

## Life In The Fast Lane

IN THE early '70s, Steve Paul, Edgar Winter's manager, held court almost every night in the back room of Max's Kansas City, a downtown restaurant and club in Manhattan. Steve wasn't alone. Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Lou Reed, David Bowie, and a host of other artists and rock stars also made Max's their late-night home.

As Edgar's road manager, I split my time between the band's house in upstate New York and the city. When I stayed overnight in Manhattan, I also ended my days hanging out with Steve at Max's.

Steve was an unusual character. He was very smart, very gay and wore only blue velvet. Newsweek once described him as, "a combination of sincerity, egotism, and coffeehouse literacy." The author went on to include a typical Steve Paulism: "I'm searching, always searching for a self-actualization through personal reality within a larger world reality."

Steve had owned an iconic New York Club called The Scene, which was famous as the place where Hendrix played his first major show in New York. It also showcased many acts that went on to become huge, including Jeff Beck, Pink Floyd, The Doors, Traffic, and Fleetwood Mac.

Drag queens, music moguls, rock stars, and movie stars hopped between the tables at Max's. It didn't matter if they stayed a minute or all night; they knew it was the place to be seen. The Velvet Underground was the house band and it was at Max's that they played their final performance with Lou Reed.

Patti Smith was Steve's secretary. With her dirty jeans, ripped

T-shirt, ratty hair, and incredible mind, she was punk before the word existed. She didn't try to be that way; that was who she was. Robert Mapplethorpe, the photographer, was her boyfriend, and they were part of the nightly backroom crowd. I knew Patti a little from the office and we talked at Max's, but it was at the Chelsea Hotel where I got to know her best. That's where she and Mapplethorpe lived.

The Chelsea Hotel was a landmark notable for the numerous writers, artists and musicians who stayed there over the years. Leonard Cohen, a longtime resident, immortalized the hotel in his song "Chelsea #2." It begins:

*I remember you well in the Chelsea Hotel  
You were talking so brave and so sweet*

When I was in the city, Steve often booked me a room at the Chelsea, and Patti and I would talk late into the night. She wrote beautiful poetry and had started to experiment with performance (putting spoken word to music). I was impressed by her drive and determination; she had something to say and was not going to be denied.

Being on the road with Edgar in the early days was difficult. There weren't any Lear jets or limousines. If the distances weren't too far, we drove in rented cars. We usually stayed at Holiday Inns and sometimes shared rooms. In many cities, the audience barely knew who we were, and we played in all types of places, including high school auditoriums.

As my career progressed, the lifestyle improved. Emerson, Lake & Palmer toured in a rented private jet and were ferried around in large stretch limos, usually one for each of the guys. Everywhere we went we were treated like royalty and had suites in the best hotels and meals in Michelin-starred restaurants. The drugs were plentiful and of high quality, and then there were the

groupies, an important and ever-present part of touring. Besides the obvious, they provided support and companionship and often traveled with the band. Emerson, Lake & Palmer seemed to attract a particularly sophisticated group of young ladies.

Nice hotel rooms, good food, and female companionship all helped to make touring more pleasant but being a tour manager was tough. Most mornings I got the band up and out to the airport for either a commercial or a private flight to the next city. After I checked the group into the hotel, I went to the venue. Once things were set up and the road crew was ready for the sound check, I went back to the hotel to get the group. One hour before the show, I gave a pep talk in the dressing room and made sure there were no bad vibes. I was also responsible for getting the group onstage as close to schedule as possible—always a challenge. During the concert, I listened to the show from different places around the venue to make sure the sound and lights were good. I also stopped at the box office to count ticket stubs and "get the money." Then I headed backstage to give the band towels when they came off the stage and see that they went back out for an encore.

After the show, I still had to get the band to the hotel and make sure the crew loaded out quickly and efficiently. I tried to go to sleep by 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. at the latest since I knew it would start all over again early the next day.

Some gigs, like Mar Y Sol, a three-day rock festival in Puerto Rico, were much harder than others. Emerson, Lake & Palmer toured with tons of specialized equipment, so the promoter arranged for a cargo plane to meet us in Jacksonville, Florida, our last stop before Puerto Rico. Alice Cooper, the Allman Brothers, Faces with Rod Stewart, and Black Sabbath were all scheduled to perform there, and most had their own equipment. ELP was afraid the scene at San Juan airport would be chaotic and elected me to go on the plane with the gear to keep track of it all.

I have a history of motion sickness, and although I am usually OK with flying, this time I was worried, especially when I realized there was no navigator on the flight, and I would have to sit in his jump seat. We left Jacksonville at about 3 a.m. under light rain. As the plane climbed higher, the first thing I noticed was the drop in temperature. There was limited heat and it was cold. I had never traveled in the cockpit before, and I was amazed by the small size of the windshield, especially considering that the aircraft was a very large old military cargo plane. The rain started coming down in sheets, and it didn't seem as if the pilot could see anything. Then the turbulence started, and I thought the flight would never end. We finally made it to San Juan in the early morning. Somehow, I didn't throw up, but I felt like shit.

I got the equipment loaded onto trucks to be driven to the festival grounds on the other side of the island. Then I took a waiting two-seater for the short flight to meet the trucks. It was Sunday morning, and the festival had started the day before, but when I arrived, things were quiet. The acts didn't start until 3 p.m. After our equipment was away in a safe location, I took a helicopter to the Cerromar Hotel. The helicopters were being used to get the artists to and from the venue.

I hadn't slept and needed a nap, but ELP had just arrived. The atmosphere at the hotel was cool. Rock stars could be seen milling about at the many restaurants, bars, and pools within the complex. Then nighttime came, and we heard from some of the groups that there were major problems with the sound system. A rumor had also spread that two people had drowned. I was worried.

Things got confusing. The promoter's representatives were telling multiple groups to get ready, but there weren't enough helicopters. I remember them frantically trying to get John McLaughlin of the Mahavishnu Orchestra on a helicopter to the gig. He was to have been on an earlier one, but someone gave

his seat away. When ELP got the call, I made sure there were enough helicopter seats, but we arrived only to find technical problems of our own. Keith's organ kept shorting out, and the road crew couldn't find the cause. It was after 1 a.m. when the band finally got on stage, and almost 4 a.m. by the time we got back to the hotel. I went right to my room, collapsed on the bed, and fell asleep with my clothes on.

Working for Emerson, Lake & Palmer and living in London took some getting used to. London was like New York City but on Valium, slower and more civilized. I drank tea, not coffee, ate fish and chips instead of burgers, and most difficult of all, drove on the wrong side of the road.

Greg offered me a room in his townhouse. He lived there with his girlfriend, Anita, and their two Irish setters, Oliver and Cromwell. The house was beautiful, and they made me feel right at home.

A few months after I arrived, I fell very ill. It turned out I had to be hospitalized, and I needed a minor operation. Greg was amazing. It was as if he was the brother I never had. Although I had a sister, Robin, who I was close with when we were children, in recent years we had gone in opposite directions, and we now had very little contact. Greg got me the best doctors and a bed in the prestigious Harley Street Clinic. After the procedure, I didn't want to put him out, but Greg would have no part of it. He insisted I return to his home to recuperate.

Fortunately, I recovered fully, got my own place and was able to quickly get back to work. Our office was at 16 Curzon Street right off Hyde Park. I spent my days planning our next European tour. There were hotels to book, promoters to call, and meetings with Stewart and the band. At night, I would often go to The Speakeasy, London's version of Max's.

There was a real contrast between my time on the road and in the office, but as hard as touring was, after a few weeks at

home, I couldn't wait to get back out there. The touring lifestyle was unique and something, for better or worse, that I tried to share with my friends.

When I was just starting out, and Steve Paul told me I needed a road crew for Edgar Winter's White Trash, the only people I really considered were my friends from college, Paul Hoffman and Ashley Lewis. I probably should have looked for more experienced people, but, fortunately, Paul and Ashley worked out pretty well. The next two friends I tapped, not so much.

Paul Schweitzer and I had been close through grade school, high school, and college. Paul was a guitar player, and we had played in many bands together throughout those years. Although he never asked me, I knew Paul wanted to come out on the road.

Greg Lake needed a guitar roadie, someone to string and tune his many guitars every night. I thought the gig would be perfect for Paul. He was excited when he arrived, but that didn't last long. After only a week, I could see that he was struggling. I'll never forget what he looked like before the show in Jacksonville. He was sitting on the floor of the stage surrounded by five or six guitars, all in a state of being half stung with guitar strings, new and used, everywhere. He looked like he hadn't slept since the tour started.

I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Hey, Paul have you had enough?"

He looked at me with a blank stare and nodded his head. I sent him home later that night. He had a big smile on his face and a sack filled with ten pounds of beautiful Florida oranges. Although the job didn't work out, I felt good that I had given him the opportunity. At least he had a story for his grandkids.

Kenny Marshall, another friend from the University of Vermont, was pissed off that I had not chosen him to be in Edgar Winter's road crew. Kenny was about 5'7", slightly built and not athletic in any way. Being a roadie was very demanding, and I

knew he would never be able to hack it. Kenny was aware of my concerns but let me know that at some point he expected a job.

He came to visit me at Edgar's house in Clinton Corners, a small town a short distance from NYC, in early August 1971. We had a gig not too far away at Gaelic Park in the Bronx. I didn't think it would be a big deal to let him drive Edgar and a couple guys in the band. I gave him detailed driving directions (remember, no cell phones or GPS), and I told him to make sure to leave himself plenty of time.

I left early to check out the venue, a medium-sized open-air gig with a good stage and sound system. We were sandwiched between Looking Glass, the opening act, and Ten Years After, the headliner.

The concert was about to begin and no Kenny. Looking Glass had about a twenty-minute set. Howard Stein, the promoter, was not happy.

"If Edgar isn't here by the time Looking Glass goes off stage, forget about it."

What could I say? Their set ended, and Howard told my guys to break down Edgar's stuff. I begged for a little more time.

"Ten minutes!" Howard barked back.

I was trying to remain calm but found myself pacing back and forth behind the stage. The ten minutes sped by, and Howard gave the signal for my roadies to move our equipment off stage. At that moment, Kenny's car pulled up and came to a screeching halt, and, although he had a curfew, Howard let us do a much-shortened set of three songs.

I was livid. Kenny did his best to apologize, but I did not want to hear it. Edgar wouldn't drive back to Rhinebeck with him. I asked Paul to take them back. Kenny loaded out with Ashley and some crew from Gaelic Park. Then, unbeknownst to me, Ashley took off with a girl and told Kenny to drive the twenty-foot rented U-Haul truck with all of the band's equipment back to the

hotel at LaGuardia Airport, where the crew was staying. Kenny had never driven any type of truck before, but for some reason, decided to do it anyway.

I went back to the house. My anger had subsided. I wasn't quite ready to forgive him, but I had to have some pity on him, especially when he told me what happened in the car. After having gotten lost once, nobody trusted him, arguments ensued, and they kept going around in circles until Kenny took control again and got them to the gig.

About four hours later, he called. I could hear from his voice that something was wrong. After what he described as an unbelievably harrowing drive, he arrived at the Holiday Inn, where the front entrance included a low concrete overhang. The truck was higher than the concrete, and as Kenny drove, he proceeded to peel back the top of the truck as if it were the lid of a sardine can. He was able to back out, but the truck and the concrete awning were badly damaged.

Nobody was injured, and the equipment was intact. I told Kenny to go home and never to call me again. Luckily, insurance covered the damage. It was a few years before we spoke, but we reminisce and laugh about it today.

That's when I learned that including friends in everything you do certainly has limits. But helping each other is an important part of any friendship and an important part of my life. I have been through some extremely difficult times and without the support of friends, I am not sure how I would have made it.

Years later, this philosophy would play a role when Michael Jackson and I became friends, and he reached out to me. It wasn't in my nature to turn a friend away, especially when I was in a uniquely qualified position to help.

By 1974, the rock and roll lifestyle had started to take its toll. I was in London when I was stricken with the worst pain I had ever experienced. A friend drove me to the Harley Street Clinic.

The diagnosis: kidney stones. The doctor admitted me for a few days.

It was late one night when an American film called *Not as a Stranger* came on the TV. The story followed a group of medical students on their journey to becoming successful physicians. As I watched, it seemed as if Dr. Aarons, the head surgeon, was talking directly to me when he was lecturing the interns: "I can see the picture you have of yourself already . . . a country road and an old Ford. It's a white house and you are Saint George complete in spotless armor. You get to a farmhouse. There's this man bleeding to death. Now alone, without instruments, without assistance, you perform an impossible operation, and because your heart is pure, you save him."

The desire to become a doctor was suddenly reignited in me. It had been buried somewhere deep inside but had never gone away. I don't know if it was the kidney stones, the pain meds, the movie, or what, but I began to cry, and I continued for a long time. The music business was hard, and I constantly had to play the tough guy when really, I was a softie inside. I was proud of what I had accomplished, but I was looking for something different both emotionally and intellectually, and I wanted to make more of a personal difference in other people's lives.

I decided then and there to go back to school to become a physician, and once I got out of the hospital, I put my plan into action. Jim was eager to buy me out of Circus Talents and take the equipment, so getting out of the business was easy.

About a year later I found out why Jim was so anxious to buy me out. I got a phone call from Stewart Young, who was still managing ELP and who had an interesting story to tell me. Stewart had been visited by agents from Scotland Yard questioning him about his relationship to Jim Morris. Unbeknownst to me, Jim had been using our speaker cabinets to smuggle large quantities of hashish from Europe into the US.

Jim had been dealing with a man named Howard Marks (Mr. Nice), who at the time, was one of the largest hashish smugglers in the world. Every time Circus Talents did a tour for ELP or Pink Floyd or whomever, the speaker cabinets were packed with the hidden hash. Since the equipment was only temporarily in the US, assuming there were no problems with the paperwork, inspection of the equipment was minimal. After the tours were finished, Jim made sure the speaker cabinets were packed with bricks so that the weight of the cabinets when they left the US would be the same as when they had arrived.

Marks was eventually caught, convicted and served seven years. In his autobiography, titled Mr. Nice, he tells the story of the first shipment using this scheme. It was in 1973, at a time when none of our groups were going on tour in the US. Jim was so sure of the plan that he got four out-of-work musicians to form a fictitious group called Laughing Grass. The group acted as if they had a tour booked in California beginning in L.A. Jim took our speaker cabinets out to a location in the remote French countryside where they were packed with a few hundred kilos of hash. They were then shipped from Paris through New York to L.A. without incident.

Fortunately, neither Stewart nor I were implicated and as far as I know, my ex-partner, Jim, disappeared and was never prosecuted.

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## 6

### The Long And Winding Road

LIKE I said, leaving was easy. Reaching my goal of becoming a doctor, a hell of a lot tougher. Almost everyone I spoke to about going back to school said I would never be successful, but I was determined, and the negativity I heard just strengthened my resolve. After all, I had heard it all before in relation to the music business.

With few college credits to my name, I felt lucky to be accepted into a pre-med program at Hofstra University in Long Island. I lived in a basement apartment close to school and worked my ass off, graduating less than two years later with a B+ average.

I'd grown up in Long Island and while at Hofstra, I reconnected with a few old friends from high school. My friend Paul Schweitzer's sister had married into the family that owned the Nevele, one of the premier hotels in the Catskill mountains, a couple of hours north of NYC.

About a year after I began classes, Paul invited me and a group of friends to go to the Nevele for Labor Day weekend. Our activities included seeing Ike and Tina Turner at Monticello Raceway, not far from the hotel. The show was terrific and afterwards we all went to a strip club across from the Raceway for a couple of drinks.

I didn't pay much attention to the first few dancers and then Leann took the stage. I don't know if it was her big blue eyes or her long sexy legs, but I became mesmerized and decided I would try to speak to her. When she came out of the backstage door, I was there waiting. At first she didn't want to know about me at