

Praise for
ROCK AND ROLL WARRIOR



“While looking back at the WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE tour, there was only one person who could have been the road manager. David Libert was somehow on the same frequency as the cast and crew’s collective madness. If the fires of insanity were burning, David Libert was fanning the flames. Every morning’s flight began with roll call and the ‘ball’ scores.”

—ALICE COOPER

“First as booking agent and then as personal manager for Parliament-Funkadelic during our wildest tours, David Libert was Mission Control for the Mothership.”

—GEORGE CLINTON, **Dr. Funkenstein**

“In the dog eat dog world of Rock and Roll in the ‘70s and ‘80s, Dave Libert was known for his upbeat style, his ruthlessness in business and his epic Hollywood Hills parties. He wore many hats as a booking agent and manager, and in those days, you couldn’t find anyone better. Thanks for the memories, Dave!”

—CHERIE CURRIE, **The Runaways**

“Enjoyed reading ‘Rock and Roll Warrior’... Brought back lots of great memories and lots I didn’t remember.”

—SHEP GORDON, **Supermensch**

“Well, for somebody who has booked the acts, done the tours, drunk the alcohol, had the hangover, done the flights, rocked the ‘joint’ or two, and let’s not forget sweet little Connie from Little Rock..it’s about goddamn time you wrote the book. Love you, Dave.”

—SUZI QUATRO, **Musician**

“When Bootsy’s Rubber Band was nobody, I had no money, no place to stay, no friends in LA. But Dave took me in and treated me as if I was a star already. He saw something in me that even I did not see at the time. Thank u David for being there when I needed u the most.”

—BOOTSY COLLINS, Musician

“Dave Libert—Dynamic, fearless, informative, team player, and great friend. He consistently exists in an environment of altruism which opens the door of creativity and success.”

—WILL CALHOUN, Living Colour

“Dave Libert is a one of a kind guy...We did great things together. He had a great life in the music industry. The only thing I hold against him was that he was in The HAPPENINGS !!!”

—CARMINE APPICE, Vanilla Fudge

“From managing rock stars to fixing my plumbing, Libert’s life has been one of the wildest rides in entertainment history.”

—DAVID KEITH, Actor

“If I hadn’t been there, I would say the entire story was bullshit. I witnessed every insane, impossible to believe moment! In my career of over 40 years as an agent to some of the biggest rock stars of all time, with the most oversized personalities as you might imagine, this was the first time that the road manager emerged as the star. Everyone wanted to be David Libert!”

—JONNY PODELL, Agent

“When I heard that Dave Libert was writing a book about his experiences in the crazy years of the music business, namely the 60s and 70s., I thought that nobody was more qualified to write a book on the subject. Manager, booking agent, tour manager etc. etc, Dave was in the thick of the fun and craziness. I immediately ordered my copy. I thought that, as Dave’s book comes from his unique and hilarious overview, that it would become one of the definitive books of the period. If you want the incredible inside stories, then get this book.”

—BRIAN AUGER, Musician

ROCK AND ROLL WARRIOR

My Misadventures with
Alice Cooper, Prince, George Clinton,
Living Colour, The Runaways, and More...



David Libert

EDITED BY
Susan Michelson



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***“Free your mind...
and your ass will follow.”***

—GEORGE CLINTON



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FOREWORD



DAVID LIBERT TRANSPORTS US ON HIS ROCKIN' ROLLER COASTER RIDE WITH the original Alice Cooper Band, Alice Cooper, George Clinton, Parliament Funkadelic, The Runaways, Cherie Currie, “Supermensch” Shep Gordon, Bootsy Collins, Prince, Sheila E, Guns N’ Roses, The Happenings, Living Colour, Vanilla Fudge, The Tokens, Brian Auger, and more!

As a road manager, artist manager, musician, songwriter, record producer, and booking agent, Libert shares vivid tales from the inner circle of the music industry: on the road, backstage, on private jets, and inside the notorious after-parties in the era of free-spirit, hard-driving rock ‘n roll and R&B. It’s life on the road in technicolor.

You’re in the trenches as “Dyno Dave” engages with his hilarious, edgy, and sarcastic wit. As Tour Manager for Alice Cooper, running the first large-scale, theatrical, international rock tour, Libert conquers logistics from the mundane to the insane—shepherding more than 50 people, nine trucks, extravagant stage sets and equipment—on private jets, vans, limos and through hotels around the world. Libert leads his charges with wisdom, ingenuity, psychology, and arm-twisting. And always with humor.

Libert gives us a backstage pass to a traveling laugh fest, conjoined with hard-driving discipline and hard-driven raunch and roll.

PROLOGUE



I'M ONSTAGE, CROUCHED DOWN BEHIND A WALL OF HUGE SPEAKER CABINETS

at Woodstock '99 and wondering, what's with Bootsy? He's been hiding behind that stage prop for twenty minutes, still fiddling with his rig. C'mon Bootsy. Get the fuck out there. The orange warning light just went on which means there's only ten minutes left of Parliament-Funkadelic's set. There are 180,000 people out there, and George Clinton has worked them into a frenzy. Bootsy, you're going to miss the moment.

And just when I'm about to completely lose it and scream, "Bootsy! What the fuck?" He looks my way, winks at me, then turns and nods to his tech guy. Seconds later, Bootsy kicks the stage prop out of the way, and there he is. The huge raucous crowd gives out a deafening roar. With Parliament-Funkadelic laying down the funkier of grooves, as only "P-Funk" can, Bootsy Collins stands motionless for a moment, looks around, looks at the audience, gives them that huge toothy smile and then, with lighting and sound systems melding together with the intensity of a supernova, he funkwalks his way to the front of the enormous stage. The spotlights reflect off his gem-encrusted Spacebass and famous star-shaped sunglasses, sending hundreds of beams of light in every direction.

Pretending to be completely oblivious to the enormity of the moment, Bootsy casually leans his six-and-a-half-foot tall frame into the mic, “Uhhhh.... What’s happening, y’all?” The crowd goes absolutely berserk. My God. What an entrance. What was I worried about?

I’m not even sure that every single member of Parliament-Funkadelic is onstage to relish this incredible moment. I think a couple of them overslept at the hotel. Or were recuperating from the festivities the night before. But when your band has six guitarists, three bass players, and two drummers, a missing guy or two is of little to no musical consequence. It’s not like Keith didn’t show up, so Mick had to cancel the gig.

Standing on the side of the stage, I feel like I’m witnessing a slice of time and space itself where the best music on earth is being played. I know that something this special doesn’t happen by accident. It’s certainly no accident that one of my closest friends is one of the most powerful booking agents alive.

Six months earlier, Jonny Podell had picked up the phone and called John Scher, the promoter of Woodstock ‘99. He “asked” for an obscene amount of money for his new client, Parliament-Funkadelic, and “asked” if they could be added to the list of headliners, which included Sheryl Crow, Rage Against the Machine, Limp Bizkit, and Red Hot Chili Peppers. Not that George Clinton and company didn’t deserve to be included with such an august lineup of superstar acts. They certainly did. But it also takes a superstar agent with a roster that includes Alice Cooper, George Harrison, and Crosby, Stills & Nash to pull it off.

When you get a call from the guy responsible for helping you evolve from promoting 1,000-seat shows in Passaic, New Jersey, to becoming the exclusive promoter for both the 20,000-seat Meadowlands Arena and the adjacent 80,000-seat Giants Stadium... well, favors are asked, and favors are granted.

George Clinton rules his kingdom through the sheer force of his will. Jonny instead plays a brilliant game of chess, albeit with people, instead of with pawns, bishops, and kings. And if you're Jonny Podell, the entire world is your chess board. Bootsy Collins may not have received the same outrageous guarantee that Podell had "asked" for—and got—for P-Funk; but when you consider Bootsy only played for nine minutes, his per minute fee could rival that of the CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation.

Since George and Bootsy were both clients of Available Entertainment, my very own management company, it wasn't a bad payday for me either. Even the backstage perks were impressive. Total access to the artists' backstage hospitality area also included the festival sponsors' courtesy tent, the equivalent of a swag bag on steroids. Companies like Nike, Levi's, Adidas, Converse, and a few dozen other name brands, had their own booths inside that tent, for the sole purpose of giving away their goods to the artists and their respective management companies. I could have easily opened my own clothing store stocked with all the booty that was literally thrown at me.

Which begs the question, how did I get here? How did all this happen? Hard work? Dedication? Sure. But the world is full of hardworking, dedicated people who never come anywhere near achieving such lofty heights. Is it luck? Yes. Great mentors like Shep Gordon? Jonny Podell? Of course. It all contributes. But if my mother hadn't insisted that I continue with my piano lessons, it's doubtful that any of this would have ever happened. Without those lessons, I very well might have ended up being the assistant manager of household appliances at Walmart.

Chapter One

I SOUNDED LIKE A PREPUBESCENT RUDY VALLEE



Turns out, it was those piano lessons, along with inheriting my father's musical talent, that pretty much scripted the outcome of my life. It was, in a word, destiny. In kindergarten, I would accompany the singing of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" on the piano. I was five years old. I don't think I was playing chords yet, but I did hit all the right melody notes. My teachers thought this was quite remarkable. I liked the attention I received from the teachers and the other kids, but I personally didn't think it was such a big deal.

My mother, Mary Bauman, was born and raised in Toronto. Does that make me half Canuck? She was what we would today consider a traditional housewife, raising two boys while dad was out there earning a living. One of my favorite qualities about my mother was her meals... she was a fantastic cook.

My father, Louis Libert, was born and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, which was also where I also grew up, although I was actually born in nearby New York City, in 1943.

Somewhere in the past, the name "Libertovski" was changed to "Libert," and pronounced Lee-bert. Less Jewish sounding, I suppose. Whatever

the reason, I'm relieved that I never had to be known as David Libertovski. It's bad enough that my name is almost always mispronounced by strangers as Lib-bert or Ly-bert. They both sound like communicable diseases to me. But there was one small advantage. Before caller ID, if someone called and asked for Mr. Libbert or Mr. Lybert, I knew it was a bill collector.

My dad was an attorney. Louis Libert's law practice was located in Manhattan, and he commuted to work every weekday from Paterson. He rarely worked on Saturdays or Sundays. He liked being with the family on the weekends, and he felt that was important. On the rare occasions when he was compelled to go into his office on a Saturday, he would always bring me and my older brother Richard along with him. The office had one of those old Dictaphone machines. Considered a modern device in the early 1950s, it could record my dad's voice onto a wax-coated cardboard cylinder, to be played back later by his secretary when she typed my dad's intended letter. I was fascinated with the device and loved playing with it. I would sing into its funnel shaped tube and then listen to the playback. I sounded like a prepubescent version of Rudy Vallee singing through a megaphone in the Lincoln Tunnel. My first recording. A portent of things to come?

My dad played the violin by ear, and he soon realized that, even at my tender age, I possessed the same rare ability on piano. I could almost immediately figure out how to play the melody of songs that I was familiar with; and by the time I was six or seven, I could play the chords as well. My dad and I got into the routine of playing together—me on the piano, him on the violin. Recognizing my early musical talent, my parents didn't pressure me, but they did encourage me to consider taking piano lessons. I thought it was a good idea. But the lessons came with a stipulation: I had to promise not to quit, no matter what. I agreed.

I became fascinated with vocal harmonizing, and my piano teacher, Walter Schroeder, had the good sense to incorporate the study of chord theory into his teaching regimen along with my classical piano lessons.

He made it fun for me by also having me learn Frankie Carle jazz piano compositions. Mr. Schroeder was also the conductor of the Paterson Philharmonic Orchestra, and I got to attend many of the concerts, which were held at Paterson's Eastside High School Auditorium, my future alma mater.

For my elementary school graduation from P.S. 20 in Paterson, the music teacher there encouraged me to enlist three other musically talented students and teach them the harmony parts to "Graduation Day," then a current hit record by The Four Freshmen. For the performance, I recruited fellow classmates Ronnie Finn, Isabel Kitay, and Karen Stone. Those three stood around me at the piano while we sang together in perfect four-part harmony to a standing ovation. I didn't realize the significance at the time, but at the age of 13, we had duplicated the harmonies of one of the most sophisticated vocal groups that ever existed. The Four Freshmen were a favorite of Beach Boy Brian Wilson, the king of vocal arranging. All I knew was I liked the way it sounded. I started listening to vocal groups like The Hi-Los, The Four Freshmen, The Double Six of Paris, and Lambert, Hendricks & Ross. I loved studying their harmony structures. It helped me to develop the one exceptional musical talent I arguably did possess—vocal arranging.

Around this same time, I had taken a bus into New York City to see an afternoon show of Ella Fitzgerald at Basin Street East, a well-known jazz club. A young kid could do those kinds of things in 1957. People rarely locked their doors, at least not in my neighborhood, and there was nothing unusual or unsafe about a kid going into the city by himself. Ella Fitzgerald was inspiring, to say the least. It brought me closer to thinking that there might be a future for me in music. It seemed like such a cool way to earn a living.

I used to listen to WNEW every Saturday when the station would feature "Your Hit Parade," and they would play the top 20 hits of the week in descending order until they got to #1. But I also loved to listen to another radio station every night: Newark, New Jersey's WADO. It

featured DJ “Jocko” Henderson...*“Back on the scene with the record machine, saying oo bob a doo, a how do you do?”* He played all the doo-wop groups of the day—The Cadillacs, The Jesters, The Paragons, The Diablos. I couldn’t get enough of it. When Jocko announced to his listeners that he would be presenting a live concert in Paterson and lots of these same groups would be singing their hit songs at the show, I simply had to go.

I took a bus to the Warner Theater in downtown Paterson. When I walked in, I made a startling discovery. Jocko, the groups, the audience... everyone was black. It was something that never occurred to me. I was the only white person there. Not that it bothered me. It didn’t. It was simply an observation. No one there treated me any differently than anyone else. My parents had drilled into me that bigotry was one of the worst scourges of humanity. God knows what they would have done to me if I ever used the “N” word in the house. It would not have been pleasant. Because the unfairness and immorality of bigotry toward black people was ingrained into my DNA by my parents, it enabled me to relate to and appreciate black music in all its genres: Jazz, R&B, Hip Hop. And it enabled me to be comfortably involved with bands like Parliament-Funkadelic, Bootsy’s Rubber Band, and Living Colour.

As I entered my teenage years, I really couldn’t think of anything else I wanted to do other than to be involved with music. Everyone seemed to think I had the talent to succeed. In my second year at Eastside High, I played piano in the school talent contest and won by an impressive margin. But if music was going to be in my future, I had absolutely no idea what I should be doing to realize this dream. I did a lot of day-dreaming though. My most recurring fantasy was getting a call in the middle of the night from someone from the Beach Boys organization. “One of the Beach Boys just dropped dead,” they told me. “Would I be interested in joining the Beach Boys and taking his place?” Years later, when The Happenings were playing a run of dates with the Beach Boys, I recounted the dream to Al Jardine. He thought it was macabre.

1957 was a traumatic year for me. On December 1st, my father died of a heart attack at the age of 50. I was 14. With his passing, my comfortable, upper middle-class existence was about to change radically. Without the substantial income from my father's law practice, my mother decided to sell the house that my brother and I grew up in.

By the time of my father's death, my brother Richard had already moved out and was living in a dorm while attending Rutgers University. So dad's passing didn't affect his life nearly as much as mine. My mother and I moved to a second-story flat. It was actually quite nice and comfortable, and my mother always made sure that we were not lacking for anything, but we were forced to adhere to a far more restrictive budget. Also, without a father to keep me in line, my mother had much less control over me.

For starters, I quit the piano lessons shortly after my father's death. As much as I loved music, I was forced to practice every day. At first it was only thirty minutes a day, but as my lessons grew more progressive and challenging, practicing increased to as much as two hours a day. This did not sit well with me.

While I was practicing piano every day after school, my buddies were out there having fun... playing sports, chasing girls, doing all the things teenage boys did. I, on the other hand, was tethered to a keyboard. I'd had enough. I told my mom I was quitting piano lessons. She reminded me that I had promised to never quit. I basically told her that I really didn't give a shit and she couldn't force me to do it anymore. Without a father to enforce discipline, there was nothing she could do about it. I WAS FREE.

But after almost eight years of piano lessons, the "damage" had been done, so to speak. Those eight years of lessons would turn out to be the education that offered me an opportunity to succeed in music. I suppose my mom always figured that at some point, I would say, "enough." And

she hoped that, by then, I would have had enough years of musical training under my belt to make a difference. She was right. Thanks, Mom.

But I had little interest in school at this point in my life, and my grades showed it. I found it a lot more fun hanging out with my friends. At 15 or 16 years old, it's tough being a boy. Girls had absolutely no interest in any guy under the age of 17, which was the driving age in New Jersey. They all wanted to go out with guys who could drive and had cars at their disposal. This forced me and my friends to search for other activities. We started playing cards for money. Fortunately, unlike some of my other friends who became gambling addicts, I was such a loser that I never really got hooked. I always ended up losing what little money I had.

So, on to other sordid activities. In those days, it was easy to steal cars. On countless occasions, my friends and I would "borrow" a car from a used car lot, or take a neighbor's car, and off we'd go to New York City. Paterson was only twelve miles from the George Washington Bridge. We would drive around the city all night in our "borrowed" car while listening to Symphony Sid on the radio. Sid aired a lot of the jazz classics... Miles Davis, Herbie Mann, Stan Getz, Art Blakey. But he also introduced me to other artists like Nina Simone, Donald Byrd, James Moody, and Miriam Makeba. This turned out to be an integral part of my musical education. We'd also visit those bars that would serve us alcohol (the drinking age in NY was only 18, and they didn't check closely), try to pick up girls in Greenwich Village, (never successfully, I might add), and then put the neighbor's car back in the same parking place early the following morning—very quietly so as not to wake up the neighbor. If the car was "borrowed" from a used car lot, we simply abandoned the car on any old street. Looking back, it was a miracle we never got caught. If we had, my life might have turned out quite differently.

One good thing did happen... I was hired to play keyboards in a local Paterson band, The Dynamic Del-Aires. They had a fast-talking, cigar-chomping manager who put out a single on his own namesake label,

Block Records. It was called, "So Far, So Long." It went absolutely nowhere. But I was excited anyway. I was in a band that had a record out. And the best thing about The Dynamic Del-Aires was that they had a weekly gig, at least for a while, where we played every Sunday afternoon at The Peppermint Lounge in NYC, the hottest club in the country.

Chubby Checker played there every night. He had the #1 record in the nation, "The Twist," and the place was packed every night with lines going around the corner. Of course, on Sunday afternoon, the lines were markedly smaller, if in fact, there were any lines at all. The folks who wanted to get in on a Sunday afternoon were mostly out-of-town tourists who had heard about The Peppermint Lounge and just wanted to be there at the famous venue. Of course, they didn't get Chubby Checker. They got The Dynamic Del-Aires, the Sunday afternoon house band. But to me, this was big time. The Peppermint Lounge! With all those sexy, skimpily-clad waitresses. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

Other than the gig at The Peppermint Lounge, my mother had no idea what I was doing with the rest of my time, since I was not really under her watch anymore. She only knew that my grades were appalling and that something needed to be done. Her solution was to send me to Morristown Prep, a rather expensive, private, Episcopalian boarding school. God help you if you weren't Episcopalian. Or at least a Baptist. It was an even tougher place to be if happened to be a Jew. Jewish or not, it was compulsory to attend chapel every morning. If it weren't for Larry Lynn, the only other Jew in school, I never would have survived. Fortunately, he was also, by far, the toughest kid in school and had my back, more or less.

I hated every fucking moment of Morristown Prep. I was an outcast. The only redeeming quality was that my grades improved dramatically. They did teach me how to study. This, of course pleased my mother to no end, who had been wondering if there was something seriously wrong with me.

While attending Morristown Prep, I joined the school dance band playing the piano. We played at all the school dances, and I learned about scoring musical arrangements and how to play with an orchestra, probably the only experience at Morristown Prep that I felt was positive. I attended the school for two years, until I got caught smoking cigarettes behind a building on campus and was suspended at the end of my junior year. In the fall, when I was permitted to return, I told my mother that wasn't going to happen. No matter what she said or did.

So I went back to Eastside High in Paterson for my senior year. My musical highlight for that final year: playing the glockenspiel in the Eastside High School Marching Band. It was here that I met Tommy Giuliano, who was to become one of the founding members of The Happenings. We started hanging out together, mostly because we had the same major interest. No, not music. Girls.

It turned out that we did have more in common than just chasing skirts. We both liked harmonizing and doo-wop music. Tommy had a huge record collection of 45s that went all the way back to "Earth Angel" by The Penguins, which, for some reason, we considered to be the very first rock 'n roll record. Tommy not only knew the artists of every song, but also the labels they were on.

It was his knowledge of this trivia that got me interested in the other information on the label—the writers and publisher. You know, "blah-blah" Music (ASCAP)? I wasn't sure why this information warranted being displayed on a record label, but I figured it must have some significance from a business point of view.

Tommy and I started meeting other guys from the Paterson-Clifton-Passaic area who shared our passion for music and girls. The crew from Passaic shared our love of harmonizing. Harry Arthur was easily the most experienced singer in this crowd, and we started hanging out with him along with his friends, Eddie Bajbek, Emil Malizia, and Joel Diamond.

We found ourselves getting together at sock hops, a great place to meet girls. We discovered that the echo in public rest rooms at these dance halls was great for harmonizing. So we started “chirping,” as we called it, in public bathrooms. We soon realized that, as much as we liked the way we sounded in the men’s room, it wasn’t going to help us meet girls. So we started hanging out in the parking lot of the Bonfire Restaurant in Paterson, a popular local eatery, and we soon realized that singing in the parking lot was a great way to attract members of the opposite sex. Now we were able to incorporate food, girls, and singing all in the same place. BINGO! We took it to parties, down the Jersey shore, anywhere we could sing and meet girls at the same time.

After graduating High School, I had a variety of jobs: delivery driver for my uncle’s pharmacy, caddy at a local golf course, and a job in New York City selling buttons to the garment industry. At least I was still able to hang out with my singing buddies at night. That never stopped.

During this summer, I started seeing a young girl named Evelyn. She was going to attend Ohio State in the fall of that year. She made me start thinking about going to college as well. In the middle of all this, one horrible morning she suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died. Just like that. She was 16. I was devastated. She was the first girl I ever really cared about.

After her death, I went into a depressive nosedive. I didn’t want to do anything. I stopped working. I stopped playing the piano, and I stopped singing with my friends. There was absolutely nothing constructive going on in my life. My mom was deeply concerned. She gave me three choices: get a job, go to college, or join the military. After Evelyn’s death, I really didn’t have a desire to go to college. So I joined the Air Force.

Chapter Two

THE AIR FORCE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH ME



THE DRAFT WAS COMPULSORY IN THOSE DAYS, AND WITHOUT A COLLEGE deferment, the military was going to get me sooner or later. The Air Force seemed to be the best choice. I did very well with their testing, and they promised to send me to electronics school if I signed up. At least I would learn a skill. I also felt that such a drastic change would be a good way to stir things up in my life. It certainly did.

I began to realize that I had been living a rather sheltered existence. I knew nothing about life and the world we all live in. We recruits were flown to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for basic training. It was the first airplane I had ever been on. We landed and, after being processed, it was the last time that those in charge didn't scream at us. From that point on, every word uttered was a blistering shout. I wondered, why are these people so pissed off at everyone? We didn't do anything wrong. I found myself having a great deal of difficulty conforming to the regimen. Many of the recruits were washed out because they couldn't handle the physical demands of basic training or because they were just too fucking stupid to get through the study courses.

But I represented a different kind of problem. I was physically fit enough to get through the physical trials and smart enough to breeze through

the classroom courses. Mine was a disciplinary problem. They didn't know what to do with me. But after eight weeks of trying everything to get me to conform to their liking, they decided to allow me to graduate anyway. Why? I'm convinced that some higher-ups decided I was too valuable an asset to them. The vast majority of their recruits were simply not qualified to get through a course in electronics, and they needed technicians more than they needed cooks or janitors. After all, this was the Air Force, not the Army.

The day after basic training, they assembled those of us who were headed to electronics school in Denver. I may have signed up to be in the Air Force, but on this day, the mode of transportation from San Antonio to Denver was by rail. The 36-hour train ride turned out to be a great trip. For the first time in a couple of months, no one was screaming at me, and I was able to relax. As I gazed out the window watching the landscape pass by, I was struck by its natural beauty. The train route went through some of the most breathtaking scenery I had ever seen. It made me realize how beautiful this country is and how little I knew about almost everything. But I was also starting to discover that there's a great big world out there, which I had yet to experience.

Next stop: Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. This was a welcome change. Denver was, and still is, a wonderful city. The base was more like a college campus than a military installation, and we were free to come and go off the base as we pleased. I started making friends with some of my fellow students. Life here was immeasurably better than San Antonio.

I started to get letters from my friends back home. Before I left Paterson, my friends Tommy Giuliano, Harry Arthur, and I, along with a new guy, Bobby Miranda, had formed a vocal group called The Four Graduates, and we had recorded a single. The A-side (featured release) was "A Lovely Way to Spend an Evening." The B-side was an old demo I had recorded with Bobby, Tommy, and Harry before I left to join the Air Force.

“Denise (Picture of an Angel)” was a song we had written as a gift for a friend who was crazy about a girl named (of course) Denise. Strings were overdubbed to make it sound more finished. The single was released on Rust Records, a subsidiary label of Laurie Records, which had The Chiffons and Randy & The Rainbows on their label. The boys sent me some copies, and I took a disc down to the local pop radio station in Denver to get the B-side, “Denise,” entered into the station’s version of “Make it or Break It,” where listeners would call in to vote “Yay” or “Nay.” The record did well in the contest, but nothing much ever happened after that. It was my first taste of being involved with a record on the radio, and it felt good.

After graduating from electronics school, I was shipped to my permanent station, Turner Air Force Base in Albany, Georgia. Turner was the home of the SAC 822nd Air Division. At the rear of a B-52 bomber, there was a pneumatic gun turret, onto which four 50-caliber machine guns were attached. The pneumatic system was controlled by a radar system. Some B-52s had optical sights, and the gunner would sit facing rear in the back of the plane. Newer models had a TV sight and the gunner sat up front in the cockpit, but also facing backwards. The radar system had been developed by Howard Hughes. The system would search the skies for enemy aircraft. Once sighted, the gunner could manually maneuver the turret’s crosshairs onto the target and then lock the turret onto the target by pushing the “Acquisition” button. At that point, the turret would track the enemy aircraft, automatically and unerringly. This was before the age of computers. This system had a series of synchroscopes and gyros that would work together and continuously calculate wind speed, air speed, closing rate, etc. It could shoot anything out of the sky that had a closure rate of 1,300 mph or less. Unfortunately, missiles could close in at 3,000 mph or more. It was only effective against enemy aircraft, not missiles. My job was to service the radar and pneumatic systems.

Around this time, I started to get to know Albany, Georgia. I had purchased a little Austin-Healy Sprite, a small, google-eyed version of the larger Austin-Healy. I started to play the piano again. There was a piano

in a recreational building on the base and, in the process, I started to meet other musicians, notably Henry Sanchez, a sax player who had been in various bands in Albany and was fairly well known around town. Along with a drummer and a bass player, we put together a band, “The Dave Lee Quartet featuring Henry Sanchez on Sax.” Yes, I changed my surname to “Lee,” easier to remember and less Jewish sounding.

Pretty soon, we landed a gig at Joe’s Cellar in downtown Albany. We played there every night except Sunday when the bar was closed. This was an amazing place and had a tremendous effect on me. Joe’s Cellar attracted lots of servicemen, of course. But it also attracted strippers, dancers, and criminals. I’m sure it attracted drug dealers as well, but in 1963, I had never taken drugs, had not been exposed to them, didn’t know there was a difference between grass and heroin, and wouldn’t have known if someone was a drug dealer if I fell over him. I was kind of naive about that stuff. Actually, I was pretty naive about a lot of things at that time, and I’m sure the regulars at Joe’s Cellar could easily see that.

While I was playing there, Joe excavated a huge area next to the cellar where he built a large secret room for gambling. This attracted even more “interesting” characters. From time to time, the club featured well-known musical artists, mostly washed-up musicians who still had some name value to attract a crowd. I remember one such artist, Mark Dinning. He had a big hit, “Teen Angel.” My band backed him up for his two performances. What an asshole. He thought it was beneath him to be nice to anyone in the place—except for the few girls who were swooning over him. But it taught me an important lesson: known artists, even washed-up ones who are assholes, can attract girls quite easily. I was starting to take notes.

Life for me in Albany was not too bad. I was playing music every night, meeting all kinds of people, learning how to drink, and honing my musical skills. However, there was a downside to all of this that eventually proved to be my undoing. I was supposed to be at work at 7:30 a.m. sharp on the base every morning to work on the B-52 bombers. This

was not a responsibility I was supposed to take lightly. The base had more than a dozen B-52s, each loaded with two 3.8-megaton hydrogen bombs, and they didn't want anyone near these devices that didn't take his job very seriously. In fact, when the hydrogen bombs were in the aircraft bomb bay, no one could work on any part of that aircraft without a second person by his side—the buddy system. We were supposed to watch each other. This was in the middle of the Cold War. The base was surrounded by missile batteries that were also armed with nuclear warheads. I, of course, was playing music in a bar until 4 a.m. every night, so it was difficult to get to work at 7:30 the following morning. I started to be late more often than not. This did not sit well with my superiors. Finally, I was given an ultimatum, “Airman Libert: the next time you're late for work, we're going to throw the book at you.” I had been given a direct order not to be tardy again. The next day I was tardy, and that was it. I was given an Article 15: thirty days in the brig and thrown out of the Air Force. This was not a dishonorable Discharge. A person would practically have to kill someone or commit treason to get one of those. No, I received a “General Discharge under Honorable Conditions.” The only negative aspect of that was that I would never be eligible to join a veteran's organization.

I was devastated. Just kidding. I couldn't fucking care less—then and now. All I knew was that I was no longer in the Air Force. I was happy about that, but consequently, this presented me with another problem. I had been telling my mother, either via phone or letter, how great I was doing in the Air Force so that she wouldn't worry too much about me. Now that I had been thrown out, what was I going to do, and how was I going to tell my mother?

As it turned out, continuing to play with my band at Joe's Cellar would not be an option, because several days after my discharge, the place was raided and shut down. For good. I also felt that, with the disreputable people outside of the military that I had come to know, it could be disastrous for me to stay in Albany. I decided to head up to Atlanta. For the time being, I decided not to tell my mother anything.

Jubilee's 'Faith' LP Carried By Wave Of News Media •
List NARM Awards Nominees • Milton Berle Goes
Into Disk Biz
Biegel Heads
Bell Sales •• **Cash Box** February 4, 1967
Kelly Gordon To Capitol A&R • Off Season
At Cannes Perks Up With Arrival Of MIDEM

THE HAPPENINGS HELP B.T. PUPPY GROW

Int'l Section
Begins Pg. 57



The Happenings on
the cover of Cashbox.



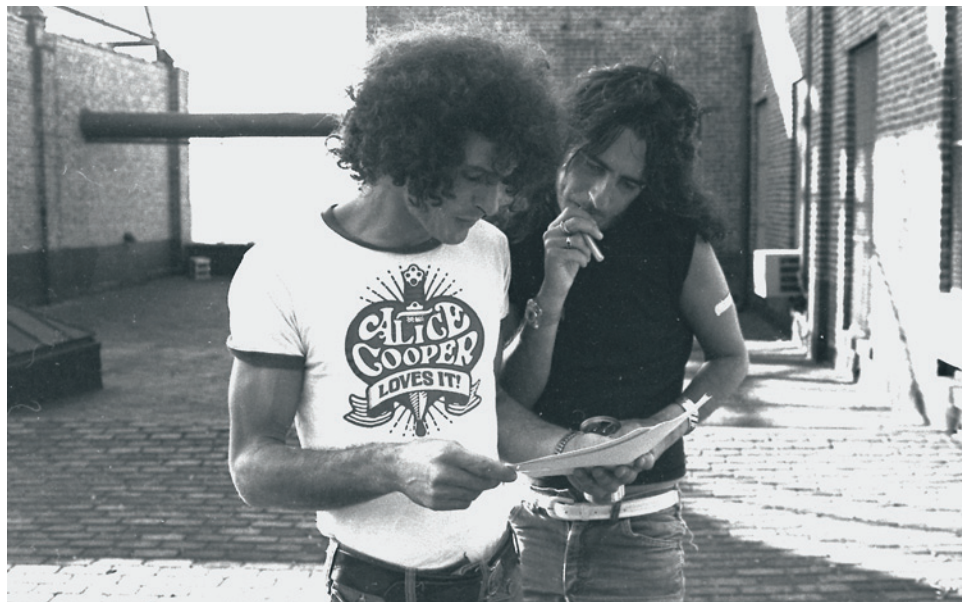
The Happenings
new lineup:
David Libert,
Bernie LaPorta,
Tommy Giuliano,
Bobby Miranda,
Mike LaNeve.





Exuma the Obeah Man. If he could have toured in a horse and buggy, that would have been just fine with him.

Just got hired to be Alice's tour manager.
Fasten your seatbelt, Libert!
Photo Credit: Eliot Holecker



“Hey, Alice!
Do you really
murder puppies?”

Deplaning with Eva Marie Snake. No one really knew if she was a boy or a girl.



Me and Shep Gordon making our escape from Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris.
Photo: Bob Gruen

With Alice backstage at Madison Square Garden, June 3, 1973



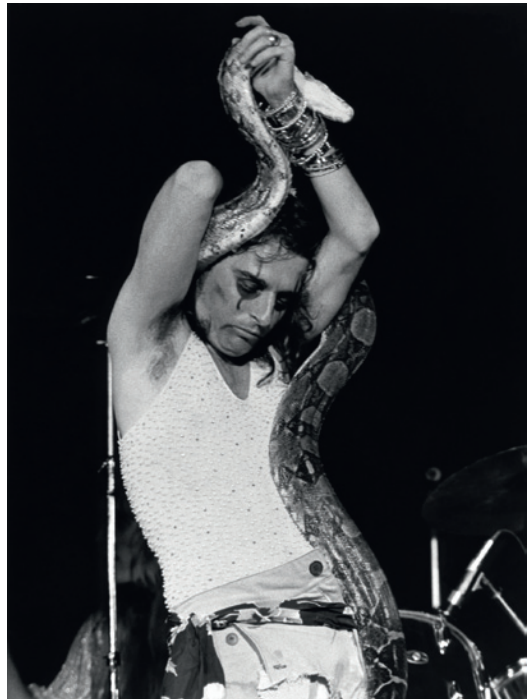


Trying to get everyone together for a group photo.



This gang could never be mistaken for scientists on their way to a convention.

Eva Marie Snake was a trouper till the very end. She never missed a show.
Photo: Bob Gruen

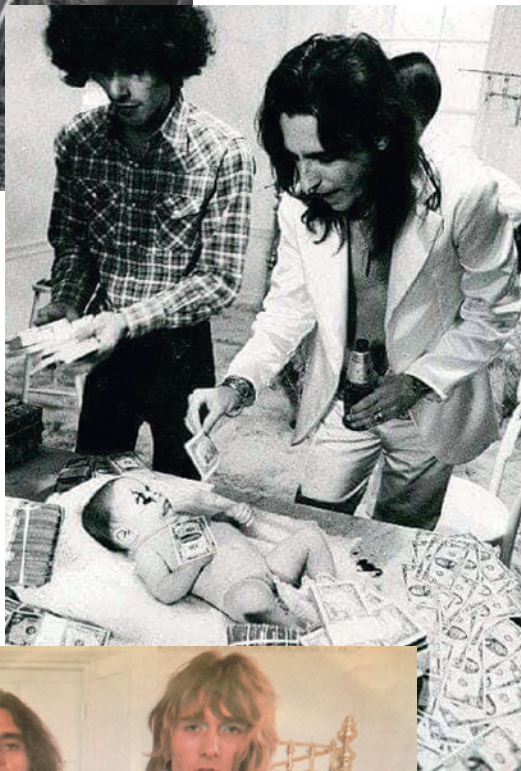




The Billion Dollar Babies shoot: I wanted to pocket a few bucks, but they were watching me like hawks.
Photo: Terry O'Neil

Alice and I counting the money at David Bailey photo session for the Billion Dollar Babies album.
Photo: Terry O'Neil

L to R: Dennis Dunaway, Glen Buxton, Michael Bruce, Alice Cooper, Neil Smith. The photo session was going well until the rabbits started eating the money.
Photo: David Bailey



EPILOGUE



Alice Cooper

Alice Cooper continues to play to sold out crowds all over the world. Today, Alice and his wife Sheryl are deeply involved in several charitable organizations. Together, they founded Alice Cooper's Solid Rock Foundation, which provides the opportunity for teenagers to develop spiritually and artistically at the Solid Rock Teen Centers in Phoenix and Mesa, Arizona.

George Clinton

After decades of drug use, George now leads a life of total sobriety (not kidding this time) and continues to play to enthusiastic audiences throughout the world. He, along with Parliament-Funkadelic, were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1997.

Bootsy Collins

Bootsy rarely does live concerts. He prefers working in his studio in Cincinnati mentoring young musicians, writing songs, and collaborating with other artists such as Deee-Lite and Fatboy Slim. In 2010, Bootsy was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by Bass Player Magazine.

PRINCE

Died in April of 2016 from an accidental overdose. I feel honored to have known him. He was one of the most talented individuals I have ever worked with. He is missed by me and his millions of fans. His music will live on forever.

CHERIE CURRIE

After leaving The Runaways, Cherie wrote “Neon Angel,” a memoir that chronicles her life as a Runaway and inspired the movie *The Runaways*, in which Cherie is portrayed by Dakota Fanning. Today, Cherie is a well-known chainsaw artist. In 2005, she opened her own art gallery and has since won several awards in chainsaw art competitions.

SUZI QUATRO

Lives in a 500-year-old Elizabethan manor house in the English countryside. With sales of over 55 million records, Suzi continues to tour at least 85 dates a year. The acclaimed documentary of her legendary career, “*Suzi Q!*,” was released in 2019 and chronicles the tremendous influence she has had on female musicians worldwide. She’s recently signed for a feature film/biopic of her life story and in 2021 released her latest album, *The Devil in Me*. Will she ever slow down? Suzi responds: “*I will retire when I go on stage, shake my ass, and there is silence.*”

BRIAN AUGER

Brian Auger has released nearly three dozen albums during his career, which continues to flourish after more than fifty years. Today, Brian extensively tours throughout the world with Brian Auger’s Oblivion Express. He also tours with Zucchero, the Italian superstar, when Brian’s own grueling schedule permits.

SHEP GORDON

Mike Myers produced and directed the documentary *Supermensch: The Legend of Shep Gordon*. Additionally, Shep chronicled his life in his book *They Call Me Supermensch*, which debuted on the NY Times Best Sellers List. Shep spends a great deal of his time at his home in Maui

while somehow still maintaining a position of power in the entertainment industry. He recently became the father of a baby boy.

CARMINE APPICE

Carmine still tours with Vanilla Fudge and continues to record as a member of Cactus. He's also managing and producing the up-and-coming band Kodiak. Today, Carmine is heavily involved in real estate and has properties in Tennessee, Florida, and South Carolina. He recently purchased an impressive property for himself in West Palm Beach, where he plans to live with his longtime girlfriend, radio host Leslie Gold, a/k/a Radio Chick.

JONNY PODELL

The Podell Agency continues to represent top tier artists such as Peter Gabriel, Sammy Hagar, and Rosie O'Donnell. He is the father of DJ Cassidy, one of the most successful DJs in the country. He and client Cyndy Lauper co-founded True Colors United, which raises awareness of homelessness. Today, Podell is on the lecture circuit chronicling his wild past and espousing his new spiritual awakening: "Consciousness is the New Rock and Roll."

KIM FOWLEY

Died of cancer in January 2015. He remained the colorful, controversial, offensive character until his death. Although he rubbed most people the wrong way, I was very fond of him and found him to be one of the most entertaining individuals I've ever known.

BOBBY MIRANDA

Bobby still tours extensively as the last original member of The Happenings. He also continues to write songs for other artists. After I left The Happenings, Bobby and I had lost touch with each other. Over the last several years, we have renewed our friendship. I find it rewarding to once again having a relationship with someone who had meant so much to my life's journey.

ALAN OKEN

Alan Oken reestablished his career as an attorney, specializing in legal representation and artist management. He also served as Director of Franchise Development for “Music in High Places,” which airs on MTV, Showtime, and Bravo. Additionally, Alan is engaged in charitable organizations, such as the Orang Utan Republik Foundation, the Rainforest Connection and Clean Green Music Machine. He remains one of my closest friends.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



FROM HARMONIZING IN THE PARKING LOT WITH HIS BUDDIES, TO KNOCKING ON doors in Tin Pan Alley, David Libert's career has traversed generations of legendary music artists and genres—from rock to pop, from funk to punk. Off the road, he's a passionate animal rights activist, personally rescuing dogs and helping to find happy homes for others. David lives just outside of Joshua Tree, in the beautiful California High Desert, with his three dogs, Harold, Barney, and Trundle.