dr. Know, and lastly the singer H.R. exited the coach.

Earl, the drummer, donned dread locks tucked up in a toboggan, a gas station attendant's shirt with the name "Earl" inscribed on it, Dickie's, and brown boots. Dr. Know, the guitarist, with long dreads and a beard, wore a Bad Brains *I Against I* t-shirt, Levi's, and white Nike leather tennis shoes. H.R. had three huge dread locks, and wore mirrored sunglasses with fingerprints all over them, a white vee neck t-shirt, a small pouch on a leather strap around his neck, with black jeans tucked into his white striped socks and weathered black army boots.

I ordered food for the band from a vegetarian restaurant down on Independence Boulevard. The band came into the club, and sat down at a round, folding table I set up back behind the bar. I didn't have a dressing room, so I hung a painter's tarp on a clothesline across the area to give them some privacy.

The Brains didn't begin their sound check until about

8:00 P.M. It was like they were moving in slow motion. Marijuana has that effect. I was just glad they made it. Then H.R. insisted on learning to play the trumpet, a talent he hadn't quite mastered yet. He caterwauled through the P.A. system for an hour, as hundreds of fans waited impatiently outside. I was thinking, "What the fuck is he doing? He can't be serious."

Finally, we opened the doors around 9:15.

First up was a group from Pennsylvania called Leeway. The kids liked the band. Before C.O.C.'s set, Karl asked me to keep an eye out for these chicks who were coming up from Atlanta. I said I would try. I remember standing outside on the loading dock, and spying a 1986 Honda Civic four door with punk rock stickers on the bumper and Georgia plates pulling into the 4808 parking area. Three women stepped out of the car, with beer cans in their hands. One of them caught my attention. She was petite, wearing a black midriff t-shirt, black spandex jumper with suspenders, black and white striped stockings with garters, and ten eyehole Docs. She wore a lot of mascara, had a bleach blonde *Rosemary's Baby* hair cut, and a total punk attitude.

I watched the young minx as she walked slowly up to the club drinking her beer then throwing the empty can to the ground. She entered the club like a scene out of the punk classic *Suburbia*. I darted inside to get behind the counter to admire her further. She was child-like, but *Lolita* sexy, all the while smacking her gum, as she presented to the door counter to exclaim, "I'm

on the guest list.” She was just in time for C.O.C.

I had called a friend in Atlanta the month before to inquire about Rob Lowe, and the under-age female in the sex video. He mailed me a copy. I remember popping the videotape into the VCR, and watched Rob Lowe having sex with the cute little blonde, as another unidentified fellow looked on exclaiming, “Do her, Rob. Do her!”

I thought to myself, “Wait a minute. That’s her. That’s fucking her!”

I approached the young girl with her striped stockings and her bobbed do.

“Do I know you from somewhere?”

“Probably not,” she quipped with attitude. “I’m from Atlanta.”

She grabbed my laminate that hung from my neck, and inspected it.

“Who are you anyway?”

“I’m Michael. This is my club.”

The girl was in disbelief.

“Yeah right. I’ve heard that one before. You’re kind of young to own your own club, wouldn’t you say?”

“Hey! Danny,” I said. “Come here. Tell her who I am.”

“That’s Mike,” Danny responded. “He’s the owner.”

He then walked away.

“How much did you pay him to say that?” she joked.

“Well I could say the same thing about you, don’t you think?”

“What? I don’t own any club.”

“Aren’t you kind of young to be a porn queen?”

Embarrassed she rolled her eyes and said, “I’m not going to answer that.”

Corrosion of Conformity opened with Black Sabbath’s “Mob Rules.” They appeared to play confidently, and Karl was a great front man, but some of the kids stood close to the stage with their backs turned in protest of the bands’ new, more metal flavor. All in all, it was good comeback show. The crowd was eventually pleased after the band played some of the old stuff. “Eye for an Eye,” and “Mad World” sent the crowd into a frenzy. I went to the rear of the room to get a better view of the stage, and all of a sudden, the overwhelming smell of pot smoke hit me. I followed my nose, ready to bust somebody’s ass, and peeled back the painter’s tarp to find H.R. smoking a big “Bob Marley” joint, smiling as he toked on the Cuban-sized spliff. I freaked out. H.R. smiled and waved, like on a *Chappelle Show* episode, without a care in the world.

I went searching through the crowd frantically for Buyonovich.

“H.R.’s back there behind the bar smoking a joint the size of a Buick. Could you handle that for me please, sir?”

“Hey, man. What do you want me to do? That’s their religion.”

“I don’t think the cops around here give a fuck, Chris! Get back there and tell ‘The Ganja Mon’ to chill before they send in a SWAT Team! All right?”

“Okay. Okay. I’ll take care of it.”

As I had feared, when The Bad Brains performed around midnight, the room was chaos, albeit controlled chaos. There were punks, skins, and Rastafarians all slam dancing with the fury of a monsoon. The band played “I Against I,” “Paid to Cum,” and “Reignition” breaking up the heavy stuff with occasional bouts of Reggae. The Bad Brains’ song “Don’t Blow Bubbles,” an obvious ode to the bands distaste for homosexuals, was written after a confrontation with Austin’s Big Boys, an openly gay punk outfit that they had a falling out with. Interesting how a band, who fused so many concepts and diverse musical styles, and brought so many different people together, was at the time homophobic. The Bad Brains have since grown out of their judgment, but at the time, the horror of AIDS struck fear into even the most liberal of hearts. The right wing propaganda was that effective. The crowd responded heartily at the end of each song with huge responses. The night was another success.

After the show, while watching the girl with the striped stockings and the Mia Farrow hair cut walking across the parking lot with Reed Mullin and Karl Agell, I noticed the red haired kid standing by the exterior fence next to his bicycle, fretting over a flat tire. I approached him, feeling sorry for the little fucker standing there looking like a homeless puppy I once knew.

“Put it in the back of my Jeep. I’ll give you a ride home. It’s gettin’ past your bedtime, you little poser.”

“I’m not a poser! You’re the poser!”

The kid smiled and put the bicycle in the back of my Cherokee. As I was leaving, I noticed Alvin walking with his suitcase, asking for directions to the bus station.

## A Mightier Wind

Hurricane Hugo became a tropical storm in the southeast hemisphere of the Atlantic on September 11, 1989, and a full-on Category 2 hurricane by the 13th, and reached its full intensity as a Category 4, as it approached the coastline of South Carolina.

On September 16, 1989, Jillian and I went to see The Rolling Stones in Raleigh at Carter-Finley Stadium. Mom got us all tickets and passes. I was backstage as Mick Jagger came down the ramp after their encore, and right before climbing into the limo, I took his picture from five feet away. Jagger had a huge, gaunt head atop his little impish body, very much like Nancy Reagan; a big-lipped mug the size of a basketball.

Sometime around September 21st, we were already feeling Hugo's effect. By the morning of September 23rd, Char-

lotte had suffered through the eye of the storm, which left an estimated one billion dollars in damage to the area. Charlotte and its vicinity had been devastated by the then Category 3, toppling historic old trees, blocking roads, tearing off rooftops, and leaving very few people with power. North Carolina was declared a disaster area, and I had a show scheduled with The Sea Hags from San Francisco that night. How poetic.

I was in a panic because Jillian was in a panic.

"We have no power!" she screamed. "How am I going to get dressed?"

I was more worried about the club. I went out to my Cherokee about 10:00 A.M. and attempted to leave the driveway, but to no avail, as the timbers had cut off both ends of Truman Avenue. As I proceeded to go around one of the trees through a neighbor's yard, he came to the edge of his lot in his bathrobe and cursed me out.

"I've got to get Uptown and check on my business!"

"Listen fella, we all got to check on our businesses."

The neighbor thought for a moment, and then went inside to retrieve his work boots, huffing as he hadn't had his morning coffee. Thousands of houses were without power, not just blocks. He then went into his garage and returned with a Poulan chain saw. Still in his bathrobe, he and I cut up the two pine trees, and moved the sections of wood to the roadside, as other neighbors came out to assist us. Charlotte was caught with its pants down, but the overwhelming sense of community after the hurricane was reassuring. We all shook

hands afterwards, and I was on my way Uptown.

After avoiding twenty or thirty downed trees, fire trucks, power company vehicles, police cars, and the National Guard, I finally arrived Uptown. The center of Charlotte was desolate, but relatively untouched. The 4808 had power, and phone. I thought to myself, “What do people have in such an emergency? They have batteries, and a radio.”

I immediately called WXRC-FM and WRFX-FM, and told them that the 4808 Club had power, and anyone who could make the show that night should come and enjoy themselves in the wake of the disaster. Luckily, the publicity didn’t cost me a nickel. It was more like a community service announcement.

That evening, people came from miles around. All the metal heads showed up with their overnight bags, shampoo bottles, hairspray and blow dryers, plugging up wherever they could find an outlet, to tease their hair. We served the community well that night.

The Sea Hags, a really sludgy “Aerosmith meets Kix” rock outfit on Chrysalis Records, had arrived safely, as if a pirate ship had beached itself, amidst the fallen soldiers of the last century. A great band with a terribly unflattering album cover, The Sea Hags, were loud and just heavy and glammy enough for an unknown around these parts to please the crowd, some of whom looked as if they combed their hair with a pork chop. About two hundred-fifty folks showed up that night. I believe that September 23, 1989 was a pinnacle moment for 4808 Club’s future successes.

As a side note: Atco Record Executive, Mark Ross was grounded in Texas, due to the storm, and witnessed a little known local metal band perform, sparking their career. Later in 1989, Ross signed the band, Pantera, and that winter, they recorded *Cowboys from Hell* for the label. I had an opportunity to do shots with Dimebag Darryl, the guitarist for the band, once in Charleston at “The Music Farm,” and another time at “The Cheetah” in Atlanta. He was always just a pleasant and funny guy. Ironically, a fan murdered Dimebag Darryl several years ago. That was a sad day.

All in all, Hugo had done some seventeen billion dollars in damage to the Southeast, only to be surpassed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The whole experience reminded me of the film *Blazing Saddles*; the line that etched itself into my psyche was, “Neitchze says, ‘Out of chaos comes order.’” “Ah, blow it out your ass Howard.”

## Jerry and Bob Weir

The date was October 22, 1989. Charlotte had been pretty much cleaned up after the Hurricane Hugo, with some evidence of the storm still by the roadside. Several months before, Jillian had waited in line eleven hours at Ticketron for four Grateful Dead tickets. She was a big fan. I wasn't. It never made sense to me to pay top dollar to see a bluegrass, psychedelic cover band.

I recall sitting on the toilet at her ski shop. As I sat on the throne trying desperately to grunt one out, I was hindered by this PETA poster on the inside of the stall door; a depiction of a lamb boxed into a wooden crate, as men approached to slaughter it. The lamb looked as if it were crying in pain, just as I was, blowing out an o-ring trying to throw a big "d" in a hurry, as Jillian's raised voice distracted me outside the bathroom. I promised Jillian I would go to The Dead with her and

two of her friends. The day of the show, Jillian's buddies left us hanging. I guess they didn't get it either.

Jillian was angry, like she was most of the time, always rattled about something. I guess it stemmed from her parents not letting her attend Julliard.

"Mark Golden is such an asshole for blowing me off like this. He promised he'd meet us at the ski shop! I stood in line eleven hours for those tickets. Maybe I should fire him. Fucking jerk."

I tried to be accommodating.

"Just don't worry about it. I'll sell the tickets in the parking lot. It's sold out, so the tickets should go real quick, and then we'll go see the show. Okay?"

There were throngs of assorted hippies standing outside the new Coliseum holding up signs displaying the words, "I need a miracle." I pulled up to the curb next to them.

"Hey man! You got some tickets?" they asked.

"Yeah. I'm just trying to get face value for them."

"Well, we don't have any money. Why don't you just give them to us?"

"I'm already loosing the surcharge and tax. Face value at twenty-five bucks is a good deal."

"You need to give us those tickets, man."

"I can't. I need face value."

This particular hippie then stepped away from the car and began to scream at the top of his lungs and pointing at the vehicle.

"Scalper! Scalper! Scalper!"

Jillian and I were both shocked, and I immediately stomped on the gas to pull away all the while looking in my rearview for the cops until I got to the other end of the parking lot.

“Little fucker. I thought hippies are supposed to be about peace and love. What’s all that shit about?”

“It was your big idea to sell the tickets in the parking lot. Hurry up about it! We’re missing the show! Just get it done so I can see Jerry and Bob Weir!”

“I mean, they’re not really hippies, anyway. They’re a bunch of rich kids. Why are they all broke?”

Jillian excitedly pointed out two guys with their fingers up.

“There are a couple of people.”

I pulled my Jeep up next to them.

“You got two tickets?”

“Yeah, man!”

“I’ll give you fifteen bucks a piece for ’em.”

I wasn’t about to haggle again, so I took the money, and the guy handed me a pamphlet. I parked the car and we headed toward the coliseum.

“What is ‘Zendek Farms’? Is it an Ashram?”

I handed the booklet to Jillian and she threw it on the ground.

“I don’t give a shit! Let’s get in the show before we miss the whole thing! You’re taking too long!”

As we traversed the parking lot, Jillian was speed-walking in her long hippie dress, like those old ladies in the shopping

mall, as she and I entered the new and unfamiliar Charlotte Coliseum.

Jillian read off the face of the ticket, “We are in section 207, seats J and K.

The sign posted inside the Coliseum pointed to the right for Section 207-245. After walking for some time, we discovered that we had completed an entire lap. When we finally arrived at our seats, there were two dirty hippies in them.

Jillian pulled me close and yelled into my ear over the music.

“Michael, if you don’t get these people out of my seats right now, I am going to scream!”

The male was scrawny and shirtless, with tobacco stained teeth, unkempt brown hair, and dirty jeans.

“Hey, you two guys are in our seats.” I then asked politely. “Would you mind if we sit down in them, please?”

The dirty hippie looked down at his girlfriend, and said “C’mon, man. There are plenty of other places you can go, man. See, my ole’ lady, she’s not feeling too well. I don’t think I should move her, man. Can’t you find somewhere else to sit down?”

I looked over at his girlfriend in the other seat. She was leaned over and drooling, had sandy brown hair with some ratty dreads, freckles, and was wearing a floral printed dress. She was also pregnant, holding a cigarette smoldering between her fingers with a long ash on the end.

“Listen here, you hippie asshole. I am not in the mood to

be fucked with right now, so you need to get you and your pregnant, junkie girlfriend out of my fucking seats, or I'm going to throw you, and her down the stairs. You got me?"

"Hey, man, there's no need for hostility, man."

He helped his strung out girlfriend to her feet. She was a bit off balance.

"That's way un-cool! She's in a bad way, man! She's pregnant man. Have a heart."

"Well then it would probably be a good idea to NOT bring a pregnant girl to a Dead concert, you jerk off."

"Fuck you, man!"

As the hippie helped his girlfriend hobble down the steps, she threw up on a guy with a pink afro and bee antennae.

I had struggled through roughly an hour of the band's set. I remember The Dead playing a long, drawn out, psychedelic number entitled, "Space." All the other fans were dancing, tripping, and twirling about, like a legion of Tasmanian Devils. I was completely and utterly sober. The song was at its climax, and I was in total hell.

"I've got to go pee. I'll be right back."

Before Jillian forbade me to go, I bolted down the steps. The whole experience was nightmarish, with her bitching at me the whole time and those assholes in the parking lot. I needed a break. I went down to the concourse to find the restroom. I had to go badly, and when I got there, of course there was a long line. Once I was inside the door, there stood a bald nude man, with a long white beard dancing in a puddle of his own urine. He had a brain tattooed to each side of his head.

"What the fuck is wrong with these people?" I asked myself.

I couldn't wait to get the fuck out of there, and it was like pulling teeth to get Jillian to leave. She wanted to stay for the entire concert. When we were finally leaving I noticed the two hippies who tried to get me arrested for selling them our tickets at face value. They were on foot.

"There are those two cock-suckers!"

I attempted to run them over as I exited the parking lot. One of them jumped over some hedges, and the other fell face down in the mud. As I drove past him, I rolled down the window and sang those brilliant words, "Casey Jones you better watch your speed!" I smiled and hit the gas. That was the most fun I had the whole night.

It wasn't that I hated hippies. My problem was that they were all so caught up in the pure hedonism of it, that it didn't stand for anything. It didn't mean anything. The music wasn't dangerous anymore. It was disjointed and meandering. It wasn't honest. Some of the hippies were even peddling bunk acid for profit. How low is that?

Then there's some guy with green teeth, selling macaroni salad out of a dirty beer cooler, and for what? So he can try to scrounge up enough money to get to The Dead show in Atlanta, or Miami, or D.C.? The experience wasn't about being free anymore. It wasn't about anything, really, except for maybe making it to the next show and taping it.

Just imagine a bunch of Dead heads debating over which show was the best: Hampden Sydney, or Merriweather Post.

Meanwhile, a hippie's toddler is crying with a soggy, shitty diaper that could use some changing, but the hippies are too entrenched in their argument over pure nonsense to tend the child's needs. I didn't understand it before I went, and I still don't. I'll take punk rock over that shit any day of the week.

My cousin Johnny told me that he saw Jerry Garcia, of The Grateful Dead, stuffing his fat, bearded face with lamb chops at his fine dining restaurant next to the Park Hotel the day before the show. There was no brotherhood. It was every man for himself.

## **Club Wars 2: Electric Boogaloo**

The 4808 was in full swing, and I was booking bands almost five nights a week. By October and into November of 1989, I had a full schedule: New wave hit-makers, The Call; punkers, Adrenalin O.D.; The U.K. Subs – Social Distortion and 7 Seconds; hair rockers, Lizzy Borden; guitar prodigy Eric Johnson; speed metal-types – Testament; and glammers – Bang Tango, and Davy Vain. I also had a show with one of my favorite regional reggae bands, Awareness Art Ensemble in November. O'Leary would later steal them from me. I would develop an act, and then he would throw more money at them. It was tricky.

O'Leary answered back with The Butthole Surfers, Faster Pussycat, The Flaming Lips, Alien Sex Fiend, The Meat Puppets, Enuff Z'Nuff, and The Bodeans. He had already swiped Panic from me. The war was on, but I have to admit, it was a

pretty cool war, similar to the one between the “The Georgia Theatre,” and “The 40 Watt” in Athens, or Rockafella’s and “The Elbow Room” in Columbia.

Charlotte had never been afforded this kind of entertainment. Although there was an attempt at revisionary history some years later by the various alignments in publication, the 4808 was arguably responsible for creating the Uptown Charlotte night club scene, and its influence forced O’Leary’s hand to change his tastes and alter his sensibilities. There was a certain one-upmanship going on between us. No question about it.

Not only were O’Leary and I in combat over bands and business, but we were also sleeping with some of the same girls. Talk about weird and incestuous. And to top it off, Bob, the original owner of 4808 Central Avenue, had pool tables in both the 4808 and the Pterodactyl Club, so O’Leary would ask him about what I was doing, and vice versa. I admit, the whole situation was a bit folly, but fun at first. It would get dirty in the coming months.

Kokenes was happy with his dance club, hosting drag shows, and dancing every night. He had carved his niche - appealing to the eclectic tastes of the gay, and avante garde of Charlotte. It was safe to say he was out of the fray.

Oftentimes, I was required to provide food and drinks for the touring acts. I had a deal with Ty, a mustached, bum-legged transplant from Minnesota. Instead of catering the band and crew’s food, I would take them down Seventh Street

to Ty’s Place on the corner of Pecan Avenue. I could get a blackened rib-eye steak, baked potato, salad, and all the fixings for less than ten bucks per head.

I remember taking Davy Vain to eat there. He was just a really nice kid from San Francisco, as many of the touring acts were. Frisco had a healthy rock scene. Davy hadn’t had a steak in months, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen a more gracious rocker. He said that he had been living off of “peanut butter and jelly” on tour and it was good to eat some meat that wasn’t potted.

I occasionally bounced a check to Ty, but he was good guy and let me float for a week or two. I always took the bands there. It was a ritual.

There were a couple of Myer's Park kids on the scene who were exuberant and tactical in helping me create enthusiasm for the club: April Morrison, of the all girl band Anastasia, and Lee McCorkle, now a professor of Anthropology, also a local musician who played in Misguided Youth and his newly formed band, Funkenstein. The local kids would come in droves for the next eight months, as I hosted many all-ages shows where the other clubs wouldn’t, as well as local metal shows with bands Like Tight Fit, Paragon, Jacob Marley, and Buster Rogue. All that teased up hair and spandex was a guilty pleasure of mine.

I did the Eric Johnson show with Nick Karras from “The Double Door Inn.” Lee McCorkle was a promoting fiend and put together the first Funkfest ’89 with Johnny Quest, Funkenstein, and The Sex Police. I had people coming out of

the woodwork for employment. It was as if they had to choose sides. Some aligned themselves with me, and others with O'Leary.

Although Chuck Billy and his boys were great guys, Testament's fat little Samoan soundman was a total dirt bag. I would deal with him on several occasions as he toured with Social Distortion among others. Andy Somers, with ICM, was the agent responsible for Testament, Megadeth, Social Distortion, and Danzig and had them all on his roster. These bands usually toured with the same sound crew, and as soon as you saw them step out of the truck, you knew what you were in for.

The Samoan always brought these monitor systems that the bands didn't need and would hit us up for five hundred dollars extra. There were always some added expenses that Buyonovich would stick me with, so I started printing up extra tickets and selling them, in anticipation of getting fucked later. The Samoan would want to load in early, and load out early, and the kids would sometimes show up too late to see the act, because the set was over at midnight. We were open until 2 A.M, but this Samoan guy didn't give a shit.

Usually things went pretty well, but occasionally I would lose money due to a band or sound crew's unreasonableness. To me, that was intolerable. And there was always someone with his hand in the cookie jar. Live music was a crap shoot, especially when you had to pay bands' guarantees and rider requirements. At Bang Tango, my mom, who occasionally

came to shows with cotton in her ears, caught the new door guy, peeling off two hundred dollars and sticking it in his pants. I instructed him to empty his pockets. When he produced the bills he said, "I was gonna bring this to you." There was a grand still in the bucket. Ready cash at almost anyone's fingertips will turn them into a thief. I hate to say it, but it's the truth.

I never prosecuted anyone. I just told them I didn't want to ever see them again. And if it rained during a big show, you could forget about a profit if you had a big guarantee. I'm sure O'Leary shared my woes. We brought it on ourselves. The "Glamorous Life" of a night club owner; "Without love, it ain't much." Long live Sheila E.

## “Earache My Eye”

It was November 24, 1989, the day after Thanksgiving. Following sound check, the members of Soundgarden, Chris Cornell, Kim Thayil, and Matt Cameron, needed a ride back to their hotel. I gladly volunteered to drive them. They were one of my new favorite bands, and were staying at the now infamous Holiday Inn, where I had met Barbie and partied with Dave Mustaine.

I was deep in conversation with the band as we rolled down Independence Boulevard, talking about *The Young Ones*, *Monty Python*, and *Cheech and Chong*. Kim Thayil, the guitarist, even looked a bit like Tommy Chong, with his long black hair and beard, almost like a Sikh without the head wrap. Matt Cameron, the drummer, was riding shotgun, with Kim, and Chris Cornell in the back of my two-door Cherokee. It was like I knew these guys well. We had been around

a lot of the same people and had similar tastes. Kim was in a C.O.C. t-shirt, Levi's, and Chuck Taylor's. Matt, a sandy blond with thin vascular arms, wore jeans, a Dinosaur Jr. t-shirt and Chuck's.

Thayil asked, “So, um, Mike, have you heard our new album, *Louder than Love*?”

“Oh, yeah, I know it very well. It's exactly what needs to be happening right now in music. You know, bridging metal and alternative. Very Sabbath influenced. I really dig it.”

“Yeah, we're all big fans of Sabbath. So you really like it?”

“Yeah. It's amazing. I'm really tired of these hair-flipping types with their cheese metal. Terry Date was able to get a huge sound on record. Stripped down and not too layered. It's taking the music in the right direction. I've turned a lot of the hair metal kids on to it, and they really like it. One thing though.” I paused.

“What?” The three asked in unison, almost as if they were anticipating what I was about to say.

“There's this one song that sounds like...Chris? Sounds like you're saying...”

“Yeah?”

I was hesitant. “It sounds like you're saying, ‘I want to be gay’.”

Kim and Matt lost it, laughing out loud and motioning towards Cornell.

Thayil said, “Ah! You fag! We told you, man! We told you that's what it sounds like!”

Cornell responded, “No, it doesn't!”

Like *Heckyl and Jeckyl* the other two responded, “Oh, yes it does!”

I thought I would interject to offer my services. “I just happen to have a copy of *Louder Than Love* right here.” I looked at the tape for a second and asked, “What song is it again?”

“Power Trip,” they all three answered simultaneously.

After rewinding, and then fast forwarding and then rewinding again, we found it. Everyone leaned their heads together over the console and listened closely to the song. Over the stereo, it sounded very much like Cornell was screaming, “I wanna be gay.”

We all busted out again.

“We told you, mother fucker!”

“Fuck you both, man. Yeah, Mike. I’m saying, ‘I want to be king.’ We tracked it twice, but that’s just the way it sounded, so we left it.”

With Thayil and Cameron still giggling, I pulled into the Holiday Inn parking lot. I parked the car and stepped out of the vehicle, then slid the driver’s seat forward. When Cornell stepped out, he was a little taller than me, with long dark brown hair, a swimmer’s build, and his signature mustache and goatee. Cornell smiled a creepy smile and draped his arm around my neck, pulling me towards him.

“But Mike, I really do want to be gay.”

I looked into Cornell’s eyes, and we kissed. Just kidding. I was scared to death.

Cornell then said after a long pause, “Just fucking with you, dude!”

I was relieved. Back then in the vacuum of AIDS, it just wasn’t something you joked about. Cornell and the others were laughing so hard they were crying.

Then Cornell told me, “You are kind of cute, though.”

I got back in the Cherokee, and laughed to myself the entire time on my way back to the club, playing the song “Power Trip” over and over again.

Antiseen opened the show. Originally there were only two bands on the bill, but the booking agent added Bullet LaVolta. Jeff Clayton and Joe Young were kind of pissed, considering they had their own draw, but we managed and they were good guys about it. Antiseen, now legendary purveyors of Ramones/Motorhead southern-trash punk, churned out the “Destructo Rock” quite nicely performing their classic “NC Royalty,” a fuck off to blue bloods, as a couple hundred or so looked on.

My friend Gib Fenning, who I had known since we both attended Lansdowne Elementary, showed up for the performances. Gib had finished at University of Georgia, and had been living in Athens playing in a band called The Silent P’s. Gib had no idea that I had opened a club. He just happened to call Mom’s house looking for me after Thanksgiving. He was one of the few high school friends of mine who could appreciate the 4808 Club’s significance.

Very few people were familiar with Soundgarden. It was my job to create enthusiasm on a street level, and I was a master at it. By midnight we had roughly four hundred people in attendance. Punks, skins, and metal heads were all slam

dancing, but this time it was different. The bodies swirled, as if from a scene in a Sam Peckinpah epic; blurred and surrealist, as if shot in slow motion, where the blood and sweat reminded us of the grim and yet exhilarating realities of a wild west, punk rock shoot out. As usual, the omnipresent red haired kid was in the pit moshing with the others.

Soundgarden played a raucous, and really heavy set, with songs like “Get on the Snake,” “Full on Kevin’s Mom,” and “Loud Love.” We were bearing witness to a music revolution, evolution, or devolution; I’m not quite sure which one. We were a part of the metamorphosis, as pupa to chrysalis in an explosion of sound. The band encored with Spinal Tap’s “Big Bottom,” as the bass player, Jason Everman, originally of Nirvana, Kim, and Chris all played bass guitars. Lastly, and even more tongue in cheek, Soundgarden befittingly performed Cheech and Chong’s “Earache My Eye,” and I was in on the joke.

That’s the first night I laid eyes on Chastity. She had black eyes, and black shoulder length hair, a turned up nose and thick doll lips. She was leggy with broad shoulders, and slinky like a runway model, yet she was slightly petite. Chastity was one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. She was just a few days over eighteen.

I saw her standing next to Joe Young watching Soundgarden’s set. As Joe stepped away, I had the uncontrollable urge to introduce myself.

“Hello.”

“You’re hot as a crack pipe. I’ve never seen you before.”

“Well don’t you have a way with words? I’ve never been here before. I just moved back from New York.”

“You here with Joe?”

“I met him today at the record store. He’s really nice, but it’s not a date or anything. My name’s Chastity Fair. You’re Michael, aren’t you?”

“How do you know my name?”

“I’ve heard all about you.”

“Doubtful. What have you heard about me?”

“Well, let’s see. You’re kind of an asshole at first, but that perception is only because you’re misunderstood. You are arrogant, but you have a heart. You believe in what you’re doing but you’re stubborn and only want it your way.”

I scratched my head in amazement. She continued.

“You don’t really like people, but you thrive off of their energy... but not in a negative way. It’s just that you think people are sub-standard, and they bore you quickly. You despise authority, and you think they’re watching you, but you can’t tell if you’re just being paranoid or not.”

“Wow. Anything else?”

She batted her eyes. “You need constant stimulation. Oh, and you live with your girlfriend.”

“I do?”

“Over on Truman Avenue.”

“Are you with the Feds?”

“No. Elite Modeling Agency.”

Next thing I knew, we were in a corner of the club kissing

wildly. I can't really describe how turned on I was by her. Chastity was a dark cherub, enticing me with her every gesture as I slipped my hand up her shirt. I noticed that she had a slight scar across her forehead. She pulled her hair down over it.

"Don't look at it," she said.

"What happened?"

"Nothing. Is there somewhere we can go?"

"Come with me."

I lead Chastity by the hand to my office and shut the door, unnoticed. We tore at each other, as if we were ravenous wolves ripping meat from the bones of a fawn in winter. The office was cold; we could see our breaths as we held each other close. She grabbed me by the back of my neck, pulling me towards her, kissing me deeply as we were passionately entwined. I turned her around, and pulled down her jeans, caressing her round and nubile bottom momentarily, and then I entered her. Her skin was soft and milky white, and her breasts were supple and perky, almost as if they were standing up to say "hello." She turned her head back towards me and we kissed again. She then spoke in a whisper, as faint and as sweet as a siren beckoning me to my destruction.

"I'm glad you found me. I was wondering how long you were just going to stand there and stare."

After the Soundgarden show, Chastity and I went to the Athens Restaurant for some late night breakfast. We sat across from each other, and talked as we drank our coffee and

smoked cigarettes. Chastity was berating me about my relationship with Jillian.

"Why are you so hung up on her? You obviously don't love her. What? You like people to see you driving her Porsche around town?"

"No, and I'm not really 'hung up' on her. I don't know. I live with her. When I was struggling trying to get 4808 open, she was supportive. I'm indebted to her. I mean she pays all the bills..."

"Well, that's chivalrous. You're using her."

"No, I'm not using her. She won't let me pay for anything. That's how she maintains control over me. Her dad's loaded. And she likes the idea of having this controversial club owner living with her. Like I'm a novelty or something."

I paused to think, and wiped my eye. The room was smoky, from all the late nighters, and kitchen Greeks sucking on their nicotine, us included. I continued.

"She begged me to move in, and now she won't let me leave. And she's crazy jealous. I can't even watch TV without her freaking out. The other day, she attacked me as I watched a commercial about women's undergarments. She dug her fingernails into the back of my ears, and beat my head on the arm of the couch, screaming "If you want to go and fuck them go and fuck 'em then.' It's difficult. I feel trapped, I guess. I don't really know how I feel."

"What do you mean, 'she won't let you'? What are you, eight? Why don't you wait until she leaves the house, pack your shit, move out, and then you and I can get an ef-

ficiency together near the club, down on Seventh. I've got about three grand in the bank from modeling. I'll pay half."

I took a drag off of my cigarette. "I can't."

"You can do anything you set your mind to. You started this whole scene out of nothing... and with no money. Are you trying to tell me that you deal with hundreds of punks, skins, and metal heads, nightly, and you can't deal with one little daddy's girl? Pffht."

"It's complicated."

"It always is. But, it's only as complicated as you make it."

I decided to change the subject.

"Why did you move back here, anyway? I would have stayed in New York."

"I loved New York. It was just time for me to go. I'd been there for three years."

"I know exactly how you feel."

"Do you want to see my portfolio?"

"Do you have it? I'd love to see it."

Chastity reached into her backpack, and pulled out her portfolio, and handed it to me over the table. There were covers of *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, and *Seventeen*.

"Wow. You look so skinny. It almost doesn't look like you."

"I've been modeling for Elite since I was fourteen. It was almost like doing kiddie-porn or something. There was always some photographer who wanted me to pose nude. In that business the models are naked half the time anyway."

There were a lot of photos, some where Chastity was nude, but she covered up her breasts in an Edie Sedgwick pose.

She went on to say, "I got into all the clubs, and parties. I drank and did tons of drugs with executives, sports figures, movie stars, and any number of other perverted sickos, all trying to get their hands down my pants. New York's full of them. I met Woody Allen. He's a real one."

Chastity rolled her eyes, and put out her cigarette.

"Is that why you left?"

"No. I stopped working. When I filled out, the modeling jobs started to fizzle. The agency suggested that I stick my finger down my throat."

Chastity flipped the bird. "I suggested they stick this finger up their asses. Fuck that. If they want anorexia, they can have it. I'm not interested. So, they didn't renew my contract. I was homesick anyway. Hey, I got to meet you, didn't I?"

Chastity smiled as she lit up another cigarette, and continued talking. I was quiet as my mind wandered. After the long day, I was dog-tired. Even though I gave her offer some thought, I knew I couldn't be with Chastity. I just couldn't. She was amazing, but she was too young for one thing, and I was living with Jillian, who was really pressuring me to get married. She would be crushed if I left.

But, I wasn't ready to get married. The thought of it scared me to death. Every time Jillian mentioned mar-

riage, I would try to change the subject, and she would get upset and start throwing things. I'd leave her house only to drive around for two hours, then going back to apologize for a fight I didn't start.

Chastity was right. I wasn't happy. The irony of it was Chastity knew me better than I knew myself. I raised my hand, and called the waitress for the check.

## **A Rock and Roll Wedding**

Johnny Quest, drawing comparisons to The Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Royal Crescent Mob, was slated to play yet again on December 23rd, the night after rap legend, Schooly D drew twelve people. No one showed up for "Schooly's School" that Thursday, not even the many critics who hyped the show; all fearful of gun play I suspected.

Luckily, Quest brought in our biggest crowd to date that following Friday. There were roughly seven hundred people in attendance to watch them perform songs like "The Heisman," and "Unnatural Woman." I made Quest in Charlotte, and then later in Myrtle Beach, bringing them to their first area performance the previous year at 4808 Central Avenue. And between Art Boerke, Frank at the Cradle, and Charlie Maulsby at the Mad Monk, we built Johnny Quest up until they became a powerhouse; the biggest and best party band

in North and South Carolina.

Their manager, Dick Hodgin, and I became friends. Dick was a wheeler-dealer, and a sound engineer who had worked with C.O.C. on *Technocracy*. He ran in the same circles as Mitch Easter of Let's Active, Don Dixon, who engineered R.E.M.'s *Murmur* at Reflections Studios in Charlotte, and Jay Faires, who at the time was starting his fledgling Mammoth Records. Faires went on to develop multi-platinum acts such as Seven Mary Three and Squirrel Nut Zippers, and one of my personal favorites, Fu Manchu. Disney purchased Mammoth Records some years ago, and Faires is now President of Lion's Gate Music. But in 1989 he managed Charlotte's Fetchin' Bones, before Hollywood was calling for him, and way before he was invited to a Chair on the University of North Carolina's Board of Trustees.

Dick had just started M-80 Management and knew that Quest was a moneymaker, and like most managers, he was all about the money. Dick liked to talk and so did I. Between us, it was hard to get a word in edgewise. We would run up our long distance phone bills, blathering on about bull shit, gossiping about the various progressions in NC music. I would answer the phone.

"Hello?"

"Mike, It's Dick."

"What's happening?"

"The Quest, man. Johnny Quest is happening. I'm looking for a date on Friday, December 23rd. The Quest is playing at the Mad Monk the night before."

"That will be huge," I responded.

Their crowd had grown exponentially. Quest was yet another band that would thank me on their disc, under the moniker "Batwings Plumides," a reference to the size of my testicles and their elasticity.

Johnny Quest played the "Masquerade" in Atlanta in 1993, where I was on stage with them performing "Ace of Spades" with the lead singer Joe Farmer. After the show, I suggested they stay at my apartment, as I lived close by in the Highlands during law school. Instead of staying in Atlanta for the night, they decided to drive to North Carolina. Ironically, right before daybreak, the band was in a horrific automobile accident by the "Gaffney peach" in South Carolina, leaving the drummer, Steve, with his leg broken in thirty places. The doctors were lucky to have saved it. The accident left the van in flames, all the equipment burnt to a cinder, and ultimately caused their subsequent break up.

Dick also managed a band called The Accelerators, on Profile Records. He called me about booking a date at 4808, so I did. Around the same time, Mark Bryan had contacted me on several occasions, asking if I had any opening slots for Hootie and the Blowfish, who was venturing out of Columbia, so I put the two bands together. Dick came down from Raleigh to run sound for The Accelerators, and Mark asked me, enthusiastically, "Is that Dick Hodgin? Would you introduce us?"

I told Mark that Dick was very approachable, and he should introduce himself.

“Just go talk to him.” I said.

At the time, Hootie was still primarily a cover band, but the guys had written some originals and were looking for a producer.

Later Dick asked me, “What do you know about Hootie and the Blowfish?”

“They’re my friends. I went to college with them. Why?”

“They want me to record a demo for them. Should I?”

“Why not? They’re good guys, and I’m sure they can pay you.”

Hootie would then record four songs with Hodgkin, two of which, “Hold My Hand,” and “I Only Want to Be With You,” would be on the biggest selling release of all time. Little did we know that we would be part of music history.

For Christmas, I spent nine hundred dollars at Garibaldi and Bruns at SouthPark, and bought Jillian a set of pearls.

When she opened the box, she shrieked. “I thought you were getting me a ring!”

Then she threw the box at me. As I said before, I wasn’t about to get married. Not to her. Not with that violent streak. Matter of fact, I wish I had never bought the fuckers.

Earlier that month, I was approached by the members of Antiseen, Tom O’Keefe and Joe Young, about holding Jeff Clayton’s wedding at 4808 on Saturday, December 30, 1989. Jeff was to tie the knot with Dee Dazis, a cute little brunette who Jeff had met at the infamous “Morehead Junction.” The

wedding would also help the band promote their upcoming release, *Noise for the Sake of Noise*, on the Australian Dog Meat Records. Antiseen played “Wedding March” loudly, but without mistake, as a hundred-fifty or so attendees looked on, mostly hardcore fans and family members.

Afterward, Jeff approached me, and asked, “How much do I owe you?”

I charged him fifty bucks to rent the hall. Those were strange times.

I remember Buyonovich calling me that evening. I told him all about the afternoon.

“Yeah. It was classic. Antiseen played the ‘Wedding March’.”

“Did Jeff wear a tuxedo?”

“Yes, he wore a tuxedo. There was a photographer there, news cameras and everything.”

“What about Fetchin’ Bones? You going to cover their guarantee?”

“Yeah, I hope so. That was a mistake. I do everything I can to stay off O’Leary’s toes, and... hey, I got to go. It’s coming on next.”

I grabbed the remote control and turned up the volume to the TV. The wedding had made local news. I loved free publicity.

“A Rock and Roll wedding in Charlotte, North Carolina. The lead singer of the punk rock outfit Antiseen was married on Saturday, December 30th, as his band mates played the

‘Wedding March.’ In a service held inside the 4808 Club in Uptown Charlotte, Jeff Clayton wed Dee Dazis.”

That evening was the first of two Fetchin’ Bones shows, which I ended up in a bidding war with O’Leary over. They were one of the few bands in Charlotte to hit it big and had recently released their third and final album on Capitol Records entitled, *Monster*. I had the show in the bag, because Hope and Aaron wanted to play my newer, hipper Uptown club. I made an offer of thirty-five hundred dollars for the package. Then their agent at ICM called me back and said O’Leary bid forty-five hundred. So I bid five thousand, and so on.

I was convinced O’Leary wasn’t going to let me have the show, under any circumstances and I didn’t have a “relationship” with ICM like Buyonovich did, so I continued to bid up the price, like anyone would now on eBay. When my last bid was seventy-five hundred, I really didn’t think I would make any money on it, but if O’Leary wanted the show so badly, I’d make him pay for it. Then O’Leary dumped it. Fuck. It was an empiric victory, and I barely covered the cost at the door for the two shows. That one almost bit me in the ass. Since O’Leary had the relationship with the agency, I wondered if it was a set up. Stranger things will happen in this story, guaranteed. Interestingly, that show would be Fetchin’ Bones’ last performance in Charlotte, before splitting up later in January.

Hope Nichols was quoted in *The Charlotte Observer* to say, “You can do as much with five people in charge as you can

with two. The basis of Fetchin’ Bones was democracy. We wanted it to be that way. Aaron and I got to the point that no matter what a great idea democracy was, we didn’t want to do that anymore. We wanted to take charge of our own destiny.”

The quote sounded a little Spinal Tap-ish to me. Any way you whitewashed it, Fetchin’ Bones was dropped by Capitol Records for poor sales. Record labels giveth, and record labels taketh away. In a recent conversation with Jay Faïres, it was his opinion that Fetchin’ Bones, having been engineered by Ed Stasium, best known for working with Living Colour, although slickly produced was possibly “too alternative for radio.”

Also the band’s A&R Representative from Capitol Records had left the company to go on to greener pastures. With no one in their corner at Capitol, Fetchin Bones got lost in the shuffle. Oftentimes, if a rep got sacked, or jumped ship, the band they signed went down with them. But Fetchin’ Bones were truly “Charlotte’s First Family of Rock and Roll,” as I called them, the only local band to make good, many years before Firehouse, or The Avett Brothers, Unknown Hinson, Benji Hughes, or Anthony Hamilton.

Several days later, I stopped in to see Joe Young, now working with Jimmy at Repo Records’ new location on the corner of Morningside and Central Avenue. I used to sell all my promotional copies there. I had known Joe since I was 15, when he used to work at Record Bar, SouthPark. As Joe stood at the counter in Repo Records, slightly raised to keep

an eye on thievery, he spoke of the nuptials the previous week. It turned out that the wedding was half punk rock ethos, and half publicity stunt, but unbeknownst to onlookers it was matrimony, shotgun-style.

“The wedding made AP, UP, and about every other P. We made CNN. Hell, we were even in *The Sun*. You know, that tabloid you buy in line at the Harris & Teeter? The headline read, ‘Rock and Roll Wedding’ right next to ‘Boy Raised by Billy Goat, Eats Tin Cans’.”

I laid a stack of discs on the counter, and a *Rip Magazine* in front of Joe. Joe rang the items up.

“Hey, Mike. You know we’re G.G.’s back-up band. You got to come and see his next show here in town on Halloween. He said he’s going to bring a loaded revolver out on stage and at the end of the show, he says he’s gonna shoot five people in the audience, saving the last bullet for himself.”

I imagined for a moment, what it would be like to attend G.G. Allin’s doo-doo throwing, smack-riddled performance. At G.G.’s Halloween show, I envisioned that near the end of his set, he would pull out a “Saturday Night Special” with electric tape wrapped around the handle, and would shoot four people in front of the stage. G.G. would then leap off covered from head-to-toe in blood and feces, intent on finding me in the audience and gleefully put a bullet in my cranium, as the band played with the volume up to eleven. Then G.G. would turn the gun on himself, blowing his own head off, spattering his disease-ridden brains all over the crowd,

like the bank scene from *Killing Zoe*.

Snapped back into reality, my comment to Joe was, “Why the fuck would I want to be anywhere near there?”

Fred Mills would occasionally drop by to see Jeff Clayton in Dilworth, as they lived close by. Once, Mills popped in to find G.G. Allin babysitting Dee’s child. G.G. bounced the baby on his knee as he watched daytime television while Dee was at the grocery store shopping. G.G. Allin the babysitter watching soap operas. How frightening.

As the winter months crept up, the 4808 was absolutely freezing at times. So, I went over to Will’s Pawn Shop and bought a cylinder-shaped, kerosene blower, that got the room nice and toasty before performances. Once people started coming in, the body heat would hold the temperature steady.

In the coming months I would host a number of sizeable shows, ranging from classic rock legends Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker of the super-group Cream for an impromptu tour date, to the hardcore punk acts Dirty Rotten Imbeciles and New York’s Sick of It All. I would also stage performances by White Heat who would later change their name to Firehouse, the next local boys to make good. In March, I promoted the first area Black Crowes performance, touring in support of *Shake Your Money Maker*, and Rozz Williams’ Christian Death.

I remember Ginger Baker, also of Blind Faith, examining the stage set up. His remark was, “I’m going to get bloody well killed in here.”

I admit the 4808 Club was no Ritz Carlton, and the big-

ger acts complained, but insistently gave their all when they performed. Sheridan Harris, a girl I've known since grade school, the knock-kneed shy one at the bus stop, came into the club to attend Cream's show holding a tablet containing all of their lyrics in her handwriting. Noticing how awestruck she was to see the band perform, as a favor I ushered her backstage to meet Bruce and Baker. Sheridan was a pretty young brunette, playing in a cover band at the time, and she was absolutely thrilled to meet them. She later told me that Ginger Baker was kind enough to sit down with her and make corrections.

Accompanied by Blues Saraceno on guitar in Eric Clapton's stead, and Bernie Worrell on keyboards, the band was absolutely astonishing, playing their classics "Tales of Brave Ulysses," "Strange Brew," "Sunshine of your Love," and "White Room," as if it were 1969 all over again. These were the times that made it all worthwhile; in this particular instance where a band that played Madison Square Garden was performing at 4808 for an intimate gathering of four hundred people.

I had seen some mosh pits in my time. But this one took the cake. Easily five hundred punks showed up for the Dirty Rotten Imbeciles/Sick of It All performance on a Tuesday, and the crowd was so frenzied, a girl was knocked out of her shoes, breaking her glasses off in her eye. We found both of her shoes, and I gave her husband the couple's money back in full and final settlement.

Firehouse played the 4808 Club on several occasions. Originally White Heat, they changed their name, due to a Canadian band that was threatening suit. With their poppy brand of hair flipping cheese metal, and their pretentious posturing, Firehouse sold millions of records in the early nineties. Jon Bon Jovi took an interest in the band, furthering Firehouse to clench their deal showcasing for Epic Records later that year, at the 4808 Club. With hand made costumes, synchronized moves, and sappy, yet hooky songs like "Home Is Where the Heart Is," "Love of a Lifetime," and "Don't Treat Me Bad," ripping off riffs from everyone from Bachmann Turner-Overdrive to Ratt, Firehouse would become huge, yet short-lived hit makers; at least until America discovered Nirvana in 1992. Firehouse epitomized everything I despised about what was happening in music, in the same fashion as *American Idol*, and I helped them on their way to stardom.

Christian Death performed in March. The poster boys of *Propaganda Magazine* had the goth rockers in a state of euphoria. Eyes thick with mascara, they were all wearing black on the outside because black is how they felt on the inside. With front man Rozz Williams in garter belts, doing his best Robert Smith impersonation in drag, the band was brilliant but more rickety and ghoulish than The Cure. In this outfit, it appeared that Williams' ass was hiked up on the back of his neck.

Junkyard played that month as well, touring to support their latest album on Geffen records. The band out of Los

Angeles via Austin, Texas, was to be the next Guns-N-Roses, comprised of the aforementioned Big Boys' member Chris Gates, and Brian Baker from Minor Threat. The opening act was the buzz band, Atlanta's Black Crowes. Their guarantee to open the show was two hundred-fifty bucks. Chris Robinson was as gracious and pleasant as anyone I had ever met, thanking me for allowing his band to perform. He was just an extremely approachable kid.

That night, Junkyard was an afterthought. Everyone came to see The Crowes, playing songs like "Jealous Again," "Twice as Hard" as well as "Hard to Handle," as clever and as close to the album as able, with their Rolling Stones/Faces era contrived yet well done shtick. "Mister Crowes's Garden," as they were originally called, developed into a magnificent blend of blues and southern rock also selling millions of units, and I was a fan of theirs.

It's interesting how people change after stardom. I saw Robinson several years later in Atlanta, and I approached his table to wish him well, and remind him of when he played the 4808. He didn't allow me past his bodyguard, picking and choosing who could approach. Later that week Robinson came to see a band I managed, Dead Cut Tree, and hogged the dressing room toilet at the Masquerade right before show time, and the drummer had to drop the twins off at the pool. Robinson was a tad less considerate by then, a talent he lost somewhere in between.

During Junkyard's performance, one of my newer bouncers, Goose, was assigned the stage security duty to keep peo-

ple from diving. Goose approached me during the middle of Junkyard's set looking sheepish.

"Mike. I don't know how to say this, but that big guitar player up there, keeps on licking his lips, sticking his tongue out, and blowing kisses at me."

"No man. He's doing that to the girls in the crowd. Get back up there, dude. You're fine."

Ten minutes later, Goose approached me again.

"I'm not going back up there. That fellow scares me. Mike, he was doing it again."

"Doing what?"

"You know, with his tongue."

I went up to investigate. As Goose and I stood to the left of the stage, Chris Gates formerly of The Big Boys winked at him, and made sexual gestures to both of us, the sweat rolling down his forehead as he played furiously.

Strange times indeed.

## Bullets and Hollywood Vampires

I was at the firing range with L.A. Guns on April 15, 1990. It was Easter Sunday. The band was in town to promote their latest entitled, *Cocked and Loaded*; a million seller. Earlier, Phil Lewis and Tracii Guns noticed that I was wearing a sidearm, and approached me after the sound check.

Phil Lewis, the lead singer for L.A. Guns, was English with a head full of jet black hair, a leather jacket with “Hollywood Vampires” painted on the back, white t-shirt, blue jeans, and black boots. Tracii, the lead guitarist and founder of the group, who had broken off with Axl Rose some years before, was wearing a sleeveless t-shirt, tattoos, blue bandanna on his head, black shoulder length hair, black jeans, leather wallet with chain and black motorcycle boots.

“That’s a nice gun.” Phil said to me.

“Thanks.” I replied.

“Is there somewhere to shoot guns around here?” Tracii asked.

“You mean at people?”

“No, man! Like a firing range. A shooting range.”

“Like in *Magnum Force*?”

“Exactly.”

“Yeah. I know a place.”

Tracii then requested, “Would you take us?”

“Sure. We’ve got a few hours to kill.”

We walked out of the club to the tour bus parked inside the fence. Phil and Tracii went into the rig for a minute, and emerged with their gun cases, both wearing their shooting glasses, and ear protection around their necks.

I was surprised. “You guys brought your guns with you on the road?”

Phil replied, “Oh, yeah. Tracii and I always take our guns on tour. You never know what might happen.”

Tracii chimed in, “We try to go to a firing range once or twice a week. You know, for recreation, and to relax. ‘Never leave home without it!’”

“Well, I hope you brought your American Express,” I responded.

I noticed Chastity sitting on the loading dock in an old wooden school chair, reading *Seventeen*.

“Hey, Chastity, I’m taking these guys to the firing range. You want to go?”

Chastity looked up and excitedly agreed. “Love to!”

Tracii then said, “Let’s go shoot some guns, fuckers!” He

laughed like the maniac he was.

After shooting our pistols for an hour or so, Tracii, Phil, and I were sitting around a table, complimenting each other on our marksmanship and looking over the paper targets.

Tracii said, "You're a pretty good shot, Michael."

"The Englishman's better than both of us. Phil, is that Smith nickel-plated?"

"Yeah. Beautiful, isn't it?"

At that moment, Chastity began firing my .380 into the silhouette on a paper target in one of the lanes. I looked over and she was wearing protective glasses, and ear wear; she was also in Danskins and high heels with her legs spread slightly, showing a noticeable gap as she discharged the weapon. She was a ringer for *The Spy Who Loved Me* poster.

Chastity then pressed the button, and retrieved the paper target. She turned toward us and winked, and examined the silhouette for a moment, then dropped the target on the table in front of us. She had talent, in more ways than one, going for the headshot seven times and the center for five. Her marksmanship caught us of guard.

I commented, "Not nearly as beautiful as that."

Chastity was obviously amused.

"Where'd you learn to shoot like that?"

"When I was fifteen, I used to live with a cop."

I scratched my head and responded, "Well, I guess that explains everything."

The 4808 Club was very crowded that night with an as-

sortment of long hair-types in black t-shirts, and chicks in spandex with teased-up hair, wearing stiletto heels. There was a lot of leather. As I walked through the crowd, I noticed the red haired kid talking to a group of underage girls, one of them was a cute blonde with braces. I overheard the kid say with confidence, "I can get you girls back stage, no problem."

Since an Easter tradition for Charlotteans was to trek down to the South Carolina coast for Bud Blast in Cherry Grove, I advertised on the cheese ball metal station in Myrtle Beach, WKZQ-FM, for that Sunday's show with L.A. Guns. It was a smart move, as the station sandwiched my promos in between Warrant and Winger songs.

We had roughly seven hundred people attend that night, and the crowd was especially rowdy and drunk. Right before the show, a fight broke out between two patrons, and one of them had been busted over the head with a long neck beer bottle. Craig came to find me.

"Hey Mike. This guy over at stage left just got his head cracked open with a beer bottle! I called the paramedics."

"What did you do that for? The hospital's a mile from here!"

"There's blood all over the place! What did you expect me to do?"

"Get a mop!"

Craig looked bewildered for a moment, shrugged and went back to tend bar. We were slammed.

Keith came up, all frustrated.

"This guy over here keeps buying beers for his kid sister.

We threw her out once already. She snuck back in and we caught him buying her another beer.”

“Where are they?”

L.A. Guns opened with “Never Enough,” and as I followed Keith through the crowd, I bumped into Slick Rick and B.A. Selleck, the TV Tag Team Champs, surrounded by metal chicks. That was weird.

Eddie was holding the big brother and little sister by the collar. Eddie had forearms the size of Foster cans and was someone you didn’t want to fuck with.

“Let go of me,” the big brother said, “I know Mike, the owner!”

“I’m the owner, and I’ve never seen you before. Keith, get her out of here.”

“You’re not him. Mike looks like Bono.”

“I’m afraid you are mistaken.”

Keith muscled the little sister out the door.

“Come on, girl.”

“What about this one, Mike?” Eddie asked me.

“Take your hands off me, you fucking biker redneck!”

Big brother then kicked Eddie in the shin. Eddie, infuriated, lifted him off the ground around the throat and carted him to the entrance of the club. I followed them to the front door.

Eddie held the guest’s head up against the glass at the entrance.

“Mike, you want me to put this disrespectful little asshole’s head through this glass?”

“No, Eddie! I don’t want you to kill him! Just get him out of here!”

As the little sister looked on, Eddie grabbed big brother by the belt loop and escorted him out of the club to the other side of the fence and threw him down in the parking lot.

“I’m going to sue your ass! You hear me! For every fucking nickel!”

“Good luck!” I responded, “I hope you find one!”

The crowd was out of control. We all had our hands full. Then I saw a fire truck, and EMS pull up next to the club. This particular truck had the Fire Marshal on board. Lucky me. I watched the Fire Marshal approach with his flashlight and clipboard.

“Oh, fuck.”

After inquiries from the Fire Marshal for a half an hour, he explained to me that the department didn’t even know the club existed. I had been flying under the radar for almost ten months. After they wheeled the bloody, blunt trauma patron out on a stretcher, the Fire Marshal, not really knowing how to handle the situation since the higher ups were still on vacation, told me that the report would be pending following an investigation.

I knew right then that I had hell to pay on Monday. What I didn’t know at the time was L.A. Guns would be our last show at the Brown-Rogers Dixon Building.

“The Ballad of Jane” was a fitting encore. As Phil Lewis sang the anthem, “It all sounds funny kind of like a dream, things ain’t always what they seem...” I knew exactly what

he meant. Things were never what they seemed. It was all a façade.

After settling up and loading the band out, there was no one left in the club but Charlie Fisher, the lighting guy and me. I was counting bar money, and it didn't add up. It kept coming up short night after night. A lot of times I would barely cover the cost of beer. I figured that everyone pinched a little, but this was getting ridiculous.

Then the phone rang. I let the answering machine pick up. "You've reached the 4808 Club office line. Please leave a message. Thanks."

"Hey Mike, you mother fucker! Come over to the Comfort Inn, and party with me! I can see your car from my window. I got a bunch of girls over. Come hang with me."

It was Tracii Guns.

I answered, "What are you doing, you crazy bastard?"

"Enjoying myself with a bunch a chicks! Come over. I'm in 426."

"Dude, I've had a long night. I had to deal with the Fire Marshal. The crowd was out of hand. I'm exhausted."

"Come on, man! One drink ain't gonna kill ya."

"All right. Let me lock up."

"And bring some beer!"

Charlie was breaking down the last of the Par 64 cans and carrying them to his truck which was backed up to the loading dock.

"Hey. Tracii's got a bunch of girls over in his hotel room. You want to go over there with me for a night cap?"

Charlie, with his long blond hair, t-shirt, jeans, and white leather tennis shoes responded, "I don't see why not. Let me put this last row of lights in the truck, and we'll go check it out."

I grabbed a twelve pack of Miller Lite and we locked up. Charlie and I walked across the parking lot, where a parking deck now stands between Sixth and Seventh Streets. We entered through the lobby and took the elevator to the fourth floor. As we stood outside Tracii's room, we heard raised voices of Tracii and his girls resonating into the hallway. Charlie knocked on the door. Suddenly, everyone inside was quiet, as we heard fumblings and shushes inside. The door opened with the chain lock on it.

A face appeared in the crack of the door, and wouldn't you know it? It was the blonde girl with braces.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"Tracii invited us over," Charlie said.

Tracii's face popped up behind the young girl.

"Hey! That's Mike and Charlie! Open up."

The girl with braces unchained the door and let us in the hotel room. Inside, there were several teenage girls strewn about the room lying on the hotel beds. Tracii was standing there nude from the waist down, in a black sleeveless muscle tee, and a bottle of Jack Daniel's in his right hand.

"Come on in, guys! We're playing cards."

Charlie and I cautiously entered the room. The blonde girl with braces curtsied, and closed the door behind us.

I arrived at Jillian's house around 6:00 A.M. Whenever I

pulled an all-nighter without calling, Jillian would usually put the chain lock on. I called for her through the mail slot. “Jillian? Jillian. Let me in!”

I knocked on the door again. I was drunk and exhausted. There’s nothing more embarrassing than to see morning joggers, and you haven’t been to sleep yet. After several minutes, Jillian opened the door and punched me right in the sternum, as hard as she could. I doubled over in pain, falling to my knees, crumpling inside the doorway.

Several hours later, I woke up to the phone ringing repeatedly. I was sleeping on the couch, with my arm hanging to the floor. I was drooling. I put the pillow, wet with saliva, over my head but the phone kept ringing. I had only been asleep a few hours. When I finally answered the phone, it was Buyonovich. He sounded desperate, and I was hung over.

“Hello?”

“Mike?”

“Yes. I’ve had a long night. What is it?”

“I’m on the lam. I need somewhere to lay low.”

“Oh, Jesus. What did you do this time, Chris?”

“I was promoting a 2 Live Crew show last night in Macon. Luke Skywalker refused to perform because I sent a van instead of a limo to pick ’em up.”

“So? What the fuck has this got to do with me, Chris?”

Nervously, Buyonovich answered, “I took the gate, and split.”

“You did what? Dude, you are fucking with the wrong

people’s money.”

“I know. I know. I’m coming to your place. 4808.”

“Wait a minute, Chris. Why are you coming here? I had the Fire Marshal in the club last night. They’re probably going to shut me down in a day or so. I got my own problems. I don’t need to take on yours. I don’t want to be involved in your bull shit, Chris!”

“I need to talk to somebody about this. Mike, I need your help!”

“Forget it!”

“But Cecil’s gonna send that crazy fucking Bobby ‘The Brick’ after me, and he’s gonna break my knee caps and thumbs, and I got nowhere else to go. His son Clint’s been waiting outside my house all morning, so I can’t go there.”

“Why do they call him Bobby ‘The Brick’?”

“Because Bobby hits people in the head with a fucking gold brick his grandfather gave him from the Civil War.”

“Well, in your case, a gold brick is appropriate.”

“I’m not screwing around this time! I’ll see you in two hours.”

“Wait! Do not come here! Do you hear me, you asshole? Do not come here! Chris? Chris? Damn it!”

The line went dead. I hit star sixty-nine. It was a pay phone. I sat up and turned on the television. The local news was interviewing Ron McDonald, from the Mecklenburg County Building Standards Department outside the 4808 Club.

“Wonderful,” I said to myself, as I fell back onto the

couch, putting the pillow over my head, momentarily peaking out from under it with one eye, as I watched the news broadcast.

A TV truck was parked outside of the club. A news reporter was interviewing a perplexed Ron McDonald, Chief Inspector of the Mecklenburg County Building Standards Department. Ron looked like Jeff Foxworthy, with his light blue button down with no undershirt, blue jeans, tan corduroy jacket with elbow patches, mustache, mullet and cowboy boots.

“Mr. McDonald,” the reporter queried, “did you know that the 4808 Club has been operating without a Certificate of Occupancy for almost a year?”

“Well, we didn’t even know that the club existed until this morning. They never filed a ‘Change of Usage’ application with us.”

“But Mr. McDonald, isn’t your office just two blocks over? Would you say that the Mecklenburg County Building Standards Office’s incompetence is to blame here?”

“Uh...well, we were very lucky in our investigation to discover that this club was operating illegally before anything bad happened. We think that the club’s alcohol license was granted in error, in addition to its fire code violations.”

I took a shower, and headed Uptown to contribute to my own abuse on that dreary Monday. There was a notice taped up to the entrance of the club. I read the decree.

“Closed by order of the Mecklenburg County Building

Standards Department.”

I tore down the writ and continued to read its content.

“That’s great. That’s phenomenal.”

Just about that time, David Sullins from the ALE walked up to the club across the gravel parking lot, holding a document in his hand. He handed me the letter. It was a notice of suspension.

“And it keeps on gettin’ better. I was enjoying my coffee and doughnut this morning, when I saw this business on the TV, and then the phone rang. I just got chewed out by the Mayor on your account. You been operating this place illegally all these months and made me look like an asshole. Your license has been temporarily suspended.”

“Sorry, I...”

“I don’t wanna hear any a your lip, boy. I had a feeling you were up to no good. The City don’t want this kind of nonsense going on down here anyway. If it were my choice, I’d shut you down once and for all, but since you ain’t got no other violations, the law says the suspension can only be temporary. You can reapply once Building Standards is satisfied.”

“But when...”

Sullins then pointed his finger in my face and said, “Listen here, you little shit ass. I got a perfect record in this town, and I ain’t gonna let some snot-nosed, college kid ruin it for me. You better straighten yer ass up quick, or I’ll jerk a knot in it. Now you best not forget that I got my eye on you, buddy!”

“Thanks.”

It’s not the first time I’ve heard that one.

As Sullins walked away I took the padlock off, and rolled up the door. I walked into the musty building, across the hardwood floor, soaked with the stench of alcohol and cigarettes. The room was still pungent from the chalky odor of the smoke machine. Sometimes it was enough to make you choke.

I went to my office and sat down at my desk. The flashing light on the message machine was distracting. I hit the play button. It was full of inquiries from news sources around town, all calling for comment. It seemed that a similar story ran in *The New York Times* earlier that week concerning an illegally operating Latino Club, where everyone was burned alive in, so Charlotte had to have its equivalent. Looks like I gave it to them.

Danny came in, with eyes still bloodshot from the night before, and asked me “What are we gonna do now?”

“We’re not gonna do anything. What can we do?”

“We can have a beer.”

“No thanks. I’m hung over as it is. But go ahead and drink ‘em. Someone has to.”

“What about the show tonight?”

“It’s canceled.”

I showed Danny the notice.

Danny hung his head for a moment, and then walked outside into the bar area. I heard him open a reach-in cooler, close it, and crack a brew.

Shortly thereafter, I overheard someone quietly ask him, “Hey, Danny. Is Michael around?”

“He’s in his office. But I don’t think he’s in much of a mood to talk to anybody.”

I looked toward the office entrance to find the red haired kid standing in the doorway.

“My dad told me what happened. He heard it on the news.”

“Yeah. It was a good run, but I’m afraid that’s the end of it.”

“End of what? The club? No way! You can’t close down, man! That would suck!”

“I don’t have a whole lot of control over it, kid. I wish I did. The City’s got me by the balls, and I don’t have enough money to fight City Hall.”

I was from a family of attorneys, but I didn’t want to ask them for help. I was embarrassed.

“No way. You got an obligation to the people, Mike. You can’t just give up like that. My life was horrible before you opened this place. Now I’m free. I can be myself here. We all can. All my friends come here and if you don’t do something, you’re gonna let everyone down! We won’t have anyplace to go. People are depending on you. ‘Stay hardcore’, remember?”

“This is bigger than me, kid. I wish I could, but I can’t ‘Stay hardcore.’ I wish it were that easy, but it isn’t.”

“Well, you’ve got to find a way.”

“There’s no way kid. There ain’t a hope in hell I can get this place up to code. It’s impossible. We’re done.”

With tears in his eyes, the red haired kid then said angrily, “You’re wrong, Mike. You’re just as bad as they are to quit like this! You’re a coward, Mike!”

He paused. “A fucking coward!”

The red haired kid ran out of the club. I said to myself, “Thanks for the pep talk there, Knute Rockne.”

Danny stuck his head back inside the office door. “I’m getting outta here. Keep your chin up, Mike. Call me if you need anything. We’ll get through this.”

I just sat in my office chair and stared off into space.

Buyonovich never showed up that day. Rumor had it that Cecil’s boys got to him. I didn’t speak to Buyonovich again. Matter of fact that was the last time anyone heard from him. I turned my back. I told myself it was none of my business. I had my own problems.

## **509 West 5th Street**

I barricaded myself in Jillian’s house for a week. I didn’t speak to anyone. *The Charlotte Observer* crucified me, painting me as this reckless rock and roll renegade who operated an “illegal club” outside the bounds of decent society, endangering the lives of their teenagers. Last week they were singing my praises calling me the “New Music Guru,” and this week I was dog shit.

It was the first bad press that the 4808 Club or I had received. I was always the media darling and now I was the media punching bag and embarrassed to show my face anywhere. The local news reporters were fair weather friends, and would often write anything to get a by-line. But the more I thought about it, the more it occurred to me; maybe the red haired kid was right. Maybe being a rock and roll renegade

was a good thing. We had just been voted “Best New Club” and “Best College Bar” by *Creative Loafing*. Maybe I did owe a “duty to the people” and the scene.

I started looking around town for a new spot to move 4808 yet again. It was Conrad Hunter’s suggestion to go talk to Franco Piro, a New York transplant and artist who set up shop in a building at 509 West Fifth Street. Conrad was a local musician, turned sound engineer, and was also one of Kenny Kokenes’ associates from the Park Elevator days, from the “before time.” Hunter always had his eye out for old warehouses that could be converted into functioning businesses, way before it was fashionable.

When I first met Piro, he was a gaunt, balding, gravelly voiced, Harvey Fierstein-ish character. I was taken aback after shaking his hand. I noticed that several of his fingers had been snipped off at the knuckle, and he was a little on the tortured-gay-artist-fiendish-junkie-side, living with his boyfriend, Roger, next door. My guess was Moose and Rocco didn’t go for the “Chelsea smile” but rather removed a few of the painter’s digits. As the power had been cut off in his building, he had knocked out a section of wall, creating an opening to run electrical cords from one side to the other.

Piro misrepresented himself as the leaseholder on the space, a five thousand square foot warehouse, in a section even more depressed than the last. I liked the space. Although the location was questionable, the room was much more fitting for a nightclub, than the previous location. I needed money, and I never asked for any from Dad, so the time had

come. Pops let me borrow thirty-thousand dollars, and I paid Piro in cash, like an idiot. By this point, I thought I was the “Nostradamus of Assholes,” but I guess I was still living and learning.

Piro had carted all of his materials next door, where they had recently filmed some scenes from and the late Don Simpson’s race epic *Days of Thunder*, starring Tom Cruise. The set was still in tact. Piro suggested I break down the set and use the lumber to do my build out. I hated that dumb movie anyway.

I later received a phone call from the true owner of the property, a local real estate agent who had inherited the building from her deceased father, demanding I pay her the money. I approached Piro about getting my cash back, and he flailed his arms about screaming, “You asshole! You’re an asshole, Plumides!”

Needless to say, I didn’t get a nickel out of him, so I had to pay not once, but twice for the space. Not only that, the owner of the property informed me that she was evicting Piro, and I would have to lease both buildings, at thirty-six hundred dollars a month which I couldn’t afford. That Southside bitch was gouging me at the worst possible juncture.

I also went through a grueling time with building standards, and Ron McDonald was still sore from the ass-reaming he got from the mayor and City Council. Luckily the area was designated “Uptown Mixed Urban Development,” which got me through a ton of red tape, and exclusive parking requirements. They approved the plans, by insisting I put in eighteen toilet fixtures, tons of electrical work, recede the entrance and

install a concrete ramp. Since there was no room for an interior ramp, and the entrance was two-tiered, they required me to install a “wheel chair elevator” to make the building handicap accessible. So I had to find a wheel chair elevator somewhere. It wasn’t something you just pick up from the hardware store. Luckily, I found one for sale in the paper over off of Tuckaseegee Road, and Danny and I went to take a look at it.

When we arrived at the address off of Tuckaseegee, the wheel chair elevator was being used for potted plants. We knocked on the door, and a big husky black fellow answered. He allowed me to purchase the elevator and cart it off for fifteen-hundred dollars, and a five-hundred dollar down payment, with the rest forthcoming the following month. Building standards also required us to remove the heating oil drum, like those you see on the side of a doublewide trailer, from the loading dock area.

It was June 8, 1989, the day after Piro was evicted from next door. Danny, Craig, Spencer, a local make-up artist, and I, were moving the oil drum out of the bay area and into the street. The fucker was heavy, still halfway filled with oil.

I looked over and noticed smoke emanating from the building next door. We set down the oil drum in the street.

“Danny! Danny! The building next door is on fire! Call the Fire Department before it spreads over here! Now!

“I’m on it!”

I covered my face with a bar rag, and went into the burn-

ing building to make sure no one was in it, and see if the fire could be contained. I ran up half a flight of steps, and the smoke was so thick, it was tangible and foraged down my throat, gagging me. It had substance, almost as if it were alive. I couldn’t make further than a few more steps until I retreated back down and out of the building. My mouth was full of burning building as I exited the blaze.

Fire trucks arrived in minutes, and after half an hour, the fire was vanquished. I had black soot all over me, and under my nostrils. A red Crown Victoria pulled up behind one of the fire trucks. Out stepped Arson Detective Smith. Smith was six feet, in a cheap navy blue suit, with a mustache, light brown hair, and orthopedic shoes.

“Which one of you is Plumides?”

“That’s me,” I said, coughing up black stuff.

“You leasing that building?”

“The tenants moved out yesterday. I thought someone might still be in the building, but the smoke was too thick to find out.”

“Don’t you ever enter a burning building! That’s our job. Now you didn’t answer my question.”

“I don’t have the lease. The landlord was trying to force me to lease it, but I don’t need it.”

“Then you got motive. I believe this fire to be arson, and I think you had something to do with it.”

“What?”

Arson Detective Smith went into his car, and pulled a briefcase from the back seat and set it on the hood. He then

opened it and retrieved a small plastic container, and a Sharpie. Smith walked over to the oil drum.

“What do we have here?”

“It’s a heating oil drum,” I responded. “Building standards ordered us to remove it from the premises.”

Smith took a sample of the heating oil.

“This could have been used as accelerant. I’m taking a sample of this to have it analyzed. You better hope we don’t find traces of it in that building. Be in my office first thing tomorrow morning for further questioning. 8:30 A.M. You better be there.”

Arson Detective Smith handed me his card and walked away.

I remember saying, “Amazing. Why is it that every one of these jerk-offs has a mustache?”

I went home that afternoon to shower off the ash. The fire was a traumatic and overwhelming experience. Not only was I almost caught up in the blaze, but now they were trying to pin it on me. I was watching the local news, while the reporter interviewed the Chief Arson Detective. I was wrapped in a blanket with my hair still wet.

“We suspect the fire to be arson. The investigation is ongoing, and we are following every lead.”

“Do you have any suspects?”

“Yes. We do have several suspects.”

I was glassy-eyed and emotional as I stared into the television.

“Yeah, and I’m one of them,” I muttered. “What else could possibly happen?”

Jillian was standing in the kitchen stirring batter in a bowl with a wooden spoon. She was making cookies for her nieces and nephews. One of Jillian’s Scotties sat in my lap comforting me, sensing my distress.

Then Jillian said, “I just hope you don’t embarrass us again, like last time.”

I wanted to blow my brains out. Her comment disgusted me. I wanted to choke her, like the smoke choked me earlier. At that moment I was so fed up with all the bull shit, I decided I wasn’t going to take it anymore, from her, from them, or from anyone. I put some clothes on and went back down to Fifth Street to work on the club. I stayed late, not getting home until around four.

The next morning, I arrived at Arson Detective Smith’s office at 8:30 A.M. and had to wait because he had not arrived yet. About 9:00 A.M., Smith entered holding a file in his hand, and ushered me back to the conference room. We sat down and he asked me some questions.

“I told you yesterday that I think you got something to do with this fire. I would like you to take a lie detector test.”

“To see if I’m lying about what?”

“Don’t get smart with me. You know exactly why you’re here.”

I snapped.

“Well here I am. But, let me ask you something, pal. After all the heat coming down on me these last months, do you really think that I would be stupid enough to commit an arson

and chance burning down a club I just spent forty-thousand on, in broad daylight?

“Well you could have...”

“I’m not finished! Since yesterday all you’ve done is make your snide comments and feed me a bunch of abuse like you’re a fucking little league coach. I’m not going to let you bully me like I was some mongoloid kid in your gym class. I’m sick and tired of getting reamed by you people every other minute. You want me to take a lie detector test? Fine! If that will satisfy you assholes, then let’s do it. Let’s take that fucker right now, because I’m tired, and I want to go back home and go to sleep. I’m not going to take this city’s bull shit any longer!”

“All right, tough guy. The Polygraph Administrator is standing by.”

I yawned. He noticed I looked exhausted, and put the receiver down.

“Wait a minute. How much sleep have you had?”

I worked until around 4:00 A.M. I slept about three hours. What difference does that make?”

“It makes a big difference. It means you can’t take this polygraph today.”

“Why not? I’m ready. I’m here.”

“Your fatigue will affect the accuracy of the test. I’m going to need you to take it another day when you’re better rested. Could you maybe come back on Tuesday?”

“Go fuck yourself!”

I stormed out of the Arson Investigator’s Office, and

slammed the door. The detective followed me out.

“Hey! Get back in here!”

I got in my Cherokee and waved goodbye to Smith, as I pulled out of the parking lot all the while snickering to myself. It was a ballsy move but I was fed up with their nonsense. Anyway, since they never called me back, I guess they figured out I didn’t do it. One thing was certain. Whoever set the blaze did me a favor. Now I wouldn’t have to sign that lease the landlord was pressing me to, renting both buildings. In some ways, she was worse than Piro. He was just a small time starving artist methadone addict, and she was a greedy cunt. As far as I was concerned, she could stick her blitzkrieged building up her ass. The question was, who did set the place on fire? Little did I know there were nefarious forces at work.

Then my car got repossessed. I hadn’t made the payment in four months. I was hiding it out back of the club in the weeds, but the man was waiting patiently. That cost me two grand I didn’t have. The shit was piling up so high I needed stilts to wade through it.

For the next month authorities were up my ass making sure that everything was up to code. I had one shot at redemption, and I didn’t want to blow it this time. All my other permits and licenses were in place and valid. I was just waiting on a certificate from the Department of Labor for the chair lift.

Sullins granted me an alcohol permit in July, albeit reluc-

tantly, and building standards was satisfied with the exception of the chair lift certificate. The alcohol permit granted was only temporary, and my certificate of occupancy was good for three hundred people.

Luckily, I still had a friend at the *Observer* in Kevin Morgan. He did a big write-up for me entitled "Follow The Bouncing Music Club: 4808 Finds New Spot," pointing out how "mobile" clubs were the hip new thing on the west coast, noting that I didn't intend such a "fly-by-night existence," although 4808's reopening had become a running joke among the music types. He later recognized "Plumides had hosted some of the most innovative acts to come through town over the past year." That the band Funkenstein had written a song entitled, "Yo, Mike Plumides, get on your funky boots," was evidence of the "impression" I had made on the scene.

Since I was having some problems with thievery, I hired some new folks. Danny stayed on, but I brought in a new guy named Hillel, the only Hasidic punk rocker I had ever met, as the new front door cashier. I then hired Joey, the skinhead, to watch Hillel. I even let the red haired kid run errands for me. I was happy.

Joey had Mr. Clean tattooed to his left pectoral muscle, and wore the skinhead uniform: a white tank top, red suspenders, blue jeans, socks, red twelve eye-hole Docs.

Hillel, originally from Chicago, had his uniform as well: a yarmulke, locks and beard, Big Black or Ministry t-shirt, cut off army shorts, wallet with chain, socks, and untied army boots.

I had done a few decent shows since opening in late July and early August: Nuclear Assault, Circus of Power, Scatterbrain, Morbid Angel (originally from Charlotte), Johnny Quest, one of McCorkle's Funkfest series with Funkenstein, Egypt from Virginia Beach, and Follow For Now who had recently signed to Chrysalis. That summer was sweltering. The heat wave brought back memories of Columbia, South Carolina, and the sweat spot on Kip's wall.

On August 16, 1990 we were preparing for a Social Distortion show, when I got the news from Triad Artists, now William Morris Agency; O'Leary's people. I had won a recent battle over him and wanted to tell the new employees about our upcoming theatrical performance that we had wrestled away from the big dogs.

"O'Leary can't do an all ages, because he sells hard liquor, so it looks like we're going to get the GWAR show."

Hillel and Joey high-fived, both of them laughing, then pretended not to be friends again. The red haired kid was jumping up and down like a pogo stick. They knew that O'Leary and I were in yet another tussle over GWAR, which I had developed in the area. The band chose to play at the 4808 on West Fifth Street.

GWAR was a costumed band, similar to KISS, Alice Cooper, *Conan the Barbarian*, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, all rolled into one. While the band performed, their 'slaves' offer interludes of deviancy and ultra-violence during the show. I brought them

to town for their first performance back in March of 1990. There was a big buzz about the band by then.

Emily Yudell, a childhood friend of mine turned me on to GWAR, as she was a friend of the band, who hailed from her alma mater, Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. VCU was considered one of the nation's better art schools, and being the punk rock artsy-fartsy that she was, Emily was up on all that weird shit.

The tour date was set for September 18, 1990. GWAR was supporting their new album on Metal Blade Records, aptly entitled *Scumdogs of the Universe*. The only way I could acquire the band was if I would agree to an all-ages show. Although I was a little sketchy about it, I reluctantly acquiesced, considering the nature of their last performance at the 4808 on Seventh Street.

Fred Mills wrote about the previous show, in *Creative Loafing's* "Music Menu." "If you recall the last area GWAR performance, nine-foot penises spewed and the slaves drank."

It was Fred's "Gig of the Week." I didn't recall any "nine foot penises." Well, so much for poetic license.

## **"The Salaminizer"**

It was Tuesday, September 18, 1990, and I was hurting for cash. I needed the GWAR show to be huge, because I was completely out of money with no reserves. I had borrowed the last nickel I could from Dad, Jillian's dad, and Jimmy Repo. The well was dry, and I still owed the big fellow for the wheelchair elevator. I still had not received its Inspection Certificate from the Department of Labor.

Around 4:00 P.M., GWAR's tour bus pulled up on Fifth Street and parked in the vacant lot across from the club. Their truck, sporting a bloody handprint on the side, backed up to the bay area. Out of the truck stepped Liz, GWAR's tour manager. Liz looked like a fat little blonde pigeon, with a purple spot of fake blood on her white tennis shirt, resembling the birthmark on Mikhail Gorbachev's forehead, and yellow stuff like silly string in her hair. She was wearing plaid shorts, and

Vans tennis shoes, which made squeaks when she walked across the tile floor.

The GWAR crew was dirty. As they loaded in blood splattered amp crates, and end-trail covered costumes, it occurred to me that I was in for a long night. My sound crew painstakingly covered all of the equipment with plastic. The stench of the stage props was inescapable as filthy, Bohemian art school weirdos prepared their alchemy.

“Hey Mike,” Liz asked. “Where are the dressing rooms and hospitality? We’re starving.”

“I’m sure you are. Dressing rooms stage right, hospitality behind the curtains on the left. Where’s the band?”

They don’t meet anyone before the show. Oh, and you got to clear this place out before sound check at 5:30. No cameras allowed. Here’s the guest list.”

She handed me the list and I didn’t bother to peek at it.

“Far out.”

I looked at Liz, and held in a laugh.

By 10:00 P.M. there was a line around the building. Hillel and Joey were at the front door when I went to check on things. Two older men with mustaches were in line laughing and carrying on. Their mustaches bothered me.

I said to Hillel, hoping against hope, that they weren’t cops, “Maybe they brought their step kids, or something.”

Joey looked out the door and said, “Hey, Mike. You’ll never guess who’s here.”

I peered from around the corner, and low and behold, it was O’Leary, his partner, and three of his goons. Although I

had frequented his clubs a number of times, O’Leary had never once visited any location of the 4808. O’Leary coming around made me nervous, and I tried to show that it didn’t bother me. I didn’t trust that fucker one bit.

I responded to Joey Vernon, “I don’t care. His money’s as green as anyone’s.”

O’Leary, with his fake laugh, and sneering nasally persona quipped with confidence, as he offered me a fishy handshake. “How’s it going, Mike? I thought I’d come check your place out. Hope you don’t mind.”

He surrounded himself with his goons, like he knew he needed their protection. That’s when it occurred to me that he was up to something. I just didn’t know what yet.

“The more the merrier. That’s thirteen dollars apiece.”

“Oh, no,” O’Leary smirked, “I’m on the guest list. Me plus four.”

Sure enough, his name was on the list.

“Well, enjoy yourselves.”

“I’m sure we will.”

Hillel then asked me “Would you get me more ones and fives?”

“I got it.”

I went into the office to get change out of the drop box. I turned on the light and waited for the fluorescent to flicker on. The phone was ringing repeatedly. I unlocked the drop box anchored to the floor, changed out the cash, turned off the light, and shut the door behind me.

The club was at capacity. I wanted a big crowd. Be care-

ful what you wish for. But I didn't like O'Leary and his goons creeping around. He was up to no good, I was sure of it. I told everyone to keep an eye on O'Leary, and report anything suspicious back to me.

There was also something peculiar about the two mustaches. With cameras hanging from around their necks, they were impatient while waiting for the show to begin. Maybe I was just paranoid but I had a right to be, considering everything I had been through. I couldn't wait for the night to be over already. GWAR was about to come on.

The lights came up slowly and the stage was soon covered in mist. GWAR opened the show with "The Salaminizer," a song that embodies their theatrical ethos. The lyrics went something like:

"Here's a little something from a god to a slave, who never should have been let out the fucking microwave! We're on this planet and we're running amok. I should give a shit, but I don't give a fuck! Ever since I was a scumdog, I blew a cum-wad. I need a mother-fucking suckadickalickalong! Burning a mall or two, blowing the load I spew. You don't wanna fuck me? I'll fuck you."

On stage, GWAR looked and sounded like they were conjured right out of an H.P. Lovecraft novel, even more so than Lorna's minions at WUSC. Oderus Urungus, the lead singer, AKA David Brockie had the most vivid costume, vile yet brilliant. With a demon's face, spiked shoulder pads, body paint, monster feet and hands, netted stockings, and a big fish like penis hanging from his groin he called "The Cuttlefish of

Cthulhu" with a three-testicle scrotum sac hanging between his legs, Oderus' "Omni-sexual" character was festering and oozing with presence.

The other members of GWAR consisted of: "Balsac, The Jaws of Death" with cloven hooves and a metal bear-trap face, on guitar; "Beefcake the Mighty" dressed as an over-size breast-plated Macedonic warrior, on bass; "Jizmak, the Gusher" a Neanderthal, on drums, and "Flattus Maximus," a primitive Viking on guitar. They were accompanied by their guido, big-haired manager "Sleazy P. Martini" and "Slymenstra Hymen," the nimble and statuesque female fire breather, as well as numerous slaves who do the band's dirty work during the performance.

The band banged out some crowd favorites such as their hardcore tune "Americanized," "The Horror of Yig," "Vlad the Impaler," "Sick of You," and "Slaughterama," where the band decapitated a "skinhead," a "hippie," and an "art fag" during a faux game show.

GWAR also tried out some new material such as "The Morality Squad." During the song a costumed actor plays "Corporal Punishment," a parody of Marvel's "Captain America" and another, "Granbo" representing the geriatric, gun-toting religious right, were both mutilated. Oderus and the other slaves tore out their guts and entrails, and sprayed the excited crowd with fake blood and bodily fluids, much to everyone's satisfaction. By this time, I was over capacity and absolutely slammed. Between keeping up with crowd control, door money, and bar money, I missed a lot of the show.

Nor could I keep an eye on the two mustaches, or O'Leary.

At the end of GWAR's performance, Oderus sprayed the crowd with the Cuttlefish of Cthulhu. *The Urban Dictionary* describes the stage prop as "Oderus' sexual reproductive organ" resembling "a huge slug" with lips, which "spurts when excited." Spurt it did, sealing my fate.

As I counted the door money in my office, the club was raided.

We have now come full circle.

Sometime during the performance, Oderus had sodomized a Catholic priest, and then shoved a giant crucifix in his sphincter. None of it was real, and was all part of GWAR's twisted, yet comical and debauched spectacle. I didn't see it. Had I witnessed the event, I probably would have had a stroke, like my dad. But the show was also chocked full of satire and social commentary, no matter how grotesque, not to be taken literally. Try selling that to bunch of redneck cops.

In handcuffs, I lead Sullins back to the dressing room where the band had just finished their encore and were taking off their costumes. The dressing room was steamy, close, and uncomfortable.

Sullins spoke with authority, "Which one of ya'll is the lead singer?"

Brockie, still in costume from the waist down, said indignantly, as if answering to roll call, "I'm the lead slave!"

"Well son, you're under arrest for an obscene performance under North Carolina law."

"Do you mind if I get out of my costume and put some clothes on?"

"Hurry your ass up, boy."

Brockie bent over to take off his monster feet and the Cuttlefish, aiming his blood crusted bare butt cheeks toward Sullins.

Sullins commented, "I could have gone all night without seeing that."

Another policeman approached Sullins. "I couldn't figure out which one of these fellers is the priest, Detective Sullins."

"Don't worry about it," Sullins replied. "I got everything I need to shut this place down."

Sullins pulled up his gun belt like he had just foiled a crime in Mayberry, and sniffed.

"Confiscate that fish, or penis, or whatever the hell it is."

Brockie interjected, "It's the 'Cuttlefish of...'"

"Put a plug in it, boy."

The policeman then asked me, "You got somethin' we could put this thang in?"

The Cuttlefish of Cthulhu was covered in fake blood and still dripping. Danny brought the cops an old rusted mop pail. The police confiscated the stage prop and carted it and us out of the 4808.

The cops were all chuckling among themselves, as if they were a bunch of kids who had just peed the pool. Brockie wasn't surprised. His brand of sarcastic, sadistic mayhem was bound and determined to eventually piss the wrong folks off somewhere in the South. It was only a matter of time before

some “Bible-Belt” yokels caught wind of GWAR’s theatrics, and these cops were ready to kick both of our asses up around our shoulder blades.

When Brockie and I were lead out onto the street in handcuffs, the crowd was in an uproar. The scene was chaotic outside the 4808 Club, awash in punk rockers soaked in sweat and fake blood, blued constables brandishing their nightsticks, and of course, the media, ready to report the whole scene as inaccurately as humanly possible.

A column of police cars were lined up outside the club blocking Fifth Street. And to add insult to injury, a police helicopter was hovering overhead with a spotlight. The crowd became riotous, led by Kirk Fisher of Buzz Ov-en, chanting anti-fascist slogans, and pushing up against the squad cars. They arrested Fisher as well, along with a few other rabble-rousers.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw O’Leary in the darkness gloating, the same way Lorna did after my defeat when I ran unsuccessfully for WUSC-FM Program Director.

Brockie and I were muscled into a squad car, as a policeman placed the red haired kid’s bicycle in the back of another vehicle close by. The kid looked frantic, trying to get my attention.

“What am I charged with?” Brockie, a Canadian National posed, nervous about a possible deportation.

Detective J.H. Hurd of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Vice Squad, pulled a small pad out of his back pocket, and read him the charges:

“Violating North Carolina Felony Criminal Statutes, more specifically, you’ve been charged with ‘Disseminating Obscenity,’ by simulating ejaculation with a two and a half foot latex penis, simulating sodomy, and eating feces, along with other misdemeanors.”

Brockie pondered the charges for a moment, and queried, “You mean you can’t do that in North Carolina?”

It was a night filled with cruel jokes.

## Aftermath and Dissent

David Brockie and I were put in an eight by ten holding cell with a vagrant who had shit down his pants, until the cops were ready to question and book us. One of the correctional officers was kind enough to come in and spray Lysol, covering his face with a towel. As he exited the small, pink room with cinderblock walls, he laughed and then slammed the solid metal door behind him.

After an hour or so, Brockie and I were taken to separate desks and asked a series of questions. During my interrogation I looked out into the hallway, and noticed one of the Vice cops running up and down the hall screaming with the Cuttlefish of Cthulhu affixed to his groin. I guess he was confident that no one would arrest him. I wasn't released until 11:00 A.M. the next day on my own recognizance and I was charged with "disseminating obscenity," a felony in North Carolina, as well as related misdemeanors. So was Brockie.

"2 Live Crew is Sunday school compared to this group," commented Detective J.H. Hurd to *The Charlotte Observer*, referencing the record store owner's arrest in Florida for selling Crew's release *Nasty As They Wanna Be*. Hurd was only repeating what someone told him, like he knew anything about 2 Live Crew. But that statement obviously indicated that police nationwide had their eyes on music. The headline read "Raunchy Singing Act Hits Wrong Note with Police." And talk about piling on; since the 4808 Club had been operating under a temporary beer permit, Sullins rejected the 4808's application. I saw that one coming. No shocker there.

Brockie's defense lawyer struck a deal with the D.A. I read in an interview that Brockie gave sometime after the court appearance to *Naked Aggression*, where he stated: "It pained me, but we accepted a plea bargain. It kind of made me sick. Jello Biafra got really mad at me for being such a puss. By my logic, the court battle was going to cost too much if we stayed and fought it, and the chance of us winning was slim to none. We had nobody backing us up at all."

Brockie's judge was named Richard Boner. I'm not kidding. According to Brockie, "He read the charges, which included simulating eating feces and simulating anal sex with a priest. He couldn't stop laughing. The fact that there was a family of midgets in the courtroom didn't help much."

In the interview he went on to say, "The State's evidence was this picture of me wearing my costume, smiling and waving at the camera. GWAR was banned from North Carolina for a year. I felt that Judge Boner handed down a pretty

‘stiff decision.’ It was ridiculous.”

The 4808 Club was finally closed down for good. I had stepped into this one and was spitting teeth afterward. But some rumors were flying around as to the origin of the bust and who tipped off the local police. It turned out that O’Leary was the one who called the cops on the GVAR show in the first place. Some years later, I had a conversation with his partner, and he verified it, stating that O’Leary really had it out for me, so much he was obsessed with my downfall, and was ready to do anything in his power to ruin me. Unfortunately I gave him the tool to do it with.

Fred Mills thought that it was his “Music Menu” item about the “nine foot penises” spewing that gave ALE the hint, but that was only the half of it. The other half was a penis with dark hair, about six feet tall from Ohio. O’Leary made the call to David Sullins at Alcohol Law Enforcement referencing the article for the head’s up. Then he came to the show that night, to see it all unravel at his hand. O’Leary ended up buying the building several weeks later; a deal he had negotiated outside of my presence with that sneaky cunt of a landlord.

It was also rumored that he set the building next door on fire, but there was never any proof of it. More than likely it was Piro, pissed off about his eviction. Piro had mumbled something once about how he perpetrated a fraudulent insurance claim on the landlord’s behalf, and she didn’t give him a fair share of the cash. I had dealt with some real assholes in

my experience in the club business.

Not to romanticize the event unnecessarily, but a bit of innocence was lost that night. Some people were so disgusted, they even moved. Both Fred Mills and Kevin Morgan, the town’s music writers, left shortly after the club’s closing. According to Mills, “Charlotte seemed a little less friendly a place for local musicians.” Mills currently resides in Asheville, North Carolina, and is Editor of *Blurt Magazine*. Asheville is now the new music mecca of the South due to its proximity to Manchester, Tennessee, the home of the yearly music festival, Bonnaroo. College radio nationwide follows the trends set right here in The Tarheel State.

But all is not well in North Carolina. Occasionally the Conservatives’ “fear and loathing” of art rears its ugly head. As recent as 2007, censorship had again made headlines, but this time, it cost the state millions of dollars in revenue. A little known yarn, entitled *Hound Dog*, starring then 13-year-old Dakota Fanning, about a precocious backwoods teen discovering her sexuality, and Elvis Presley, was filmed in Wilmington and its environs, and received tax incentives from the state. In a press release, one of the producers commented on Fanning’s full frontal nude scene during a rape depiction, and created a stir on internet blogs. When the film premiered at The Sundance Film Festival in 2008, it was referred to in certain circles as the “Dakota Fanning Rape Movie.” Watchdog groups in the state, as well as child protection advocates were outraged that the film had received a

subsidy from North Carolina. Film critic opinions were varied; Roger Ebert likened the role to that of Jodie Foster in *Taxi Driver*, as where others were disgusted with the exploitation of the young and innocent star of *Charlotte's Web*. One of the film's strongest critics, *Entertainment Weekly*, described the film as "Art House goo," and prescribed for the dud to be "Returned to Sender."

Self-appointed pontiff Phil Berger, North Carolina Senate Majority Leader, then called for all future films made in North Carolina to have "scripts approved in advance," if filmmakers expected to get state-provided production subsidies. Berger also stated that he "had not seen the film" but was "acting in response to what he had read about it." I have seen the film, starring Fanning, Robin Wright Penn, and David Morse. The story line is abysmal, and one could say that the picture "appeals to the prurient interest," according to the *Miller vs. California* test, only meeting one of the three required elements to brand the film pornographic. Nevertheless, *Hound Dog* is at best tasteless, but hardly obscene.

The state lost over 60 million dollars worth of revenue in 2008, after Berger opened his big mouth; scaring off potential film projects and monies, partially due to his moral fumbings, and a poorly written 15% tax incentives program passed into law in recent years that is barely competitive in today's market.

O'Leary, so filled with avarice would unknowingly scuttle the music scene for a time. Even his own clubs fizzled

out in the mid-nineties, one after the other. The death knell for the Pterodactyl came with a gunshot to a patron as she unlocked her car in the parking lot. O'Leary attempted to re-live its glory days by opening another Pterodactyl Club at 509 West Fifth Street, the last 4808 location, after his "Go Cat Go Club" was unsuccessful. The building was then leveled and is now a parking lot.

On a sad note, the red haired kid rode his bike down to the 4808 Club, several days after its closing to see if there was a show still on. The place had been padlocked. He then rode off into the Charlotte night and was haplessly hit by a speeding car. The impact killed him; a victim of a hit and run. The police never caught the driver who murdered my young friend. They certainly could send forty cops to arrest me and this other guy with his rubber fish. It made me nauseous. In many ways, this book is as much the red haired kid's story as it is mine. I hope this is the obituary that he never got; about a good kid who was misunderstood by his parents and found peace in music.

CNN, MTV, *Rolling Stone*, and *Billboard*, all covered the arrests. Commentaries on censorship of art and music, by politicians, law enforcement, and concerned mothers flurried like the ashes of a concentration camp. Other self-appointed pontiffs such as Robert D. Raiford, of the Charlotte rock station WRFX-FM, described the situation with zeal referring to all involved as a bunch of "scumbag bands at a

scumbag club.” Some even labeled me as a “second generation pornographer,” noting my father’s bouts with the city over topless dancing.

Joseph Golden, who at the time was President of Spirit Square Center for the Arts, commented on the raid of their “Cultural Center” in a *Charlotte Observer* editorial early November of 1990, in regard to the “Disseminating Obscenities” Statute. It seemed that the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department “interrupted their pursuit of rapists, murderers, and robbers in order to stifle art,” but were sympathetic to their venue when they raided a play with full frontal nudity while in progress, shortly after the GVAR bust. Golden went on to say that the law was at fault, and not the police, stating “moral and aesthetic rage should be directed at legislators in Raleigh,” and not the local authorities. Further, Golden added, “It’s the North Carolina anti-nudity law that makes no distinction between a sleaze joint and an art center.”

Officer Paul Levins, the other mustached undercover Vice Officer opposite Hurd, was quoted to say “I can’t go into detail about the case, but what I saw on stage was almost verbatim what the statute says is illegal.”

Attorney Charles Johnson, then Chairman of the Charlotte ACLU, said in response to the arrests, “The conduct cannot possibly be considered obscene because it doesn’t meet the three (prong) tests laid down by the Supreme Court in *Miller vs. California*.”

Many learned scholars have argued that North Carolina’s “Disseminating Obscenity” statute is in fact, unconstitutional.

This sense of Puritanism and censorship extended into George W. Bush’s Administration, when then Attorney General John Ashcroft, insisted on covering up the breast of “Lady Justice” in the foyer of The Robert F. Kennedy Department of Justice Building. The coverings were removed in 2005, much to the relief of the American public, although W.’s administration criminally masterminded a multitude of cover ups. There have been also numerous legislations introduced to control pornography on the internet. It is now evident that their attempts to legislate morality worldwide, disguising themselves behind a cloak of moral high ground, were only a smokescreen. Their true intent was to rip us all off, at the costly expense of American lives and resources, much needed in our economic crisis of today.

In November of 1990, Fred Mills wrote an article in *Creative Loafing* entitled, “4808 Blues” where he made a number of valid points.

“As we all know by now metal, punk, and rap music have all been targeted by the FBI, the PMRC, and police around the country as ‘dangerous.’ Whether or not Plumides got caught up in the national witch-hunt, I can’t say. Maybe it was Plumides’ against-the-grain attitude. Maybe he didn’t grease the right palms. In the end, ‘World Class City Charlotte’ and its small town mentality has once again brought itself national ridicule, much like Jesse Helms has brought ridicule to North Carolina.”

At a presentation made during the annual meeting of the

Law and Society Association held in Chicago, Illinois, May of 1993, Matthew Deflem, Professor of Sociology at the University of South Carolina, referenced the arrests in Charlotte, stating “While the censorship of art is not a new phenomenon, the 1980’s experienced renewed and intensified attempts to control popular culture. In particular, rock and rap music then came under increasing attack from various sides representing the entire left and right political spectrum, purportedly for their explicit sexual and violent lyrical contents.”

The 4808 Club managed to incite pretty much all the local authorities by staging all-ages punk and hard rock shows right in the heart of Uptown Charlotte, the last place where they would want a subversive, subculture to thrive. Even today music scenes suffer at the hands of government from both the “left and right of the political spectrum.”

As recent as 2008, Chicago’s City Council and Mayor Daley, a Democrat, both intended to implement a city ordinance prohibiting independent promoters the ability to present shows without a costly license. According to a statement by the Chicago Music Commission, “If the ordinance becomes law, it will create unworkable burdens for many small and young music promoters in Chicago, pressuring a key component of the vibrant Chicago music community instead of supporting and fostering its growth.”

The controversy stemmed from a tragedy that occurred at the E-2 nightclub in 2003, where twenty-one people were tram-

pled to death. “You don’t want to have a burden on the event promoters. But at the same time, they have a responsibility to protect the people,” Daley said defending the ordinance.

The debate is still ongoing. Please note, there will always be someone trying to save us from ourselves in the interest of the public. Here is an example of yet another “World Class City” at odds with its government concerning the freedom of music, and live performances, although in this particular case, adverse to the 4808 Club arrests, no one was killed, maimed, or harmed in any way.

Music is thriving again here in Charlotte with venues like The Visulite, Tremont Music Hall, Snug Harbor, Evening Muse, Amos’ Southend and The Neighborhood Theatre promoting shows nightly. Arguably, there is more variety now than ever. Some new guys even re-opened the World Famous Milestone a year or two back. As Dylan said, “Times they are a changin’.” I’m glad to have been a part of the changing times.

Last summer I walked the streets of Uptown during “Speed Week,” a promotion for NASCAR fans and the Lowe’s Motor Speedway. Major corporations such as Ford, Budweiser, and General Mills all sponsored the yearly festival. Young, attractive people walked from bar to bar, a huge crowd enjoyed the festivities, and live music played on each corner.

As I strolled down Seventh, I came across this scaffolding, where a band was performing in front of throngs of concert attendees, right where the 4808 Club once stood. The tour buses were parked on the vacant lot where my office

once sat. The rock stars were covering the Nine Inch Nails song entitled, “Closer,” screaming the explicit lyrics, “Fuck you like an animal,” using little discretion as moms and dads held their children’s ice cream cones, and pushed their baby strollers within earshot. Closer indeed.

I think that after trying so desperately to kill the music those many years ago and after finally succeeding, the powers that be helped to commercialize it and package it neatly for mass consumption, just like your favorite morning breakfast cereal. I guess that’s why they turned Uptown Charlotte into the “Entertainment District.”

So what happened to me after the 4808 Club closed? Well, I couldn’t pay back all the money that I borrowed, so I filed a Chapter 7. That guy repossessed his wheel chair elevator. And I left Jillian. There were no hard feelings. I must have been impossible to live with. It wasn’t her fault. I’m sure I deserved half the grief she gave me anyway. We are still friends. Matter of fact, Jillian gave me the best present I’ve ever had: My Jack Russell Terrier, Tyberius. He was beautiful; my angel who left a lasting impression on everyone he touched. After his death last year, I began my journey down memory lane, to take my mind off of his passing. Here you have the result.

The prosecutor, David Cayer, dropped the felony charges and I pleaded guilty to “Harmful Performance to Minors,” a misdemeanor. My Uncle John and Mike Shulimson represented me, now both deceased. The court

ordered me to do one hundred-twenty hours of community service. After answering phones at the Red Cross, carrying watermelons at the Farmer’s Market, and washing fire trucks, I finished my penance. The prosecutor didn’t think I could knock out the required hours in three months but I walked into the courtroom with the completion certificate in my hand.

Cayer, now a judge, was pissed. When asked why he struck the plea bargain in the first place, Cayer responded, “We felt a misdemeanor disposition was appropriate because this was a one time performance.”

GWAR has played two dozen times or more in North Carolina since then, and been nominated for two Grammys in the “Metal Category.” The act has been touring persistently and to celebrate their 25th Anniversary, GWAR will release *Lust in Space* on Brian Slagel’s aforementioned label, Metal Blade, followed by a world tour. The band’s lore has transcended pop culture so much, that several years ago their mythos brought the “Cuttlefish of Cthulhu” to the Hard Rock Café at Universal City, California; hand delivered by Oderus Urungus himself to christen the grand opening. The bizarre and offensive, but hardly obscene, stage prop was donated, and put on display in a glass case, until it was eventually removed after years of parental protest. Today, you can see any number of GWAR’s videos, with live performances, and beheadings of celebrities, readily available at your fingertips on youtube.com, or you may even buy the band’s wares on eBay.

After my last court appearance, I moved back down to my

beloved South Carolina, to do some shows on the coast, continuing the saga into the summer of 1991. I took Chastity with me, and we had a blast.

I was on my way to see The Pixies in Chapel Hill with my brother Damon, and Brian McKenzie in early December. We stopped off at the Mad Monk to drop off some fliers. That night, the place burned to the ground. The following year I did shows with Bad Religion, Helmet, Reverend Horton Heat, L7, and White Zombie, just to name a few, years before the House of Blues arrived. The 1990's were a glorious time in music.

There will always be someone out there dictating what you should do, where you should go, and what you should watch or listen to. Thus is our destiny. But they can't kill the music forever no matter how hard they try. Someone once had to remind me of that. For a moment I had almost forgotten. He said, "You can't quit!" He said, "Stay hardcore, remember?" The red haired kid charged me with a simple task; to remember my own credo. Luckily, I did "Stay hardcore," and I promised myself that I would never forget again.

**THE END**



232 Michael G. Plumides, Jr.

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