Phase Fifteen:

EXILE IN ROCKIN’ TOWN

September 22, 2009. Recording at Ben’s house tonight. Wait — what? Recording at Ben’s?? I guess we’re adding to our list of Things That Will Not Die. / / Here's how we got here. We played our last (make that "our latest"; I'd rather it not actually be our last) gig at K's a little less than a month ago. Within a few days, Doug was e-mailing me and Ben that he was ready to start recording the next CD and he sounded like he was in a hurry to get it done quickly. (My immediate suspicion was that his target date was sometime around his 50th birthday, looming just five months from now.) His plan was to record it like the VALENTINE album and to trek over to Bruce Bartlett's studio in Elkhart at least a couple times a week and would Ben and I still want to join him? I responded yes — as long as Ben's on board. It was looking like this would be more like a "Doug Cowen and the Basics" than a "Basics" work, with Doug calling all the shots on songs, production, etc. And I'm okay with that. Heck, I wasn't even expecting to be back in the band just two years ago. I figured I'd get ready for my marching orders and hope that I could keep up with learning new songs and playing them well enough to pass muster in the studio. The studio . . . wow, I hadn't done that since we recorded at Ace Mobile, also in Elkhart I think, back in 1983. / / Just a few days later, I got another message from Doug: Ben has convinced him to invest in a new computer and ProTools software and we'll record back at Ben's again. Okay — huh?! Seriously . . . what? This wasn't making any sense to me. If we're recording ourselves again, what's wrong with the results we got from the Yamaha deck? Things were moving so quickly that by the time I posed my questions, it was already too late; Doug and Ben had already ordered the computer and software and they were splitting the expense (I think Ben bought the computer and Doug the software, but you can ask them). / / The gear arrived last week while Doug was vacationing in DC. Ben

e-mailed us with a message to the effect of "now we're recording like the big boys." Gee, I thought we WERE big boys. Doug also e-mailed a list of the twelve songs that he's targeting to record: The five Tommy Thompson songs currently on our list, plus GONNA MISS YOU, I LOVE YOU GIRL, TRANSPARENT ALIBIS, DO YOU LOVE ME?, THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW, WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG, and SUGAR COATED MAN. I'm wondering about the status of the four songs that looked to be the start of the "next CD" back in 2006 (FLOATING ON, I'M THE CAPTAIN et al.). / / Doug and I drove up to Ben's tonight. It's been, what, three years since we've done this on a regular basis? I've gotten very spoiled just practicing at Doug's over the last year. We made this trip weekly (sometimes twice!) from 1999 through 2005; Ben owes us at least a few more trips to South Bend. Ben had the drums and PA set up in the garage, but first we went in the house to check out the recording gear. It looks like . . . a computer. With some kind of box we can plug instruments into. That's it. Ben played us some loops and samples he strung together to make a "song." That's how they do it these days — kids just paste other people's sounds together and convince themselves that they're making music. I have no concept how this thing operates. But I guess that's Ben's thing to figure out, and he appears to be way excited to do so. / / We returned to the garage and did some raggedy run-throughs of some of the songs that we were planning to start recording. At one point while we were playing GONNA MISS YOU, Ben said let's just go start recording now. Now? Seriously? So, we trudged to the basement and Doug layed down a scratch reference guitar and vocal (along with a built-in cowbell-ish click track) for GONNA MISS YOU. Ben then put a WAV file of the track on my flash drive so I could take it home to practice — no more CDs for him to burn, I guess. And even more Brave New World stuff: Ben suggested that I could even record my bass tracks at home on my little handheld digital recorder and he could synch up the file on the computer. Really? You can do that? This is getting wild. / / Well, that's it. We've started recording again.

September 29, 2009. Recording at Ben's. Took the dice off my bass today. That's what I do when we record; I take off the dice. The dice are for shows, not for recording. Thta’s my entirely irrational rule. Practiced all week at home for my bass part on GONNA MISS YOU. Didn't have much to learn, as we've been playing this live for a while. But I just needed to get in more repetitions so I'll sound like I know how to play it because once we record it, this is how it's going to sound . . . FOREVER. Ben plugged me in to the computer's connection box — I forgot what he called it — and he did surprisingly little fussing with my sound. We used to compress me and crank up the treble. But tonight we had no compression on the front end and all my tone controls were in the same place I had them when we last gigged. Ben said he can add compression after the fact and adjust the tone any way he needs. Ben already had his drum track ready. I played along and my third take sounded pretty good, but I needed to go back and punch in over a goof. But when Ben did the punch, there was a "click" sound when we played it back. THAT'S not supposed to happen. Doug and I mildly freaked out, but Ben assured us that he was certain he just needed to read up on the instructions for the software. / / I ended up recording the whole track over again, but I think I hit the open "E" late — grrrr. They let me try out an idea to double some of the sections an octave up. That didn't work very well, but it was worth a try. Plus I used the second bass track to fix that late open "E" on the other track. This software has no virtual tracks, but there are 32 tracks to play with AND because the drums are like sequenced through the electronic drum set they only take up one track instead of the the four to six tracks needed for the acoustic drums on the Yamaha 16-track. Okay, that's an improvement. / / Satisfied with my effort, Doug finished the night on guitar, playing rhythm, some Lee-style arpeggio fills, and riffing. That's technical talk.

October 6, 2009. Recording at Ben's. I'd forgotten how good that special sauce was on the Big Mac. That's because I probably haven't eaten at McDonald's since the last time we used to make this trek. But I gotta go easy on this kind of gut bomb. Maybe Arby's or Subway next time. / / Doug spent most of the night working on the lead guitar in the middle and at the end of GONNA MISS YOU. He might be a little frustrated; his mood was a little dark by the end of the night. He was starting to talk about calling in Lee to play the lead and I thought I heard some second thoughts about going down this do-it-ourselves-with-ProTools road. / / I brought my mandolin to try out some ideas, but nobody was buying and I wasn't confident enough to go for the hard sell.

October 16, 2009. Private Party. Singletons' ND-USC Party in "Dogpatch" ($300/band)

This is the job that we got from the golf cart brigade that shows up regularly at K's. Apparently this family (the Singletons? — our contact is a nice older man named Dale) throws a big bash the weekend of the USC game. And it's in the neighborhood that Doug and Ben so lovingly refer to as "Dogpatch." Now, not having grown up on this end of town like Doug and Ben, I can well imagine why it's called that. There appears to have been a total lack of building codes when most of the houses here were built, with shambly little shacks and hovels sitting next to modern ranches and split-levels. / / We were supposed to start at six and we made a couple trips to drop off the gear. The party seemed to be well underway when we arrived — I later found out that this bash pretty much continues throughout the weekend. Some big fellers came out to help us haul the stuff into a pole barn behind the house.They had an area cleared for us right in front of a huge wood-burning stove. A huge and HOT wood-burning stove. This was not going to do, so we cleared another area off to the side, getting as far away from the stove as possible. Ben's drum set was crammed pretty tight up against a table saw (or was it a drill press?) and he had to limbo his way into his seat. / / I didn't eat terribly well before I left for the gig. I had imagined that there would be a buffet table or something like that. I imagined wrong; it appeared to me more like an encampment of a hunter-gatherer tribe. Food would come off the grill and everyone would gather 'round and grab something. A pot of chili appears in the kitchen and another crowd rushes in to dish up. I got in on that chili before we played, hoping there weren't too many weird spices in it (it was pretty good). / / The crowd was pretty much what I expected when we started playing — locals in ND sweatshirts and stuff — but a different element started drifting in. It was USC fans. And they looked it — tanned, smartly attired, dolled-up women. How can I say this politlely? They did not look like they belonged at the same party with the locals. I'm not sure who's related to whom here, but it's their party and I'm sure they have it all sorted out. I'm just here to entertain. And that we did. We had a set list of all covers, plus FLIGHT ENVELOPE, and we had them up and dancing and the whole crowd looked to be enjoying the evening. / / I was expecting to hate the USC people because, well . . . they're USC people. But they were pretty nice. There was this one couple that really got into us. He was a big guy named Kevin; I think he said he was a 1972 USC law school grad. His wife was a wild, black-haired party-lady wearing a fur hat and high-heeled boots. She was up dancing a lot and kept wanting to shimmy with me anytime I got near the dance floor. Anything to keep the fans happy. Kevin was digging on us all night and he even got up to sing along on a couple of songs; his wife told us that he's Jimmy Durante's nephew. That's pretty cool. They acted like we were the greatest thing they'd ever seen. (Maybe they were just shocked to find such an entertaining band here in the hinterlands. And in Dogpatch, of all places.) The wife — sorry, I can't remember her name; we kept calling her "fur-hat lady" — even gave me a big hug before they left. Our fans tend bond with us like we're family (even when they know I'll be rooting for their football team to die a horrible death tomorrow). / / There was another family — a mom and a dad and a boy of about 8 — camped at a table directly to my left. They seemed to be enjoying the backstage view of the band. The dad watched us in the way that guys in bands observe other guys in bands at work. Every time we'd communicate something within the group — a second lead, cueing an ending — I'd look over at them and say something to the effect of "Did you see that? We're just making this up!" And he'd nod excitedly. This was a fun crowd in many different ways. / / We didn't bring any CDs (because of an internal disagreement over whether selling CDs at a private event was tacky or not), but I know we would have sold at least a half dozen tonight. Not to tip off which side of the disagreement I was on. / / And then there was this guy — one of the Dogpatch locals — who entertained the crowd during our second break by standing behind a white folding table and pantomiming a Jerry Lee Lewis routine to a recording of GREAT BALLS OF FIRE. The crowd likes us a lot, but they LOVED him. Sometimes I think we're working too hard actually playing music. But we had them up and dancing and that always makes for a fun time. In fact, I think we actually played an hour longer than we planned. And we pulled out a few number we hadn't done in a long time (KANSAS CITY, ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK). We added a few people to our e-mail list and there was this one lady who sounded like she wants to hire us for some kind of lake gig in Edwardsburg next summer. / / A friend of Ben's who happened to live across the road from the party helped haul the gear back to Doug's in his pickup truck. That was most helpful. It allowed us to relax and hang a little out by the fire pit. There was this young guy that Ben and I chatted with him while Doug was gone running the gear home. His name was Paul. And he was drunk or high or both. He looked barely old enough to be drinking and maybe he wasn't, but I didn't ask. He said he played in a band "in Chicago," but I couldn't establish if he was a local who moved to Chicago or if he's from Chicago and just in for the game. He was probably having as much trouble understanding my questions as I was having understanding his answers. I asked what instrument he plays and he said "everything." Okay, that narrows it down. Well, he had some advice for me. He leaned in, real serious, and he told me not to take this personally, but he thought that I needed to . . . "tone it down." Tone it down? Yeah, the jumping around and stuff; you gotta tone it down. Thanks, kid. I'll keep that in mind.

October 24, 2009. Private Party. Ken and Patty Wiggins' Harvest/Hayride Party. (gratis)

No hayride this year because I think the tractor is broken. So it's just a Harvest Party. That's okay; we play the same music no matter what it's called. Ben arrived late, so Doug and I set up what we could without him and then we had plenty of time to play with Ken's new minibike. Doug was riding it around in the yard and he was having a blast. I had no desire to ride it myself, but he egged me on pretty bad, so I gave it a try. I tried it. I survived with no injuries to myself and without destroying the bike. So I did okay. / / And then there was the ND-Boston College game to keep track of. Ken had a TV set on the corner, so I got to watch the Irish almost blow it but somehow manage a 20-16 win. Whew. / / Ben arrived with Cousin Jeff, who was already drunk. And — unless he was putting us on in a big way — he got even more so as the night went on. But I don't think he was putting us on. / / Ken didn't invite his Billy-Bob neighbors this year, so I won't get to have an in-depth discussion of contemporary socio-politics with them. Truly a shame. / / I brought Julie's pink Strat so she could sit in later in the night, but I used it for an experiment while we were getting tuned up. Actually, I tuned it down instead of up. See, we're going to record Doug's old song WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG. We already have a reference track of Doug on guitar and vocal. The problem is that he did the reference track in "E," the same key that he wrote it in many years ago. Many years ago when he was able to hit those high notes with greater ease. Not a criticism; just the realities of creeping middle age. So I tuned Julie's Strat down to E-flat (just like the Smithereens) and let Doug use it to run through the tricky high-note parts of WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG. I think we have a winner, key-wise. Ben did chime in to say that the guitar still sounded bad (we have an ongoing . . . thing with that guitar; he says it sounds out of tune even after I tune it and I'm not sure what he's hearing). / / As this was a freebie party gig, we offered to let anybody that wanted to sing with the band and to use us like a live karaoke. No one took us up on the offer. But Julie did have her guitar on hand to join us on her specialty songs. This time, she was ready to sing. I was totally oblivious to the fact that she was completely freaked out with nerves before she came up to play. Mind you, this was her choice, so I guess I assumed that she was as cool on the inside as she looked on the outside. (You looked cool, Julie.) We kicked into REFUGEE and Ben didn't think she was singing loud enough and he harangued her a couple times in the first verse. This only made her more nervous. She did sing a little louder, but I'm sure she would have anyway; that's part of getting used to hearing yourself in the monitor, which is not a natural thing for us non-singers. Plus, we could have done her a favor by turing up her gain some. Really, most of us do not sing as loud as Doug does. (That's how I keep pleading it to Ben: I can either sing halfway on key or I can sing loud; you pick.) She did okay. And her playing was better. We also did WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU and GLORIA and Julie's rhythm playing was noticeably better than it was when she sat in with us back in May. Really. You did great, Julie. / / Later in the second set, Ken came up and shouted something to the effect of "Cut Charley loose!" We assumed that meant he wanted me to sing the Kinks, so we kicked in to ALL THE DAY AND ALL THE NIGHT. But apparently that’s not what he wanted. Oh boy, we were afraid of this. He wanted “The Funky Thing.” We first did that funky thing at last year’s hayride party and it was LEGEND . . . wait for it . . . DARY. We tried it a couple more times with varying success in the year since. But we weren’t feeling it tonight. And that’s part of the problem of trying to replicate it: It was totally spontaneous and you can’t replictate something like that. So we waved Ken off. Maybe it was me; I waved Ken off. I thought that was the end of it, but a couple songs later, Patty came up and very quietly . . . asked real nice . . . for the funky thing. I can say no to Ken; I can’t say no to Patty. I told Ben to kick it in and he did; he’d actually been teasing with it a few times in the evening. Doug stepped up to the mic and started building up a big introduction of — me? Like, this was MY show now? I wasn’t ready for this. I totally wasn’t feeling it. My mind was blank. I literally couldn’t think of anything. I don’t know what kind of silly magic struck us last year, but it wasn’t happening now. It was sad. I don’t want to hear the tape. Worst. Funky thing. Ever. / / I brought my Hofner tonight as a backup bass and it was my intention to play it on some Beatles songs. As the night was coming to a close, I grabbed it for SHE LOVES YOU and I plugged it into my effects pedal and you know what? It sounded pretty good. Even Ben thought so. But after SHE LOVES YOU, Ben stated playing the opening of BLOOD AND ROSES. Yipe, not something I’d have ever thought to play on the Hofner. I started moving my fingers where I’d put them on the Precision, but the short scale caused me to start hitting the A-flat instead of the G. Oops. I did recover only to forget the order of some of the A and the D at the end of the refrains. I throught: Why is Doug playing the wrong chords here? Sorry. It was me. That’s what not playing for even a couple months does to me. / / I’d say it was another successful Wiggins party, even without the hayride or the Billy-Bobs. Ken and Patty suprised us at the end of the night with thank you notes with Houlihan’s gift cards inside them (actually, the next day for me because they gave mine to Julie). Gee, thanks kids. You didn’t have to do that. For how much Ken helps us when we play out, we owe him at least this much.

October 27, 2009. Recording at Ben’s. I layed down my bass for WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG. This was kind of weird: Ben had his drum track down for me to follow, but the reference guitar and vocal were in the key of E. I convinced Doug to de-tune and do the song in E-flat, so playing along with the reference guitar would be clash-city, whcih it certainly sounded like when I gave it a few run-thoughs. Doug offered to do another in the new key, but I said no, let me just play along with the drum and vocal. And that worked out okay, except for the fact that Doug’s vocal now sounded horribly out of tune with my bass — or was it my bass horribly out of tune with his vocal? (We could do a dirty trick on him when the song is done by recording a mix with that key of E reference vocal in place of the final vocal. That would be too cruel.)

November 6, 2009. Recording at Ben’s. Bought pizza tonight, just for the heck of it. And I guess because it’s friday and it seemed like the right thing to do, as we’re kind of encroaching on Chris’s weekend. Take note: cheese pizza with alfredo topping at Pizza Hut; I’m gonna see if I can get spinach with that next time. Working on WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG, now in the key of E-flat instead of E. I’m pretty certain it’s the only song we’ve ever recorded in E-flat. I brough my 12-string in case Doug wanted it to try out some ideas. I could hear it, but I’m not sure I could play it well enough to show anyone where. Doug did some leads and fills on his guitar, plus backing vocals and I tried out some percussion with the tambourine, shaker and bells. As we listened to the stuff that’s accumulating in the mix, Doug suggested that we should do a second, all-acoustic mix of this song. That would be do-able. / / Ken suggested he might come over tonight, but he never showed. We ended the night out in the garage, sitting next to the hot stove and listening to BITTER / SWEET in its entirety like a gang of fan-boys.

November 13, 2009. Recording at Ben’s. Another friday because I had to work bad overtime on tuesday. There’s good overtime and there’s bad overtime. Good overtime is when we have a lot of work in the department and I can’t get it all done in 8 hours. Bad overtime is when we have a normal workload (or less, as we have right now) and I have to stay late because of some bad time management by, um . . . certain higher-ups. That’s bad overtime. / / I came prepared to record the bass for THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW. I spent lots of time working on it at home and all day at work, I kept going over it in my head. But we started the night with Doug doing some touch-up work on guitar for WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG. And it was during this process I that I lost what little recollection of the new song I had still in my head. Every time we did another playback of WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG, I had more trouble remembering how the new song — and my bass line — went. This is like the studio version of my blanking-out stage fright fear. / / I got the song back when Doug switched to doing some acoustic guitar tracks for THIS PLACE. But I kind of started dozing off. Dozing off? Yeah, see . . . my day started at 3 am. Julie woke me up because she thought she smelled something. I don’t know what, but we got up and ran around the house and the basement, sniffing like a couple of hunting dogs. Nothing. Julie went back to sleep; I didn’t. And here I am falling asleep when I need to bo useful on bass in a few minutes. / / I did wake up enough to lay down my bass for THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW. I did three takes and they were all pretty good. I went with the last one, which was recorded just listening to the drums and vocal and no guitar. This is our third song for the new CD, but it’s the first bass line that I’ve been able to contsruct from scratch since we worked on PRIVATE DRIVE several years ago. For the two previous songs, I’ve kind of had to copy — more or less, usually more — the bass on exisiting demos of WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG and the live version by Matt on GONNA MISS YOU. This isn’t a complaint, but for the purposes of recording, the approach is more like doing a cover song. / / We finished the night with Doug laying down a reference track for the next song: TRANSPARENT ALIBIS. Whoa. This one clocked in at 6 minutes. This was a song I remember working on (but maybe in a different tempo and key?) back in our Randy-days. / / In other news, Mishawaka lost tonight in the semi-state football playoff to Merrillville. Oh well, at least we beat Penn this year (TWICE!).

December 1, 2009. Recording at Ben's. / / I'm starting to slip at this again — the keeping up with the day-to-day on recording. I know I've missed at least a couple sessions in November, and maybe October too. It's work (Mossberg) doing this to me. My whole routine has been disrupted since the Big Upheaval back in July. I used to have little snippets of 5 to 10 minutes here and there, waiting for jobs to come out of desktop. Maybe it wasn't the best use of my time, but I used these little odd chunks of time to write down my journal entries. Now I can go DAYS with nothing coming out of desktop and there's huge pressure on all of us to do "cross training" and learn how to do everyone else's jobs. So those little slivers of time are GONE, and I've been too rattled to figure out a new routine. And maybe a little too lazy to figure out a new routine. I'm addicted to old routines; I never want to change them. / / Tonight we spent most of the night deconstructing and then reconstructing the backing vocals on THIS PLACE. Doug went through variations that sounded like a boy's choir and others that sounded like African-fusion pop (like maybe the "Graceland" album). / / We recorded two more reference tracks tonight: ROCKIN' TOWN and the brand-new-this-week PATHETIC NEIGHBOR (about Doug's travails with his disagreeable neighbor across the street). Plus Doug decided tonight that he'd keep TRANSPARENT ALIBIS at the six-minute length; he had been considering doing a shorter reference track.

December 29, 2009. Recording at Ben's. / / I'm falling behind again. Maybe I need to rethink detailing every recording session. When I started this journal (TEN YEARS AGO?!), it was my intention to just record things that happened at our gigs. Well, it kind of grew from there, didn't it? I dunno. Be patient with me. / / Here's what happened tonight. Doug got to kick back because it was all me and Ben tonight. I laid down bass for TRANSPARENT ALIBIS, playing along with Ben's finished drum track. I've been working on this at home for like a month now. Ben had me plug direct without my pedal. I'm not sure I like this; I've gotten used to having some compression on the front end to smooth out my sharp edges when I get the "yips." / / I finished the bass on ALIBIS to my satisfaction (but not entirely to Doug's, but I'll get into that later) and Doug had no guitars here tonight, so we moved on to PATHETIC NEIGHBOR. I showed the guys the ideas that I've been playing around with at home. Unlike the month that I put into TRANSPARENT ALIBIS, these were all brand new just in the last few days. Doug wanted a wild, loose sound on this song and I'm certainly not sounding over-practiced. They liked what I had so far and Ben set us up to record bass and drums live together along with the reference track. I worked the board and and played bass seated in front of the computer screen. I think we did it. After at least a dozen tries, I really think we got useable tracks of drums and bass on the same take. I tried another go on a second track to Ben's recorded drums, but it wasn't quite as good as the one I recorded live. / / I finished the night showing Doug what I've been noodling at home for ROCKIN' TOWN. I'm a little more nervous about this one because Doug has done a couple of demos of this one over the years and I'm not exactly sticking to the template on parts. He seemed to like what I was doing, so Ben got me down on tape, not as a final track, but mostly for something he can use to get his drums done during the following week. I'm hearing this song more like a Stones number and I've been trying to channel vintage Bill Wyman on bass (okay, I wish).

January 5, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Doug has decided to can TRANSPARENT ALIBIS, or at least to table it for a later date. I know he wasn't crazy about the bass I recorded — maybe I did go a little far off the reservation on the arrangement — but he was diplomatic and that was just one of several reasons he wanted to halt the production on this number. / / Ben re-did his drum track for PATHETIC NEIGHBOR on his own time this week. We listened to the track and the guys were shocked that I'm still happy with the bass track that I played live in the studio last week. Like Doug originally said, the song need to sound loose. I know I can't practice sounding that loose. Does that make sense?

/ / Ben also had a drum track ready for ROCKIN' TOWN, so I was on deck for bass. This song has been making me nervous for one reason — that bass "solo" — but I'll get into that later. Ben agreed to let me record the bass in two parts: one track for the "rhythm" bass throughout the song and a second track for the "soloing" section. That way I wouldn't have the pressure of having to nail a decent solo during a complete take of the song. That's how we record the lead guitar, so I didn't think it was an unreasonable request. (And I’m pretty sure that’s how Fleetwood Mac did it for John McVie’s bass solo in THE CHAIN.) The rhythm bass was pretty simple; I did two takes with a couple of punch-ins on each and now I'm not sure if we went with the first or the second. As I mentioned earlier, I'm playing it a little different that Doug's demos. I'm trying to capture kind of a Bill Wyman groove. I don't know if saying this over and over will make it so, but that's what I'm after. / / Then came the solo. I'm gonna say right up front that I nearly hit the wall on this part and surrendered my bass to Doug so he could play it. Seriously. I'm not a soloing guy. I was very intimidated when I sat down with Doug's demos of this song. I was certain I couldn't replicate the style he was playing, so I tried out numerous approaches that I thought I could pull off. Instead of Doug's controlled picking attack, I ended up with a kind of frenzied strumming on the strings with my fingernails. More like a spastic imitation of Victor Wooten. (Okay, NOT.) Ben has me crank up the treble (obviously, he was thinking "Victor," too). I started in on the strummy-thing. It wasn't working. I was getting nervous. I even tried my Musicmaster bass. I brought it along because it has much lower action than my Precision and I thought that would make a difference. It very much didn't. I was living one of my nightmares. It's not a frequent nightmare like my going-blank-at-gigs nightmare, but I have dreamed this one before: Trying to play something that I don't feel physically capable of playing. I know Keith Moon went through this when Pete Townsend was trying to coach him through a certain part of THE MUSIC MUST CHANGE on the last Who album before Moon died (I think the song ended up with no drums in the final mix). That's what I kept thinking — this is my Keith Moon moment. I wanted to be Victor and I end up being Keith. / / After much patience on the part of Doug and Ben, I eventually switched back to the Precision, upped the tone back to the bass levels used on the "rhythm" track, switched to a thin plectrum for speedier picking, and concentrated on just playing it the way Doug originally demo'ed. I wasn't exact, but it was close. And I was more than willing to settle for close at that point. / / We ended the night with Doug laying down acoustic guitar (Stu's nifty Epiphone!) on ROCKIN' TOWN.

January 12, 2010. Recording at Ben's. It was all Doug tonight on ROCKIN' TOWN: Two tracks of lead guitar with the DeArmond, lead vocal track, harmony vocal track, electric rhythm on Telecaster, and a feedback track that will go under the start of the bass solo. Doug is taking home a mix to see if it still need something more — percussion? piano? Not sure yet. / / On the drive up, I gave Doug my first demo CD of some tracks I recorded on my digital recorder that Julie gave me for our last anniversary. One of the tracks was ALL SAINTS DAY, which Doug has talked about recording ever since I previewed it for them during a practice last summer. / / Hot topic of discussion tonight: If we get some gigs, would we all still want to record once a week while gigging on the weekend? I don't have a problem with that . . . in theory.

January 23, 2010. K's, Private 60th Birthday Party for Kevin ($225/band)

A funny thing happened exactly nine days ago: Kevin called Doug. Been waiting for that one a long time. Just to recap a little . . . we last played K's at the end of August. Kevin said he didn't need us for September because of the home games, but he never called us back for October so it looked a bit like a kiss-off. We heard conflicting reports about whether he wanted us back or not, but about a month ago we heard through Ken that Kevin was interested in hiring us again. We talked it over one night during a recording session at Ben's, and Doug seemed to concede that he'd play there again but for a firm price and only once a month instead of every week. Sounded good to me, so I suggested that we contact Kevin and start the negotiations. No, said Doug. Apparently Doug had a third condition: Kevin had to call him. I didn't see what difference it made, but there we stood. This is, until nine days ago. / / Out of the blue, Kevin called to ask if we'd play his 60th birthday party on the 23rd. They didn't talk money, but we agreed to play and Kevin okayed $225, although Ben wanted $300, which I didn't know at the time. With only nine days to prepare, we quickly scheduled practice at Doug's for Monday night. Doug had a set list ready for us and we ripped through about 35 songs. We did okay. And in case you're wondering, I was totally excited about getting back into K's, even if it's just for this party. It opens up those lines of communication between Doug and Kevin and we might get that once-a-month thing going. K's has been good for us because we can play whatever we want (originals!) and it's a good place for friends and family to come see us (my mom isn't going to come to a 9 to 1 gig at a bar). I feel like it's OUR GIG, rather than Kevin's gig to give us when he pleases, and I don't want to give it up easily. / / We practiced again Wednesday night.I was feeling kind of hit and miss. We practiced our HAPPY BIRTHDAY medley and a couple of songs that Kevin said he'd like to sing with us — MARGARITAVILLE (yuk!) and HOOTCHIE COOTCHIE MAN (Muddy Waters, but I sang it like "Old Harv" of South Bend's own Elwood Splinters Blues Band). Ben complained about doing so many covers, but c'mon, it's a birthday party; we'll load up on the originals when Kevin

re-hires us for Friday nights again. We ended the night running through some originals. For this I was TOTALLY unprepared. Talk about hit and miss. That's what I really need to practice. / / And then we practiced again on Friday night. This time was to get Kevin ready to sit in with us on a couple of songs. Kevin was already in the basement with Doug when Ben and I arrived, quite coinicidentally at the same time. He brought his two guitars — a nice Ovation and a black Yamaha Telecaster copy. (Just my opinion, but he could have gotten by with just the Ovation. But he needs a case for it, really. And a strap; when Kevin switched guitars he also had to switch the strap. Maybe someone will give him one for his birthday.) We kicked off with MARGARITAVILLE. We had practiced it in "D," but Kevin knew it in "C." (And again, I think he might have sing it better in "D.") That came together well. Then came HOOTCHIE COOTCHIE MAN. The Muddy Waters track that we learned it from was in "A," but Kevin knew this one in "E." Okay, simple fix. And Kevin belted this one out well, but when it came time for Doug's blues soloing, I'm not sure Kevin was always on the right E's, A's or B's. I guess we're close enough for Blues. We also ran him through GLORIA and BORN TO BE WILD. There, now he's set to be the star at his party . . . and I'm guessing to impress his new girlfriend. / / Gig day came and I had a bit of a problem. I wasn't the least bit nervous, but Julie was gone all day and I really had nothing to do except get my gear ready, pick out my clothes, change batteries in the bass, tuner, and pedal, practice a little, and make sure I ate enough to hold me until I could get some food after we finish playing at ten. I get really tired just wasting time waiting for a saturday night gig. I need something to occupy me (other than surfing websites for pictures of women dressed like Batgirl and Catwoman — wait; did I just write that out loud?) I packed up the car and took off a little after five to meet Doug and Ken Wiggins to load up the truck at Doug's house. I got there right at 5:30 and Ken's truck wasn't in the driveway, so I figured I beat him. Dawn met me at the door and she said that they just took off. No way; I thought she was putting me on. But when I got to K's, they were there and the speakers and subwoofer were already in place. I put up the banner and we hooked up as much of the PA as we could, waiting to string a lot of the cables until Ben got his drum set in place. Kevin arrived with his guitars and amp and Ben showed up and got his drums together in no time and we had about a half hour to spare, so we tuned up the guitars and had a proper sound check and a run-through of Kevin's songs. I sounded like I was turned up way too loud — I think I was making the windows rattle — but Ben said it was perfect. And Kevin asked to have the gain on my mic turned up. And you know what? I could hear myself fine through my monitor all night; I'm going to ask for "Kevin's gain" from Ben every time! / / The Karaoke guy arrived as we finished setting up. He had some huge speakers and a TV monitor and a mixing board of sorts. The plan was to move our stuff aside when we finish as ten o'clock and let him have the stage. People are gonna be up for Karaoke at ten? Not my call; it's Kevin's party. Anyway, the Karaoke guy's name was Tom Batalis, so I HAD to find out if he was related to my old boss at Heptagon. Turns out he's a distant cousin and he's only met Mr. Chris Batalis once. Lucky guy. / / We started a little later than seven; Kevin told us to hold off because people were a bit slow in arriving. Ken suggested that no one might show up and the party would be a bust. Again, it's Kevin's party and we're not responsible for hustling people out to see us. I'm pretty sure that after our long layoff, we'd pack this place pretty good. And people did drift in as we started playing. Our old regulars Sue and Mike showed up as we were getting ready to play and Sue came up and gave us all hugs. Kevin's adult daughters arrived and he introduced them to the crowd. The person we were waiting to see was Kevin's new girlfriend. (Just curious and maybe a little nosey, that's all.) As usual, I was a little tight at the start, not nervous, just stiff, not very smooth. I flubbed one chord on our opened WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN and Ben said, "That's one." And also as usual, I loosened up. We did our HAPPY BIRTHDAY medley during the first set; Doug suggested we do it several times over the night. That's a good plan, seeing how this IS a birthday party. I think we ended up doing it three times in all, but each time I think one of us messed up part of it, so maybe if we edit the three takes properly we can come up one good version. But it's a party thing; it doesn't have to be perfect. / / Kevin took his star turn at the beginning of the second set. The crowd cheered him like he was the guest of honor . . . oh, I guess he was. He strapped on his Ovation and we kicked in to MARAGARITAVILLE. Kevin used my microphone and I stood over between Doug and Ben to keep out of his way, and so that Julie could get a good picture of us. (My plan is to make a print and maybe autograph it so that he'll hang it in the restaurant as a reminder that he needs to hire us again. Am I sounding like a broken record on this?) I made a goof when I thought the song was ending after the second refrain, but i hope it doesn't sound too bad on Ben's tape. Then Kevin switched to the Yamaha and we did HOOTCHIE COOTCHIE MAN. Just like in practice, Kevin spaced out on the opening line of the third verse and we just repeated the big bluesy riff unitl he recovered. It was actually kind of entertaining because he didn't get flustered and he sang something like "I forgot the words!" He had a lyric sheet in front of his, but he didn't follow my advice to just write out the first couple words of each verse as big as possible because that's all you really need. In the fog of battle it's hard to focus on every single word written out on a sheet of paper. Then we brought him home with GLORIA and BORN TO BE WILD. I coached him on the chords for BORN, but he was alert enough to stop playing on the parts he wasn't sure of. The crowd loved him. As well they should. / / Although we had three sets planned, we actually ended up playing a longish second set, mixing in a few from the third set. I made my biggest goof of the night when we went off the list completely with THE ONE I LOVE. I totally spaced out on the two chords at the end of the first bridge. It was bad and I know it's gonna sound bad when I hear the tape. (It bugged me all night that I really couldn't remember where I was supposed to go after the "D." When I got home at midnight I had to go to my notes to see that it was "E" and then "D" again. Of course it was; it's SO OBVIOUS now.) / / Kevin moved all the tables out from in front of the stage area and it made a good dance floor, but we were having trouble getting people to dance (they needed my family there). We were trying to do as many danceable numbers as possible; that's when we started jumping back and forth between our lists for sets two and three. There were probably ten people dancing during SECRET AGENT MAN, so I called my own number when we finished. Okay, it sounds like ego, but I prefer to think it's self-confidence. Mike and Sue requested WIPEOUT and Ben obliged (it was on the list anyway). And then Julie joined us. I'm not sure if it was Doug or Ben invited her during the break, but she jumped at the opportunity to strap on Kevin's electric guitar and play REFUGEE with us. Doug even gave her the option to sing lead, but she declined. Almost immediately, she got into trouble, switching the order of the "D"s and "G's in the verses and the "C"s and "A"s in the bridges. And the middle section (D-G-C-D) appeared to be a total blank for her. I'm not trying to be harsh here; I just want to paint the total picture to explain how I got in trouble with Ben. I tried telling Julie the chords. But she wasn't following. Now, either she didn't hear me because of our louder-than-normal volume level, or my "G"s, "C"s and "D"s just sounded like "EEE, EEE, EEE" amid the aforementioned volume. Anyway, I ended up SHOUTING the chords and maybe I was too loud, but I couldn't think of anything else to do. Ben says I was too loud and I embarrassed Julie. I'm sorry Julie; my intention was quite the opposite. / / We finished up at ten and we hustled to move all our gear out of the way for Tom the Karaoke guy. Several people came up to me to tell us how much they enjoyed us and I told them to tell Kevin to hire us back so they could hear us play all the time. The only deal that Kevin seemed to want was to come over and play in the basement some more. Hmmm; wasn't what I had in mind. / / We might have a summer gig from Sue and Mike. I hear they were asking about dates. / / And speaking of dates, Ken and I grabbed waitress Karen (not literally, of course) and asked her to point out Kevin's new squeeze. We saw her; young (well, younger than Kevin at least and probably younger than me), blonde, big boobs (did I just say that?). If we had waited a while we would have known that was her because she and Kevin were doing some serious canoodling during the Karaoke. For the record, Julie karaoke'd FREE FALLIN' (although she thought at the time that she was selecting LEARNING TO FLY) and Papa Faini sang (after much soul searching/whining) I'LL BE SEEING YOU and DANNY BOY. Tom's sound system turned out to be much crappier than it looked. The sound was loud and tinny and there was no monitor for the singer. The singers couldn't hear themselves at all. Doing this kind of thing is hard enough, but that just makes it impossible. / / And finally, Craig's friend Jan from MacPhearson and the Struts was there — never found out how she knows Kevin — and she sang HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Kevin, Marilyn-Monroe-style. That's a good birthday present. But he still needs a second guitar strap.

January 26, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Work on PATHETIC NEIGHBOR all night. Doug started out with the lead vocal. He changed the lyrics a bit and now he doesn't actually say the phrase "pathetic neighbor" anywhere in the song, which I am sure will make my bootleg of the original reference track all the more valuable. Then Doug played an electric rhythm on the Telecaster to counter the acoustic rhythm that he layed down the last time we worked on this song. I didn't bring my bass, so I didn't have my tuner on me, but the Tele was holding its tune okay. No such luck with the DeArmond. It was sufficiently out of tune to cause some major clashing. And I freaked because I didn't have my tuner. But Ben reminded us that Doug's floorpod pedal has a built-in tuner and he poked around on it until he figured out how to turn it on. I tuned it up and you know what? I like this tuner. I'm going to have to use it to tune Doug during breaks at gigs. With the DeArmond in tune, Doug did a track of whammy-strums through the song. And then his real work began on the lead. It was a process we've done before: Doug played as many things as possible and Ben and I told him which bits we thought worked and then he'd rearrange them again until he felt comfortable with all of it. It turned out that he settled on the two or three best parts and stretched them out and repeated one of them at the beginning, middle and end and — wow, we have a lead guitar. I wish I could do stuff like that. / / I get to do stuff like percussion. Not that I'm complaining; I actually had a red-letter night on percussion. We added four percussion tracks: tambourine, vibra-slap, finger cymbals and castanets. Castanets?! I have a set of castanets that my brother-in-law Steve Austin bought for me in Spain during one of his overseas trips courtesy of the U.S. Air Force. They came with an illustrated sheet showing how to string them on your thumb and rap them with your fingers to get that "clopa-clopa" flamenco sound. And I have found them very frustrating because I can't seem to make them work. I may have fixed that a little tonight. While Doug was recording his vocal, Ben tinkled the ice in the glass he was drinking from. It came over on the tape, and as we listened, it sounded like castanets, and we're getting a little bit of a Spaghetti Western sound on this song. So Ben wanted me to try the castanets. I complained that I couldn't seem to make them work, and I wondered if there was a way that I could play them more like spoons. After a few tries, I eventually squeezed the bases of the castanets together in each hand, pinching part of the connecting shoelace between them and then knocking them on my knees. That's it. It sounded good enough and we double-tracked a couple castanet hits in the intro. And also on the percussion front, I did tambourine throughout and vibra-slap in the middle and finger cymbals throughout the guitar solo — I was trying out the Brian Wilson bells and Doug suggested maybe something that would sound like a cowboy's spurs. That's when I dug out the finger cymbals. We'll see what Ben does with them in the mix.

February 2, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Ben had a new mix of PATHETIC NEIGHBOR for us to hear. It sounded good. He monkeyed with Doug's guitar and added an extra line to Doug's lead at the end; he just copied and pasted it from another part just like you'd do in a word processing program. And even more amazing, all the percussion parts I added last week were still there. / / Doug started us out by fixing some stuff he didn't like in the vocal track of WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG. Then he worked out some Stones-ish backing vocals on ROCKIN' TOWN ("hooo-hooo"). Ben was dubious about these. He didn't quite see the point. I'm not sure there was a point other than they needed to be there. / / In contrast with the great success I had on percussion for PATHETIC NEIGHBOR last week, I tried a buttload of percussion for ROCKIN' TOWN tonight and nothing stuck. Tambourine? No. Bells? No. Vibra-slap? No. Shakers? No. I pushed Ben to give a try on tambourine and shaker and he certainly did better than I did, but I'm not sure if those will stick either. / / Last thing recorded tonight was new reference tracks for GREAT BIG SKY and KEEP ON ROCKIN'. Both are old songs that Doug has been kicking around for a long time. Wait, wasn't KEEP ON ROCKIN' on one of his solo projects . . . a cassette maybe? I better check. I'm trying to think if there are other "Rockin'" songs that I should be remembering. / / In non-recording news, we signed an 11 x 17 print of Kevin playing with the band. I'm going to frame it and give it to Kevin so he'll hang it at K's as a reminder that HE SHOULD HIRE US AGAIN. / / Also, Doug told me the name of the young fellow in the kitchen at K's: Irv (Irving? possibly Ervin?) / / And Doug had a reaction to my demo CD. He said that we should start working on my solo album. Maybe he had too much to drink tonight.

February 16, 2010. Drove past K's on my way to get Doug tonight. By next weekend it's not going to be K's anymore. It's going to be closed. Not a whole lot more I can say. It's been coming for a long time. I did get a chance over the weekend to give Kevin the photo that we signed for him. After Julie's Scholastic Arts show on Sunday, we drove by and his blue pickup truck was parked by the door. He came out and we exchanged a few words and I gave him the disc with Julie's JPEGs of the night and the framed photo. He said he'd be calling Doug about getting together to jam some time. Um . . . okay. We'll see what happens there. / / It turned out to be a long night for me on bass tonight. I started with GREAT BIG SKY, casually laying down a track while trying to get my bearings on the song. Doug and Ben acted like it was a keeper, but I still had a few things I wanted to work out on the verses (mostly the "G"). Ben had drums done for both new songs, so I suggested we go back and forth between the two so I don't get bogged down. Well, I switched to KEEP ON ROCKIN' — and I got bogged down. It's a simple song, but deceptively so in many ways, especially for the bass. It needed to be driving yet bouncy. I could drive a little; I could bounce a little. Doing both at the same time for three minutes straight can be a not-so-easy thing. Thus the bogging began. I had to ditch my plan to play part of the refrains like I SAW HER STANDING THERE because it sounded like I was tripping over my own fingers. That usually happens most times anyway; I bring in something a little complicated and it gradually gets simplified. That's how the night went on both songs. I eventually settled on the best takes of both and I figured if Doug and Ben are happy with them, that should be good enough for me. Besides, it usually happens that I come back and listen to my part compressed and blended down in the mix and I'm okay with it. We'll see if that happens this time. / / Doug finished the night adding acoustic guitar to both songs. KEEP ON ROCKIN' sounded more filled out with the extra guitars. But GREAT BIG SKY sounded funny as the layers of acoustics accumulated. It sounded like my bass had too much "swing" to it (as if I'm playing it the way I would play it just accompanying a single guitar), and I'm thinking I gotta go back and tone down the groove. Again, I'll wait until I hear the first full mix before I say anything.

Feb 23, 2010. Recording at Ben's. On the drive up, I told Doug about the nine demos that I recorded on Saturday. He challenged me to figure out how many songs I've written. I told him at least a hundred with the very strong caveat that the first forty or so were pretty much total crap. / / For our listening pleasure on the way, I brought a CD copy that Steve Austin made of ORBITING WITH ROY ORBISON AND BRISTOW HOPPER. I tried to convey the significance of this LP to my early musical development — this was the first rock and roll album that I was exposed to as a child. And we played this thing to death, as the pops and scratches on the CD attested. The Roy Orbison side sounded relatively okay because it was the Bristow Hopper side that we kids rock out to. Hopper — I have been able to find out absolutely NOTHING about him — was a dimestore Elvis knockoff, nothing more, but we didn't care. His songs (I'M GONNA SEE MY BABY TONIGHT, HATE THAT BEAR, MANDY MINE, 17 LITTLE KISSES, COMPACT CAR) stand as huge pre-Beatle signposts in my musical memories. / / And we did some recording tonight: Lead vocal on SKY / back voc. on SKY / Lead vocal on KEEP ON ROCKIN' / back vocal on KEEP ON ROCKIN' / and a start on lead guitar on KEEP ON.

February 24, 2010. E-Mail from Doug today:

<<Charley,

You got me thinking last night.

I sat down this morning and put together a list

of my songs from memory. I'm sure theres a

couple I'm forgetting and like you said, there's

a lot more that i didn't include because they

were not officially finished etc, etc. It was fun

doing this. Here it is. BOOP!

 Doug Cowen Originals

01.  IF YOU WERE WITH ME

02.  GIVE ME A SIGN

03.  MAUREEN (I’M THINKING OF YOU)

04.  I’M GOING BACK (TO MY HOME TOWN)

05.  I MET A GIRL LAST SUMMER

06.  SHE SAID

07.  GIRL COME OUT

08.  I WANNA LOVE YOU

09.  MY PRINCESS

10.  I LOVE YOU GIRL

11.  HEY BABY

12.  TOOTH PAST SMILE

13.  THAT’S WHAT SONGS ARE FOR (Cowen/Neises)

14.  JUST TOO BUSY

15.  JUST YOU AND ME

16.  NO DOUBT (SHE’S THE ONE)

17.  IN THE MORNING

18.  LOVELY NIGHT

19.  B.M.D.R.S.C.C.

20.  SOMETHING TO DO

21.  SWEET THING

22.  I CAN’T WAIT (TO ROCK ‘N’ ROLL)

23.  WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG

24.  SIVLE

25.  I WON’T PRETEND

26.  IN A WORLD

27.  FLIGHT ENVELOPE

28.  THIS TIME WE’RE THROUGH

29.  GRANDPA PLAY

30.  THIS IS MY LIFE, THIS IS MY HOME

31.  DEAD END BLUES

32.  HEAVEN SENT FOR YOU

33.  ROLLS AND SPINS

34.  SO WHAT/AIN’T NOTHING

35.  STARVING FOR YOUR KISSES

36.  GREAT BIG SKY

37.  EDGE OF REALITY

38.  KEEP ON ROCKIN’

39.  WATCHING YOU

40.  THIS APPETITE

41.  DO YOU LOVE ME?

42.  ALISON

43.  WAIT AND SEE

44.  ROCKIN’ TOWN

45.  DAYLIGHT THROUGH THE BLINDS

46.  CITY OF THE DEAD/LONG WAY TO HELL (Cowen/Erskine)

47.  (OH DARLING) ROCKING CHAIR

48.  WHEN YOUR EYES ARE CLOSED

49.  GET UP AND GO

50.  ALL I WANNA DO

51.  3 CHORD ROCK ‘N’ ROLL BAND

52.  ALL THE LYRICS BUT THE RIGHT ONES

53.  LONELY LIES (FROM THE HEART)

54.  SHE LIKES TO DANCE

55.  SUGAR COATED MAN

56.  WAITING FOR YOU

57.  MY PERFECT DREAM

58.  LET’S GO FISHING

59.  SOMEBODY LIKE YOU

60.  LUCKY DAY

61.  MAKE ME FEEL BETTER

62.  LET ME KNOW

63.  VALENTINE

64.  BABY RUN

65.  TURN ME ON

66.  FOR SO LONG

67.  CRYIN’ MY HEART OUT

68.  LITTLE FOOL

69.  GUILTY

70.  BABY BLEU

71.  DAMN THAT GIRL

72.  FLOATING ON

73.  TRANSPARENT ALIBIES

74.  IN A CROWDED ROOM (Cowen/Neises)

75.  BITTERSWEET ROAD (Cowen/Neises)

76.  WHAT IF AND WHAT IS (Cowen/Neises)

77.  DOES THE BOTTLE BURN? (Cowen/Neises)

78.  UNLIKE ME

79.  SO LAME (Cowen/Neises)

80.  IGNORE THE DAYLIGHT

81.  TURN IT AROUND (Cowen/Neises)

82.  NOTHING BUT TIME (Cowen/Neises)

83.  DAMAGED MAN (Cowen/Neises)

84.  BETTY BROWN (Cowen/Neises)

85.  DON’T TELL THE MOON (Cowen/Neises)

86.  HOLD ON ME (Cowen/Neises)’

87.  EVERYWHERE MAN (Cowen/Neises)

88.  PERFECT (Cowen/Neises)

89.  ONE MAN TELLS ANOTHER (Cowen/Neises)

90.  A TRAIN AND A ROOM (Cowen/Neises)

91.  2/NIGHT

92.  RUDE AWAKENING (Cowen/Neises)

93.  BLUE GIRL (Cowen/Neises)

94.  JUST LIKE CHRISTMAS

95.  GONNA MISS YOU (TOMMY)

96.  THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW

97.  PATHETIC NEIGHBOR

98.  NUMB

99.  SUSTAIN

February 25, 2010. My e-mail back to Doug:

DOUG--

I said I wasn't going to do this, but you made me. I worked mostly from memory, because I figured anything that I couldn't at least remember the title of probably wasn't worthwhile anyway. A few surprises now that I see all this written out: I always thought of the 1980s as my most productive decade, but the 2000s were more productive than I thought. And the 1990s were my fallow period (four keepers and a lot of drek — I felt dried up.) I didn't number them because in my mind they all exist in these parallel universes of Touchtones / Basics / Brothers in Sound / Solo / etc. I didn't count them; possibly 100+.

-- charley

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THE "KURT" YEARS (1975-1979)

--1975/1976-- (Mostly crapola; my creative Primordial Goo -- these barely count as songs)

PATTY

THE GREENLAND PLAN

MIGUEL

COLD GREY DAY AND NIGHT

BLIND OEDIPUS (music by Kurt)

SEE ME (music by Kurt)

AMY'S PLACE

BABY COME BACK

HALF (music by Kurt)

SWEET WATER

ON THE TRAIN

OSCEOLA GOLD

--1977/1978-- (Faint glimmers of talent)

DID I HEAR YOU SAY?

GUITAR MAN

GIVE US A SIGN

APRIL,12 TIMES A YEAR (music by Kurt)

WHEN I'M AWAY (later renamed SUMMER 1977 THEME)

I TRIED TO CRY

SAPPHO

FOR THE CONCERTMASTER

BLACK MAN SANG

SKIN AND BONES

ELEVATOR LADY

WHAT WOULD THE PARROT SAY? (lyrics by Kurt)

--1979-- (the year Kurt bought a Les Paul and made me buy a bass and we thought we were going somewhere)

JUST LOOKING

REQUIEM FOR PAGANINI

HIGH SCHOOL QUEEN

TROJAN WOMEN

COUNTING TASSELS

GRADUATION NIGHT

BEST AT THE FIGHT

BLOOMSDAY

COHABITATIN'

FOREVER AND EVER

SOMETHING THAT YOU NEED

SO BAD IT HURT

LATE DECEMBER SNOW

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THE TOUCHTONES / BROTHERS IN SOUND YEARS (1980s)

MICHIGAN LINE

JUST MARRIED

ONE LAST FLING

A WEEK AND COUNTING

TELEPHONE KISSES (lyrics by Mark)

YOU'RE A BIG BOY NOW (music by CPN and Greg)

DEAR MARY (music by Mark)

SUSPENDED ADOLESCENCE (lyrics by Mark)

HONEY B.

GEEKS GROW UP

MDC

MOMMY'S SHOES (music by Mark)

PUNK MONK

CRAZY RADIO (lyrics by Greg)

TAKE YOUR PICTURE (lyrics by CPN; music by Greg + CPN)

LOW-TECH GUY (lyrics by CPN; music by Greg + CPN)

U MAKE ME CRAZY (lyrics by CPN; music by Greg + CPN)

BROTHERS IN SOUND (lyrics by Greg; music by CPN + Greg)

SEE DEE (lyrics by Greg; music by CPN + Greg)

TIME MACHINE (lyrics by Greg; music by CPN + Greg)

LIP-SYNCHING (lyrics by Greg; music by CPN + Greg)

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THE BASICS CATALOG

EVERY DAY RAIN

WALK AWAY DEAD

--(Music by Doug on all of the following, so including them is

a bit like cheating because the music part is the

heavy lifting of song writing.)--

THAT’S WHAT SONGS ARE FOR (Cowen/Neises)

IN A CROWDED ROOM (Cowen/Neises)

BITTERSWEET ROAD (Cowen/Neises)

WHAT IF AND WHAT IS (Cowen/Neises)

DOES THE BOTTLE BURN? (Cowen/Neises)

SO LAME (Cowen/Neises)

TURN IT AROUND (Cowen/Neises)

NOTHING BUT TIME (Cowen/Neises)

DAMAGED MAN (Cowen/Neises)

BETTY BROWN (Cowen/Neises)

DON’T TELL THE MOON (Cowen/Neises)

HOLD ON ME (Cowen/Neises)’

EVERYWHERE MAN (Cowen/Neises)

PERFECT (Cowen/Neises)

ONE MAN TELLS ANOTHER (Cowen/Neises)

A TRAIN AND A ROOM (Cowen/Neises)

RUDE AWAKENING (Cowen/Neises)

BLUE GIRL (Cowen/Neises)

EVERY NOW AND THEN (Cowen/Neises)

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ALL THE REST

--1980s--

LAST LAUGH (THE OTHER HALF)

BOO HOO I LOVE YOU

OVERNIGHT SENSATION

LITTLE GLASS BOX

WHERE THE PEOPLE GO

EVERY WORD AND NOTE

COME AND GET ME

THE FIRST WORD

HEAVY METAL CHRISTMAS

WEBB OF LIES

EVERY TIME I FALL

STREET JUSTICE

GOOD MORNING, GOOD AFTERNOON

TALKING TO MYSELF

GONE (lyrics by Tom Rospopo)

PROMISE FROM WITHIN (lyrics by Tom Rospopo)

GO HOME (PARTY'S OVER)

--1990s--

CHICKS WITH DICKS

JAMES DEAN (WASN'T SO COOL)

HEY HEY NEIL YOUNG

LOVE DISEASE

WHO KNOWS, WHO CARES?

--2000s--

BLUE PLANET

HISTORY GIRL

AMERICAN WORLD

BLUE GIRL II

THERAPY

EX-GIRLS

EINSTEIN'S BRAIN

FOUR SHOTS

MARCHANT FOR STATEHOUSE 2006 JINGLE

PARTLY LOUSY DAY

CANDY TREAT

YOUR BABY (CALLS ME "BABY")

RADIO GEHENNA

LAST NIGHT'S PANTS

HIDE AND SEEK

ALL SAINTS DAY

--2010s--

BIG GUITAR

February 27, 2010. Big 50th birthday party for Doug at Mom and Pop Cowen's house. Happy Big 50th, Doug.

March 2, 2010. Bad night for Doug. Tried out keyboard parts for KEEP ON ROCKIN' and WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG. Ben said let's get a "real" key player — suggested Jeff's dad. And his attempt at lead guitar on KEEP ON ROCKIN' just wasn't working . . . VERY SIMILAR to problems I had with the bass for this same song. THE PROBLEM IS that the song is trying to capture such an iconic sound — that Chuck Berry thing — that we all have an image in our head of what it should be and anything slightly off is gonna sound wrong. This is why it took me TOO MANY tries to get down what sounded like it would be a very simple bass line.

March 16, 2010. More work on KEEP ON ROCKIN' — Me on hot seat: guitar(!) / bells x4 / tambourine / finger cymbals / all of us on hand claps x4. / / Ben imported tracks Doug recorded at home — a new direction on lead guitar?

March 23, 2010 Ben remixed KEEP ON ROCKIN and the old lead guitar is back — Ben pieced together leads from like 90 tries that Doug ran through last week — apparently this machine stores old takes in some kind of backup file. / / Doug tried a new distorted-fills part on guitar, but after a listen we decided that it was too distorted for the oldies feel of the song. / / My counter rhythm is out in the verses, but they let me try a new variation where I did some single strums at the ends of the refrains and I think that works much better. / / After weeks of bringing in my 12-string, Doug finally got to lay down some 12-string on GREAT BIG SKY — we've been stuck on KEEP ON ROCKING for way too long. / / NEWS: Doug's been working on gigs — possible open for Benders at Phoenix on April 10 (we better start practicing!!!) and a possible gig at Cove before a Silver Hwks game and a possible deal with the Buns in Granger (we discussed going over there after work tomorrow).

March 24, 2010 The Buns in Granger (the old Granger Tap and Grill) to meet with Phil Schreiber about a regular gig. Phil not there but we meet with his underling (ooops, I missed his name). Says they don't usually have bands — space not big and I'm thinking it's not big enough for little US. But Ben and Doug say don't worry, we'll fit. I still don’t think so. We'll have to get congas fpr Ben and play with acoustics to make this work. We agree to a price of $225 for Friday ngiths from 8 to 11. Not sure if it's gonna be every friday or every other friday. I'm hoping for every other but I guess we can't say no either way. / / Did we jump at this too fast? Small space / smoking in the bar so a lot of our regulars can't come / No Julie pix because she’ll have to stay away too.

March 29, 2010. Things are hoppin' just in time for Easter bunny. Doug got an email frm Matt Webster about a benefit at 4H fairgrounds in May for Our Lady of Hungary grade school. Sounds okay. I'll say yes.

March 31, 2010. Practice at Doug's: For PHOENIX on April 10 opening for "Bender leftovers" and for the Buns gig starting in May. Turns out there’s no fairgrounds gig; they went with Wildcat, which is charging them $500! / / Ben told me to bring acoustic bass tonight. We played under new lights that Doug bought with Guitar Center gift cards he got for his 50th b-day. Needed to make adjustments so they wouldn't flash so WILDLY, although I think Doug liked the wild manic flashing. / / We ran through Doug's Phoenix list. The guys were enthused afterwards about doing the Phoenix; I was less so mostly because I would rather spend our time working on the entire list to get ready for the Buns. But I guess the Phoenix is something we can’t pass up.

April 10, 2010. THE PHOENIX, opening for The Benders. (no pay) (Guests: Janine and Tim, Craig and Marlene, Ken, Brian Myers)

"It's a good sunset; call Doug!" That was our mantra years ago when Julie and I were trying to stage the cover photo for Doug's EDGE OF REALITY CD. We did finally get the picture after tries in front of a couple different sunsets. But we said it so often that it became a running gag between me and Julie for long after that project was done. It's a good sunset; call Doug. We said that a long time, but only for really good sunsets. I was reminded of this as I drove to the Phoenix tonight. It was a good sunset. A really good sunset. Call Doug, I thought. But I didn't have to. I was going to see him in a few minutes. / / So how did we get to the Phoenix? Turned left on Lincolnway . . . no, seriously. Matt Webster called Doug maybe a month ago. His plan was to reconstitute a "Benders" lineup and play the old Benders material with a heavy emphasis on Tommy's originals. This plan had the Imprimatur of Scott Thompson and "Suzie Q" Thompson and they had the Phoenix gig already booked. But Matt didn't think they'd have enough material for a full night, so would we want to open for them and do a one hour set? Sure, we all agreed that it would be cool. Doug put together a set list of about 18 songs and we ran through them at his house one night and then the set got cut to 45 minutes . . . and then to 30 minutes. By that time we we’re like, what's the point? We figured there had to be some infighting within these new Benders; maybe one of them was mad at Matt for adding us to the bill. Just speculating. So we got our list down to eight songs to fit in 30 minutes. Three covers and five originals, plus an extra in case we luck into an encore situation. And we had four intense practices over the last week and a half, running through those eight songs at least three times each. It was very much like the days when were starting out and we'd play the same songs over and over. Of course, we only KNEW eight songs back then. Had we been gigging recently, we would have been a little more casual about practicing, but we didn't want to get up there and look like we were coming off a four-month layoff. / / I arrived at the Phoenix at about the same time as Doug and Ben. I was alone; Julie couldn't come because it's usually pretty smokey in there. It was exactly eight o'clock; we were slated to go on at nine-thirty. We parked what little gear we brought at the booth in the back corner, near the windows and next to the stage. There were bunches of people already there. This included a large group seated around the table directly in front of the stage. I immediately recognized Jaimie Miller, of High Life and the Whistle Pigs. Oh crap, I thought. I'm going to be playing in front of HIM? This is one of my big nightmares: playing in front of "real" musicians. Okay, my Primary Nightmare is completely forgetting some or all of what I'm supposed to be playing; that is the worst thing I can imagine. My Secondary Nightmare is playing in front of people who I know to be top-notch musicians . . . like Jaimie Miller. This stems from my age-old insecurity about my own playing (and singing?), that I will be recognized as a fake, a fraud, a poseur. If it's someone I know — like Craig or Lee — then I'm okay. But I've met Jaimie a couple times and I'm never quite sure how to take him. Kind of like Matt, too. I'm never sure if Matt is eyeing me with suspicion, contempt or just pity. So my fear about my Secondary Nightmare of playing in front of a Jaimie Miller is that it will make me all mental and cause my Primary Nightmare to happen. And as I said before, that would be the worst. / / Out of nowhere (actually, from the same table where Jaimie was seated but I'm not sure how they know each other) came "Charlie," the former sax player with the Benders. He was all over Doug, trying to convince Doug that we needed a sax in the Basics. Doug was nice to him, but I'm not worried that it's gonna happen. I think we're all happy with our current lineup. / / Ken showed up in an ornery mood and we said hi to Scott Thompson. Scott would be running the lights tonight just like the old days. The guy we really wanted to see — "Curty" (or is it "Kurty"?) the sound man — didn't show for a while, so we cooled our heels in the booth. We eventually grew impatient and we poked around the stage to figure out where we could put our pedals and plug in our guitars. The bass amp appeared to have a wireless device attached to it, so I wasn't going to touch a thing. I ended up setting up on the right side of the stage (opposite of my usual position), pinned in behind a keyboard with speakers and amps to my right and the drums to my left. I had to be careful when I sang into the mic that I didn't bang my bass on the keyboard. And it took me a few minutes to find the least-awkward place to position my pedal so I could see it, reach it, and sing into the mic with as few separate motions as possible. / / Curty did show up and tell us where to plug in, but it was clear that we weren't gonna get anything even vaguely resembling a sound check. I made sure I got the only instructions that I really needed from Curty: To turn my volume to an acceptable stage volume and he'd take care of the PA mix. I guess that's all I really needed to know (I'm not used to having a sound man who isn't also playing drums right next to me). / / We went back to the booth to wait it out. Ken poked at me about being nervous. I really wasn't nervous; it was more like keyed and focused and TOTALLY not in a place where I appreciated being poked about ANYTHING. Doug and Ben are good. They know to leave me alone before we play. But Ken didn't let up, so I got up to hit the can a couple times and then pace in the narrow "backstage" hallway. I worked hard all day to stay occupied and not fall into running through the set in my head or — even worse — picking up my bass for last-minute practicing. It's like trying to cram minutes before a test; it doesn't work. So I putzed around in the yard. Or I ended up BEING a putz: I went to Ace Hardware and got some more of those keyhole-shaped landscaping bricks and I was trying to cover up some gaps in the deck where raccoons and groundhogs have gotten in and taken up residence. At one point, I mishandled a couple of the bricks and I mashed my left index finger between them. YOWCH! That hurt. I ran inside and put it on ice for about 20 minutes. It swelled. It got purple. It even clicked when I tried to bend it. But it didn't hurt when I put pressure on the tip — that was the determining factor in my decision to sit tight and not go to the hospital. And I was not canceling the show. If I had to wrap it up and play with the remaining three fingers on my left hand, I was gonna do it. After an unsuccessful attempt at a nap and a nice dinner with Julie, I calmly packed the car to get ready to go. I put my spare bass in the back of the car, but it landed on top of a stack of corrugated cardboard that I'm saving for a project. I reached in to move the cardboard, and . . . ziiiiip! I ran my hand across the edge of that cardboard. YOWCH AGAIN! Ow, corrugated paper cut. I ran inside with my middle finger on my right hand in my mouth. Julie looked at me. "What now?" she said. She could tell I hurt myself again. I pulled my finger out of my mouth and showed her. It wasn't gushing, but there was enough blood to see that I was cut. So upstairs I went, washed up, bandage, and ready to play with three fingers on my left hand and three fingers on my right hand. At least I had something to focus on to keep from getting too nervous. / / Ben related some news while we waited for 9:30 to roll around: He talked to the people at the Carriage House about a possible patio gig this summer. They are building a deck of some sort and they are interested in having a band. Sounds like the perfect gig for us! Unless . . . we've already committed to dates at the Buns? Stay tuned. / / We finally went on at 9:30. It was kind of weird, we just all sort of drifted to the stage and got in position, of course making sure that Curty and Scott were ready to go. (Doug made a special request to Scott to not leave us in total darkness between songs.) Matt offered to introduce us, but Doug waved him off. We started A HARD DAY'S NIGHT with the big thundering "G" chord opening that we copped from the Benders' old stage intro. That was pretty much our sound check. Everything sounded okay. I thought I was a little loud, but I figured someone would say something if I was too loud (anyway, Ben always complains that I'm not loud enough). We plowed into the song and here's where the week and a half of over-practice helped. It's kind of like doing a stiff, autopilot approximation of performing the songs. I just felt like I was a little stiff, but I didn't make any mistakes. Doug got his one mistake over with early, hitting some wrong chords midway through the first song. Scott's lights were on us and so I couldn't see much of the crowd. I could see maybe as far out there as . . . Jaimie Miller was sitting. Yep, every time I looked up, there was Jaimie. Okay, I didn't make any mistakes. Maybe the whole experience was just surreal enough to override my Primary and Secondary Nightmares. / / Doug's goof behind him, he kicked us into LUCKY DAY and that went well. I started calming down. Maybe not so much calm, maybe just less stiff and clunky. Clunk clunk, that's a little what my playing on A HARD DAY'S NIGHT sounded like to me. When we practiced the ending of LUCKY DAY, Ben and I just kind of kept rumbling on the open "E" so Doug could change his harmonica, but when the ending came along tonight, I started the rumbling and I heard Ben making a joke about Doug's gas-powered harmonica and Doug interjected some remarks about playing originals and so I pulled the plug on my end of the rumble. We kicked into FLIGHT ENVELOPE. I leaned very carefully over the keyboard to reach the microphone to sing the backup parts. And I'm not sure I could hear myself. Either my mic was off or I was too low in the mix. I looked over at Ben and asked "can you hear yourself?" He shook his head "no." Oh well, nothing we can do now, just keep plowing forward. I tried jumping up and down a little, feeling a little looser at that point. But I think I looked up and saw Jaimie Miller looking right at me and I punted a note or two. We finished FLIGHT and I remembered to click the wah pedal for the intro of SO LAME. When I hit the A-flat and stepped on the wah, it sounded funny. Not sure if there's something wrong with the pedal or if it just sounded odd coming out of a different sound system. Once again, can't fiddle with it now. By now I noticed that Scott had the lights on us pretty good. He was keeping them up between songs so Doug could see and he wasn't switching them manically, which is fine by me. And I saw Tim Hanlon crawling around the edge of the stage with a fancy digital camera. Cool. He should have some pretty good pix of us. I'll find out from Janine later what we'll have to do to get a CD with some JPEGs. (And while I'm on the subject of Tim, I noticed much later in the night that he was dressed ALMOST EXACTLY like ME! Did Janine notice that? And what does it mean? I'm afraid to imagine.) SOMEBODY LIKE YOU felt pretty smooth. I wasn't sure how the "ooohs" and "aaahs" sounded, but when Ben sang that harmony counterpoint in the "some-body"s at the end, I could hear the harmony, so I guess I was coming out of the speakers at that point. Next came the biggest test of my composure: BLOOD AND ROSES. I started the bass riff okay and I don't think I mess it up at all. We got a really good crowd reaction from this one. Doug got a huge hand at the conclusion of his first guitar solo in the middle of the song. That was very pleasing — a real rock star moment. We continued to cook on BETTY BROWN; I think in the last week of practice, we have found a higher-lever groove in that song than we we ever have before. I think it sounds even better now than when we recorded it. It's like a road-tested warhorse. If I sound excited, I am. And I was. And we were down to one song to go. And it was BORN TO RUN. And I was starting to get a little nervous. Mostly because things were going so well — I was suddenly afraid that I was going to have MY big mess-up and screw up our finale. So I concentrated extra hard throughout the song. I was extra careful when I hit the octave pedal and then the chorus/delay for the big "walk-down" section and the sound that came out of the speakers was AWESOME! And it probably helped the Scott went absolutely nuts on the lights; I guess that's what happens when we do a song where he knows what's coming. That's it; we finished as strong as we could have hoped for. The crowd gave us a big hand. It sounded big to me. / / I looked around for someone to cue us to do one more — we had SHE LOVES YOU in reserve for an encore — but that didn't happen. Matt appeared at the side of the stage, congratulating me on our performance and hurriedly unplugging me from his rig. I took my bass and pedal to the cramped hallway behind the stage. When I turned back toward the stage, Matt was there holding the tangled mess of my two heavy bass cords. Instead of untangling them, I just shoved the spaghetti works into the back compartment of my gig bag. Craig and Marlene appeared out of nowhere. Craig shook my hand and Marlene gave me a hug. I felt bad because we were in such a hurry to clear the stage that I didn't get to talk to them much. I looked for them later but they must have taken off. / / We settled into our booth and Ken fetched beers for us. Good boy, Ken. John Vendenabele came over and tried to carry on a conversation right as the Benders were starting up. I couldn't hear a word he was saying. I said "John, I can't hear a word you're saying." I don't think he could hear me either, because he just kept on talking. Also saw Brian Myers and "Jim" (not sure of his last name) from the Mossberg night shift. / / The Benders were loud. Matt sang and played guitar and traded duties on bass with the keyboard player. Lee was his usual fluid-guitar-guy self. And did I mention that they were loud? They played all the typical Bender covers and probably more Tommy originals than Tommy ever did at those later Benders shows. The crowd of old Benders-people ate it up. And it was loud. Really loud. Nerve-damage loud. / / We stayed through the first set and left during the break. We passed Lee's girlfriend Sally on our way out. And Jaimie James — the legendary Jaimie James to this crowd, I suppose. Finally we chatted with Sue Thompson out on the sidewalk on our way to the cars. This has to be really hard for her. The Benders — this new Benders — will probably just end up looking like a Tommy Thompson tribute band. / / I drove home all alone and I realized that I forgot to tell Doug about the sunset.

April 13, 2010. PRACTICE AT DOUG'S. A short practice (finally something other than the eight songs for the Phoenix). And then we convened for drinks and munchies at the Granger Buns to check out Jason Sapen's solo acoustic act. He did a most excellent ACROSS THE UNIVERSE. Also, we introduced ourselves to the owner, Phil Schreiber, who happens to be an old high school chum of Ben's and the father of Julie's co-worker "Herr" Schreiber the German teacher at MHS.

April 20, 2010. Recording at Ben's. I think I nailed a bass line for NUMB, playing along with Ben live-like in the studio. Ben will do his track over during the week, I am sure. I left two takes on the recorder, one with a fancy refrain and the other with a simple refrain, just in case one of the notes I played in the fancy refrain conflicts with something Doug adds down the road. I like working this way, playing live with the drums to the click and Doug's reference track.

April 27, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Over dinner (the usual Subway turkey sub), Doug and I had a funny exchange that started with his astounding assertion that in the old days of the band he thought he was the worst musician of the bunch. "You?! " I said. No, it was me, I counter-asserted. Thus we argued, each trying to claim the mantle of worst musician in Ben's basement circa 1982. I think we may have agreed that it was a tie, even though I still know that it was me. / / Ben had his drum track done for NUMB. He wasn't sure about it. We gave it a listen. Afterwards, I asked him to play it back using the bass track that I recorded second, with the simplified refrain (and I think a slightly tighter middle section). It sounded better to me and Ben perked up as he listened to it. Hey, said Ben. Now it sounds good! Funny how little changes can make all the difference. / / Doug layed down acoustic rhythm guitar for NUMB and he took a stab at an acoustic lead for GREAT BIG SKY, but that didn't work, so he'll try again later with the electric. So we stayed on SKY and he added some additional backing vocals. / / Doug brought his keyboard tonight so I could try out my idea to add a layer of the "accordion" voice during the lead of PATHETIC NEIGHBOR. It's something we did repeatedly on several songs on PRIVATE DRIVE, so I thought it would fill out the sound. But I wasn't sure I would get the go-ahead now that Doug was using Jerrol for keys on other songs. Not sure if I was gonna be able to sell the guys on my two-finger keyboard arrangements anymore. But Doug said let's try. I practiced at home a part that turned out more complicated than I originally imagined and I played it through the entire song instead of the lead. I played it for the guys and it eventually got simplified from chords to single notes. And Ben had me change to a lower octave; still not sure if I agree with that decision. As usual, I'll decide what I think when I hear it in the mix next week. / / Finished the night adding percussion to GREAT BIG SKY. I did a track of two tambourines played at the same time. Doug said "we never do that," but I did it. Maybe not well, but I did it. And then I did a shaker track; I think that was okay. And then I did bells. Four tracks of bells. Shaking them wildly at Ben's direction. Not sure about this one at all. By the end of it all, the bells just sounded like car keys rattling around in a garbage can. (Am I the worst bell player in the band?)

May 5, 2010. In honor of Cinco de Mayo, I e-mailed Doug and Ben a photo of Eva Longoria last night (if she's not from Mexico, her character in DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES is). I'm not worried that Julie will be upset. She has Sting. And Eddie Vedder. And Tom Petty and Robert Downey Jr. and Liam Neeson and Ewan MacGregor and Chuck Todd and Rahm Emanuel and Anderson Cooper. The topic, of course, is the harmless low-grade celebrity crush. And Julie has NINE! She could start a baseball team, except that someone would have to explain the rules to Sting. This all started with Doug. He famously has a thing — I'd call it that harmless low-grade celebrity crush — for Jennifer Love Hewitt. Somehow this topic came up a few weeks ago when we were cooking out after a saturday practice at Doug's and Julie joined us after she was done at Fire Arts. Doug went on a bit about JLH and I may have mentioned Eva L. and Doug asked Julie if she had any "guys." Perhaps feeling pressured, she couldn't come up with any but she has since come up with her list . . . of nine guys. If she gets nine guys, then I need to come up with eight more women. Let's see — Kate Bush, Anne Currie, Connie Chung . . . um, I have to think some more. I tried to add Asia Carerra and Tori Welles, but Julie said porn stars were out. Howcome she gets to make the rules? What does this have to do with recording at Ben's? Nothing really. I asked Chris if she thought any of the men on Julie's list were sexy. Some of them she didn't know who they were, but she agreed that Liam Neeson was sexy. Watch out Ben. If a man in a kilt shows up in your driveway, LOCK THE DOOR! / / We did do some recording tonight. First, my accordion track for PATHETIC is history already; Ben put it in the mix and the consensus is that it's not working. Doug fixed some rough edges on the acoustic track that he recorded last week for SUSTAIN. And then it was my turn. After listening to my home-recorded trial track on my Zoom H2 digital recorder, I plugged in my stuff and ran through the track. I was a bit nervous about this one. I wasn't sure what Doug would think about the thing I'm playing during his "climbing" sections. It's different and if I don't play it just right it'll sound really amateurish, so I was sweating really hard to get it right. Or right by the way my ears are hearing it. After a couple plays, Doug gave me the thumbs-up. Cool. So then Ben and I just played it over and over until it more or less came together. I'm thinking this is a good way to work. I'd even like to have all three of us play together even before Doug records the reference track. Maybe I'll suggest that some time.

May 12, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Ben has a drum track down for SUSTAIN. I came prepared to do a final bass track, but he said my track from last week was "genius." Not quite, I'm thinking. I layed down a couple of improved tracks, but the first was the one we finally settled on. / / Doug brought a whole mess of new home-recorded guitar parts for GREAT BIG SKY and NUMB. Ben imported them to the ProTools and he jostled them into time with the existing rhythm tracks. This is the part that has really speeded up the recording process. Doug said that he imagined me and Ben saying "less is more" while he recorded guitar fills and solos by himself at home. / / Kind of a short night; it was still light out when Doug and I left. Saw two deer in Ben's driveway. Cool. Who would want to shoot those babies?

May 19, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Doug brought tracks he recorded at home for NUMB and SUSTAIN; Ben imported them into the computer and jogged them into place. Doug also recorded a new vocal for GREAT BIG SKY and he started on NUMB, but he bailed on that one, opting to do the work at home. I think that's becoming his preferred mode of operation — Ben and I aren't there to kibbutz.

June 3, 2010. Practice at Doug's for party gig next saturday. Ran through 33 songs in a little over two hours. A few rough spots but mostly not bad at all.

June 5, 2010. Spent day digitizing old cassette tapes. I'm suddenly lost in the Seventies. When Julie gave me my Zoom H2 digital recorder for our 25th anniversary exactly one year ago, I had two immediate goals in mind. The first was to record my Mom's life story; I now have about 12 hours of her on tape and we distributed a six-CD set to all my siblings at Christmas. The other was to start digitizing

[THE OTHER HALF + HALF = explain}

June 9, 2010. Practice at Doug's. Ran through about 30 more songs. Gave Doug and Ben my first production copies of THE OTHER HALF disc. (Ben e-mailed me the next morning and said he was "speechless" after listening to LITTLE GLASS BOX.)

June 11, 2010. We have a gig for June 26: The Carriage House's "Rockin' the Gardens" thing, whatever that is. I guess we'll find out.

June 14, 2010. Practice at Doug's. Not a good night for me. Instead of my usual practicing at home, I've been spending my free time working on my cassette tape digitizing project. Tonight I gave the boys copies of the CD of HALF.

June 19, 2010. Retirement Party for "Craig" at Juno Lake (Edwardsburg, MI). ($300/band)

This was one of the gigs that we got through someone who heard us at the Singleton Party last fall.

HERE’S WHAT WENT WRONG AT TODAY'S GIG:

— The extension cord wasn't in the big black bag, but luckily I had one in my car.

— my pedal started acting like it was out of juice when I put nearly-fresh batteries in it. It eventually worked okay, but don't know what that was all about.

— We had to wait two hours to play after we got everything set up.

— It was pretty dark when we finished up at about 11 pm. We didn't bring the lights because we thought we'd only be playing until 9 or 10.

— We tried providing music for the party with Julie's old iPod. Two problems: It's really not set up for extensive party shuffling and the built-in rechargeable battery doesn't seem to be hold a charge very well. I had a full battery icon showing when we plugged it in but after about three hours it was reading empty already. It never went completely dead, but I was really scared. It did blink off once and I was able to restart it.

—Ben's recorder actually did run out of juice while we were playing.

— I messed up a handful of songs, which isn't entirely unusual for me.

— Doug messed up about three handfuls of songs, which is not like him at all. I think it was the waiting around in the heat that fried our heads a little.

—There were ANTS crawling all over the concrete. I tried to put as many of our bags and boxes as possible up on a bench.

— When we started playing, people just pulled up in their golf carts and watched us, like it was some kind of drive-in theater.

— When it got dark, the flying bugs swarmed us like mad.

— Ben jokingly offered non-existent prizes to drunk people; this could have gotten ugly.

— I spilled my Gatorade on the concrete in front of my mic stand. Luckily, It did not get on my pedal or cord, but I had to do some acrobatic stradling to keep from stepping in it.

— Ben hit a skunk on his way home.

HERE'S WHAT WENT RIGHT AT TODAY'S GIG:

— We managed to squeeze everything we needed into Ben's car and my car. It's good to know that we can do that when we need to when Ken's truck isn't available.

— Ben's recorder ran out of juice. Yeah, that was in the "bad" list, but it's also good because now we won't have to listen to HOW BADLY we played.

June 26, 2010. The Carriage House ($300/band)

This is the job that Ben started fishing for back around the time we played the Phoenix. We landed it, and I think it may have tasted like crab. / / Ben gave his contact "Emily" a package of discs and whatnot and it sounded like they were interested in hiring us initially, but the lead went cold for a while. Then Emily contacted Doug just a few weeks ago and asked if we could play on this date. We all said yes. That's when the confusion started. We all knew that The Carriage House was a fancy place and maybe a little on the snooty side, but I looked at the web site and they had a page all about their "Rockin' the Garden" series featuring bands like ours and "Alfresco Dining" featuring an outside bar and pizza on a woodfired grill. Cool, I thought, this is gonna be like a fancier version of The Sports Page. I could deal with that. Doug and I both sent out e-mails to all our contacts, announcing this gig. / / But then things got funny when we tried to nail down the Carriage House on what this was going to be like. My sister Sue called them, thinking that she could arrange a birthday party for my Mom that night (Mom's 82nd), but she got nowhere. I called and talked to our contact Emily, but she couldn't answer simple questions like: could people come and sit in the garden, listen to the music and order drinks and appetizers? It was like she couldn't fathom WHY anyone would WANT to do that. It was looking like we had a little bit of a culture clash happening here; fine dining meets rock and roll, and it may not be pretty.

/ / Then on Monday of this week, Jerry Wozniak showed up at work with a printed invitation for the Carriage House's "Grand Re-opening Weekend." It pretty much spelled out that the music in the garden (us) would be available only to guests with reservations (required!) in the dining room. This was not the woodfired-pizza-alfresco-dining described on the web page. I scrambled to tell people NOT to come unless they were up for a one hundred to two hundred dollar dinner. Needless to say, Sue moved Mom's birthday party to Karen's house. / / Then Ben drove over to Carriage House; it's not far from his office. He reported that everything out back was still under construction and they had a bunch of tables and chairs squeezed together on a concrete patio and it looked like we'd be playing out in the open on that patio. This seemed to be getting worse. We had also been debating whether it would be okay to bring our wives, but this just didn't seem like it would be that kind of gig. My assumption became that they were going to treat us like busboys who happen to make music. Could you see the new busboy showing up for his first night of work: "This is my girlfriend; she'll just sit over here and order drinks while I clear the tables." I don't think so. I did not want to put Julie in an uncomfortable situation, so I told her to make other plans, perhaps my Mom's birthday party? Ben also left Chris at home. / / The weather has been dicey this week and I was afraid (or hopeful, depending on my mood) that we'd get canceled. Or Wednesday prectice was shortened this week when a big storm blew through. I made it home right before it hit; we were okay, but five tornados touched down just east of Goshen. It was storming when I got up this morning, but it cleared up and didn't rain at all the rest of the day. / / I arrived at Doug's today expecting to load stuff into the back of my car, like we had last week. But Ken was already there and all the gear was in the bed of his truck. They beat me over to The Carriage House and when I caught up with them, they were on the patio checking out the half-constructed octagonal bar and woodfired grill building. A fellow was showing them around; I'm not sure who he was. He showed us where we'd be playing. It was not on the patio like Ben said. It was a little gazebo with a wooden floor about a foot off the ground and plants and vines crawling up all four corners and a tenty-type roof. Cool. Somewhat of a stage and somewhat of a roof in case it rains. This was already better than I was imagining. And very scenic, out in the garden and all. I realized that I forgot to pack my camera. I was going to hand it to Ken and have him click a bunch of pix. I called Ben to tell him to bring a camera and to let him know that he could pull his car through the gate off Orange Road on the side of the restaurant and unload fairly close to the stage. He and Chris had just loaded a tent into the back of his car but now he was going to leave the tent at home. / / We got set up pretty good. There was only one outlet with one useable plug, but I had my retractable extension cord. The platform had little wings to the left and the right that weren't covered by the canvas roof; that's where we put the speakers. We figured we could move them in under the covering if it started raining. It was clouding up a little in the northwest and I could have sworn I heard a rumble of thunder at one point. I think Doug heard it too. Turns out we were hearing wind blowing across the microphones and coming out the PA speakers. (Whew.) A lady named Sabrina came by. I don't know what her official function is, but she was very enthused about having us playing tonight. She took me in the back door of the restaurant to show me where the restroom was — we would all need to change in a few minutes. She showed me the dining room; I poked my head around the corner. It looked too fancy for me. Sabrina offered to get us some water. That would be great, I said. I stood there for a few minutes, thinking she was going to bring me some bottles or something but she didn't reappear from the kitchen. So I headed back to the bandstand. When I got there, someone had already delivered water to the small table where Ken had set up camp. It was in a clear plastic container that looked like a cross between a bucket and a small fish tank. And it had a dipper. And we were given plastic tumblers like you mom might have had from an old Tupperware set. And the tumblers had other people's names written on them in magic marker. Mine said "Emily" (I didn't get to meet Emily but I got to drink out of her cup). I think I got my answer to the question of whether we'd be treated like the kitchen staff. I hope they washed the Tupperware before they gave it to us. / / We changed into our spiffiest gig clothes: Doug was mostly in black, Ben had a black and blue bowling shirt and I put on a new bowling shirt that Julie and I scored a Kohl's a few weeks ago — it's black with a tan racing stripe down the right side; I thought that would look cool because it's the side opposite where my guitar strap will hang. They had long pants on and I put on khakis that convert to shorts. But I kept them long all night; no one was in shorts. Heck, the waitresses even wore stockings under their skirts and dresses. (For future reference, my new shirt is a linen-rayon mix and it worked great; I should run over to Kohl's and see if they have any more left.) / / We started promtly at 5 pm. People just sort of milled about in the garden area with drinks in hand while we played. The men in jackets and ties and the women all in dresses. Waiters and waitresses offered hors d'oeuvres from big platters. It looked like a fancy garden wedding like you see in the movies. Oh, is that Hugh Grant and Julie Roberts ? No wait, that's Craig and Marlene! Turns out it's their anniversary (33rd) and they elected to spend it here — isn't that romantic? They sat at a table in the garden throughout most of the first set and for dinner they sat at a table on the patio in the back of the building where they could still hear the music. In the second set, a waitress came to the stage with a tray of mojitos courtesy of Craig and Marlene. Wasn't that nice? I'm not much of a drinker, but I did sip away at my mojito throughout the night, especially after I noticed that the ants and other bugs that were EVERYWHERE were also swimming in my Gatorade bottle. Later in the night, that same waitress came over to take orders because Craig and Marlene were offering to buy another round. I was still working on my mojito, so i told the waitress to tell Craig that I wanted a Vox 12-string, which she wrote down on her pad. "What's that?" she asked. "It's a guitar," Ben answered; "and you'll NEVER get it!" / / I think we played really well tonight. It was probably our best version of BORN TO RUN ever. Didn't seem like there were many people to hear us, though. We heard from the staff that they were getting "good comments" from people. Really? It still seemed like a very boring wedding reception to me. / / After we finished and packed up, one of the ladies there (Judy?) said that we could sit out on the patio and smoke (Doug and Ben's cigars). She offered drinks and a waitress came by to take our orders. As an added surprise, the chef whipped up soft shell crabs for us and Ken. It looked like something out of one of those cooking shows when he and a couple of his underlings came out and presented armloads of crabs on little plates. And then he hovered while we sampled them. While THEY sampled them. I hope I didn't offend the great chef, but I simply do not eat any seafood. Maybe some seaweed in a souffle, but not thses crabs. I mean, they were sitting there on the plate with their little arms sticking out, like "help me! help me!" Ben finished my plate with no problem. I congratulated the guys on being REAL rock stars now . . . they play a gig; they get crabs. Just like the big boys out on the road. Then the waitress came back with our check for the drinks. The check? You mean, the drinks aren't free? Oh crab!

July 3, 2010. Jeff and Rene Sieg's Lake Party. (No pay, although Ben tried to pay us) (Directions to Siegs' place: Take SR23 to Redfield St. after the state line, turn right. Then left on Elkhart Road, Right on Sandy Beach) (Guests: Ben's mom — she's a hoot!, Jeff's parents Don and Pam, Andrea Simpson! and Nicky)

"Arf Arf Arf Arf Arf!" That's pretty much what Ben heard when he listened to the tape of today's show. There was a little yappy do tied up not far from where he put the recorder. So now the tape is very arf-full. / / We arrive

2-ish and we were the first people there. Jeff showed us around all the additions to the decking on the house and the various renovations. He wanted us to play on the top level of the deck, but it was like the top of a wedding cake, three stories above the back yard. Nah, the height would not be good for Doug, and besides, we'd have to haul everything up those winding stairs. So we opted to set up on the grass near the lake. / / Ben brought a tent-thing and that was good covering from the sun. we hooked up my iPod and I played what i though would be decent "party" mix — actually it was the mix that had my whole family up and dancing at Nancy's latest wedding several years ago — but Doug took major offense at the number of '80s dance tunes (Safety Dance, Gloria, Dead or Alive, etc.). He was downright angry, man. I switched playlists. wow, I think I found an exposed nerve, music-wise. / / Julie went with the whole crew on a pontoon boat ride and I stood on the pier and waved as they motored away. No, I still don't get in boats. I'll get in a boat if the continent sinks. / / Big surprise arrival: Andrea Simpson and Nicky. Andrea gave us all hugs and Nicky's like a grown-up person now (he's, what, 17, 18?). I gave Nicky a copy of PRIVATE DRIVE. Andrea asked us to play BROWN-EYED GIRL and she said we used to do it at the Sport Page, but that must have been during that brief Matt-era. I'd rather nor be doing BROWN-EYED GIRL. I'd sooner do SAFETY DANCE. / / Andrea told Ken at some point that Randy had been fired from his second band. I take it she's talking about "Who Wants Pie?" That means he must have been fired from "Rogue's Gallery" before that. She doesn't realize that he was actually fired from the Basics, too. So make that three bands. / / We played roughly from 6:15 to 8:30 with no set list; I just called out songs, picking them from the set list left over from the Carriage House gig. We were relaxed and I think we all played well, especially Doug. He was in a zone and he wanted to keep playing when Ben suggested we cut the second set short. I think he would have soloed on BLOOD AND ROSES another ten minutes if Ben had let him. On the fly we added BORN ON THE BAYOU to our PRETTY WOMAN/LONG COOL WOMAN medley; I always wanted to give that a try. It was all fun. / / Ben tried to pay me and Doug $100 each for today's gig, but we wouldn't take the checks. See, he initially told us this was a paying gig and we figured, sure we'll let Jeff and Rene pay us, but the real deal was that Ben was footing the bill and offering us to the Siegs for "free." So that's why we declined payment. I said that we should each get one free gig each year, no questions asked. Ben actually said that was a good idea, but he didn't want this to be his one for the year. / / Awesome fireworks show over the lake after dark. But the best part was the "lanterns." After the fireworks, nearly every house around the lake launched these little hot air balloons. And I don't know if they were made of paper or linen or what, but they silently rose and hovered over the lake and then slowly drifted away. It was like something out of a movie. There looked like a hundred of them them. Forget the fireworks; THAT was more awesome.

July 9, 2010. American Legion Post 308, Osceola. (No pay) (Guests: Ken, Sue and Mike)

As we finished our very last song for the night, Doug and I turned to face Ben and we ripped up the checks he gave us tonight for the Sieg party and we threw the confetti bits at him. This will have to be a scene in the movie they make about us some day. And the little bits of paper flying through the air will be in slow motion. I can see it all. / / That's the Thing That Happened at the end of the night, but it's the Thing That Happened at the beginning of the night that really has us puzzled: Ken showed up, even after telling us he wasn't going to be here. He seemed really distraught. And he very mysteriously informed us that he wasn't going to come around and hang with us anymore. Huh? He didn't explain. But it seemed to be tearing him up, whatever was going on. And we have no idea what it is. Did Patty tell him that we're taking advantage of him and his truck? (For the record, we transported EVERYTHING — including the lights — in just two cars.) Did we say something, or do something, that upset him? For now, it's a mystery. / / Marv wanted to mess with us all night. He seemed unhappy with our set list. He wanted to hear "fast" songs. He wanted to sing along. He needed us to make public service announcements by reading from these long flyers for upcoming events. He wanted us to play "country." Okay, that's where I draw the line. This was the place where Doug said we'd be treated like kings. It felt more like we were being treated like incompetent day laborers. We did try to accommodate him at one point by dragging PEGGY SUE out of our asses. Doug did great on it, but I was borderline lost; I know it's just four chords but it jumps around in funny ways. We did better with an impromptu PINK CADILLAC. In fact, it may have been the best version we've ever done. It's going back on the active list NOW. / / We used Doug's new lights for the first time. they were good, but I think they might have been causing electrical interference with my bass. Plus Doug's side was flashing way too maniacally. And then marv plugged in a mirror ball in the middle of the dance floor and the whole room started SPINNING. Okay, it just looked like it was spinning, but I got dizzy anyway. / / The worst thing that went wrong all night was that we didn't do a sound check and everything sounded off — to me at least. / / Oh, and I almost forgot about the Thing That Happened during our performance: A guy there proposed to his girl friend. And she said yes. Doug had us play the chords to our slow version of MAYBE BABY and the guy took my microphone and did his spiel, getting down on one knee and all. I guess that must have looked like it was from a movie, too.

July 21, 2010. Recording at Ben's. First time since, what, May? I actually had to sit and listen to some of the latest tracks to remember what all we were doing when we last left off. Getting my head into gigging mode — and and keeping it there — is such hard work that it seems to be edging out all my brainpower for remembering our last recording sessions. We don't have much of a history of gigging and recording at the same time; it's usually been one or the other. But I'm up for giving it a try if we can keep the calendar filled. I'd much rather record than spend a lot of time learning new cover songs anyway. / / The other thing that's taken my head out of recording has been my current at-home project of digitizing my old cassette tapes. WHY haven't I mentioned this yet? I should do an in-depth discussion soon, but not now. / / Tonight we arrived at Ben's and Doug had some vocal tracks for NUMB, which Ben imported and nudged into place. It was a double-tracked lead vocal and some background harmonies. It sounded really different at first, but after a dozen listens, it fit right in. I guess that's the key. If it sounds funny after you've had time to get used to it, then most likely something is wrong. / / Then Doug spent about an hour laying down lead and harmony vocals for SUSTAIN. His voice was very scratchy tonight. I'm not sure if that was just a thing he was after or if he's coming down with something (or getting over something). As usual, we ran out of time for all the things Doug had planned, but it was good to get back in the groove, even if there are no grooves in our records anymore.

July 28, 2010. Practice at Doug's. Ran through songs that we haven't touched since K's about a year ago. Plus PINK CADILLAC, which sounded really good at the Legion. And PEGGY SUE, which sounded okay at the Legion, but I need more practice on it. Somehow Doug got the idea that I should be singing it. Oh no; that tends to be the kiss of death for most songs. I'll practice it at home, but Doug will really have to sing it if I don't pass the audition. It's too good a song to not do. / / IN OTHER NEWS: Emily from the Carriage House called to see if we were available for a job on Sunday evening, August 15. I told Doug yes before I realized that it would make three jobs in three days for that weekend. Ooops. Well, I'll just have to pace myself.

July 31, 2010. Club Noma Hog Roast. 8-11 pm. ($300)

This gig started with a call from Doug on Thursday night. Hog roast at Club Noma on Saturday . . . can I do it? Two days' notice? Someone must have canceled on them. We haven't done an emergency cancelation job in a long time — sure, I'll do it! After the call from Carriage House the other day and now this, it's kind of fun to be in demand all of a sudden. Not sure what the whole story is, but somehow Carrie Rose (Big Vinnie's wife) is connected. (And my initial fear was that they thought we were that local jazz combo that calls itself "Back to Basics.") / / We packed everything in two cars and arrived a little after six. We were able to pull into a little grassy strip between the building and a parking lot next door. That was convenient because we were close to the patio where we'd be playing. It rained this morning and was still threatening when we arrived, but we set up outside anyway. Here's what scares me: It takes an hour to set up and a half hour to tear down but only five seconds for a downpour to drench everything we own. / / We met our contact, a metrosexual-looking guy named Ty, and he showed us where to set up. The space looked a little tight and he offered to move some planters to make more room. Ben said it was okay, but I said sure, move the planters. My rule is that anytime anyone offers us more room, we should take it. / / Also met our new friend for the night: The doorman/bouncer Phil, a really intimidating-looking guy with shades, a shaved head and muscles. But he was fun; he requested Johnny Cash — and he did not look like the Johnny Cash type — and he spent much of the time just hanging with his Indian-looking girlfriend. There was a sign on the door that said "DRESS CODE ENFORCED." I asked Phil if my cargo shorts were a violation of the dress code. He just gave me a sly smile and said "yeah." / / We could smell the hog roasting when we got there; the roaster was set up on the sidewalk at the back end of the patio, as we were looking at it. Ty gave us a small plate of pulled pork that we picked at with our fingers like monkeys in bowling shirts. Mmmm, pork. / / Janine and Tim arrived early. Janine told Doug all about her ordeal with heat stroke at the Smithereens concert a few weeks ago. Karen and Steve arrived during the first set. I'm sure we would have gotten more peeps out if we had more than one day to warn people — I didn't send out my e-mail notice until yesterday because I wanted to get all the details right this time, not like the near-fiasco with the Carriage House and their required reservations. / / We set up the lights and our plan was to use them in the second set. It got dark enough — dusky enough — at the end of the first set to need them. / / I think we played really great and the sound was unusually good for an outside gig. We had a fake marble wall to our left and that gave a nice empty bathroom sound, plus when we'd stop abrutly, we could hear the echo bouncing back from the big glass Marriot building across Michigan street. I think I made it through the entire night without a single goof or brain fart or anything — that's a success for me. Just without hearing the tape, I think we played our best THINGS WE SAID TODAY ever, and BORN TO RUN kicked ass as usual. The crowd never got very big, but people kind of drifted in and out throughtout. They all seemed appreciative, though. Janine and Karen got up and danced at one point and a table of twenty-somethings behind them joined in. (I'll take it even if they were ironically mocking us all.) We played four Tommy songs for Tim and we pulled BABY RUN pretty much out of our heinies. And BLOOD AND ROSES was dynamite, and PINK CADDY wasn't bad either (although I'm still trying to get a handle on that PETER GUNN bass line.) / / One couple was really getting into us. They arrived around the end of the first set, and the lady was bopping and grooving the whole time. I thought we had some new fans here, but the guy got pretend-belligerent with us when we wouldn't play SURRENDER by Cheap Trick. We told him that we played their version of AIN'T THAT A SHAME earlier, but that didn't satisfy him. I hope he was pretending, because his wife seemed to be having a really good time. I tried to give them a flyer when they left at the end of the night, but he was still moaning about us not playing his song. [We should really print up a sheet with the title of every song we know and tell people that we'll do requests only if they're on the list. You wouldn't ask the karaoke guy to play a song that's not in his CD library, so why ask us to do songs that we don't have in our heads? It's because people think we're doing a magic act here — that we think the songs up in our heads and conjure them into being through our fingertips.] / / At about nine o'clock, we could see (and hear) the fireworks over at the Cove. Ben and I could see them, but our audience on the patio couldn't, so I told the people when to "oooh" and "ahhh" and they were surprisingly compliant. / / At around ten o'clock, there was suddenly a stream of people, young sharp-dressed people, filing past Phil's check-in desk and going inside the club. This must be the regular crowd and their regular arrival time. They were young and the girls were all pretty much dressed up in these dresses that looked like they came from Frederick's of Hollywood — tight, short, plungy, ruchy. And the guys were dressed like

. . . um, I didn't notice at all. The women are wearing Frederick's-type dresses and I'm supposed to remember what the guys are wearing?

I don't THINK so. / / We heard there was going to be a DJ inside by the time were were done at 11:00. We saw him moving his gear while we were playing and by the time we finished up we could hear his thump-thumpy music coming from inside. Ben went inside to get paid and I followed him. There were flashing lights over in the bar area, and it looked like a stage in the corner and — HURKY DURN! — a go-go girl doing a hot dance in what appeared to be a bikini and furry knee-boots. Hey, waitaminute! THAT has to be a dress-code violation. I guess that dress code doesn't apply to us . . . entertainers.

August 7, 2010. Anniversary Party for Mike + Sue and Bill + Nanette. (on Yankee Road in Niles) ($300/band)

Mike and Sue are true fans. They started coming around when we got the K's gig and they've been so loyal to us, so there's no way we would have turned down a private party for them. / / We drove to what I believe was Bill and Nanette's house on a huge piece of land in Niles. We set up under a tent that serving as a makeshift awning over the front of a huge pole barn. There was a ton of food and we did our best to chow down before we had to go on. Mike and Sue presented me with a bunch of bananas — that's all they ever saw me eat in our year-plus at K's. And speaking of K's, Mr. Kevin was there today with his new girlfriend. He seemed all relaxed and happy to be out of the restaurant business. / / Mike and Sue always request WIPEOUT whenever they see us, so Doug wrote a set list with WIPEOUT appearing in all three sets. Ben wasn't too crazy about that, but he went along wih it. / / There were little kids hanging around us all day. I gave them picks, but that didn't satisfy them. I dug out my little mini-maracas for them to play along but we weren't loud enough to drown them out and that got a little annoying, but fortunately they got bored with those and ran off and found something more interesting. / /

I did not play well today. Don't know what my problem was. It was just there. Tonight we tried out our new cover of LISTEN TO HER HEART and maybe I'm not quite ready for prime time on this one. I did sing WELL ALRIGHT for the first time in a long time and I think I did okay. I remembered to prime myself before we started by quietly playing on my bass the first note that I needed to sing. Then I hummed that note throughout the intro and I got off to what sounded to me like a good start. I used to do something like this with IMAGINE years ago; maybe I can start doing this with my background vocals. / / We had a guy come up and sing after we offered to be a live karaoke for anyone brave enough. His name was Curtis and he belted his way through ROADHOUSE BLUES at the end of the second set. He must have had a good time, because he came back in the third for CALIFORNIA SUN, HANKY PANKY, MARY JANE, and JOHNNY B. GOODE. He's all excited about coming out to see us at the American Legion. I hope he knows he's not in the band.

/ / One of the guys sitting in a group of people with Curtis got really excited when we played BLOOD AND ROSES. He was on his feet and clapping and singing along. Afterwards he told us about being stationed in Germany with the army in the 1980s and hunting down Smithereens records all over the country. That's the U.S. army — make the world safe for rock and roll. / / We finished up our third set and Sue pleaded with us to play a fourth. Yikes. We were running out of songs, Doug was having trouble seeing in the dark, and Ben's back was killing him. We regouped and threw together a five-song leftovers encore set before we finally had to call on account of darkness — we didn't think we'd be playing this late.

/ / We packed up in the dark and some of the ladies went inside the house and brought out some of the leftover so we could have a bite. That was very nice of them. Doug loaded up a plate and set his mostly-smoked cigar on the edge of the plate so he could chow down. A few minutes went by and I heard a lady sitting near him exclaim: "Are you EATING your CIGAR?!" Yep, in the darkness, Doug speared his fork onto something that looked like a cocktail weenie and put it in his mouth. It was indeed his cigar. Unlit, of course, but it still could not have tasted very good. / / Doug eating his cigar was the most noteworthy thing that happened in the loadout phase, that is, until The Fight started. There was a group of 20- to 30-somethings standing around drinking beer and whatnot right in the spot where we had been tearing down but we stopped to have some food. And I guess some of them were pretty drunk, Well, the next thing I know, this little guy just hauls off and sucker punches this bigger guy right in the side of the face. There's a moment where everthing seems to stop and the big guy stands there kinda dazed and confused, most of that alcohol-induced I am certain. He lunges for the little guy. Some of the poeple standing around grab him and someone else hold the little guy. They knock over Ben's gear and the whole mob careens in our direction. Needless to say, I jumped out of my seat as fast as I could. I'm not even sure where I went; I just needed to get out of the way. The little guy started barking at the big guy. Not that he was yelling or speaking words in any way. He was BARKING, quite literally, like one of those yappy little dogs that take off after big dogs but don’t seem to be aware that they're . . . lttle dogs. It was nutty. Apparently the big guy was very drunk (as was the little guy) and he was being inappropriate in some way with the little guy's wife. Sue apologized profusely for the incident, but my only concern was that none of Ben's drum gear got wrecked.

(As a post script, Ben did misplace his drum seat in the confusuion and he had to retrieve it from Sue and Mike the next day.)

August 13, 2010. American Legion 308, Osceola. ($400)

Marv had us all set up on the stage tonight. I didn't think we'd fit, which is why we used it as a big drum riser last time. But Marv said that Doug and I took up too much of the dance floor. So Doug and I set up on either side of the drum set — there wasn't enough room to walk in front of the drums — and we put our mic stands and monitor stands on the floor in front of us. It worked out okay, I guess. When I need to wander near Doug to tell him somthing or to catch a cue, I just stepped off the stage and walked out in front of him. It was kind of dark, so he didn't know I was out there a few times. / / Ken is back. He bought us a couple fish dinners to share. That was fortunate for me because i accidently left my bananas at home. I didn't eat the fish, of course. I chowed on the potato salad and the cole slaw. / / Superfans Mike and Sue were here and they brought along Bill the UPS guy and Bill's wife (Karen?). / / It was Marv's birthday, so we sang Happy Birthday and there was a cake during the break. And Marv didn't bug us as much as he did last time, maybe because he was in a good birthday-mood. He did try to sing a few songs with us, and — this was really weird — he asked me to hand over my bass during GLORIA so he could play it. I'm still not sure how i decided to do it, but I took off the bass and offered it to him. (It's a Fender, so it can take some punishment, as long as he doesn't drop it.) Marv held it up to his chest without strapping it on. Before I was able to say anything, Ben shouted into his mic "USE THE STRAP!" So Marv strapped it on and he thumped at it, out of tune and out of time, of course. He gave me a helpless look and said "show me what notes." I pointed at the "E," the "D," and the "A." But he was ready to give up already and he handed it back to me, looking a little defeated. Not as easy as it looks, is it Marv? / / Marv's one request for the night, other than playing my bass, was for us to play every Tommy Thompson song we knew. And we did. And I scewed up TWENTY YEARS. Sorry Marv. Sorry Tommy.

August 23, 2010. Completed my latest at-home recording project: a CD I'm calling 21 DEMOS. It's demos of twenty-one of my best songs mostly from the last decade or so. I just needed to record them mostly for posterity, but partly to help me figure out if I can justify buying a digital multitrack recorder and get busy making "studio" versions of these songs.

August 20, 2010. Practice at Doug's, a rare friday night practice. Very odd little dustup between Ben and Doug tonight. Ben's been on a kick to get us all to practice more at home. He vowed to practice 30 minutes a day, and Doug did likewise. And I think I vowed to make sure that they both practice 30 minutes a day. Doug even upped the ante by declaring that he would make it his goal to master the complicated guitar parts on Peter Frampton's DO YOU FEEL LIKE WE DO? (And of course, we would have to learn it so we can help him play it properly.) But something else has been eating at Ben, apparently. We were running through some songs, okay, cover tunes — PEGGY SUE, RUBY BABY — when Ben just stopped practice cold and asked Doug why we "don't play originals anymore." This has been bubbling under the surface since we lost the K's residency. Ben wants to take a damn-the-audience approach and play as many originals as we can and if we don't get hired back, who cares? Doug prefers a more measured approach, pleasing the audience with covers and getting hired back and slowly introducing them to our catalog of originals. This went on way too long, and it was a discussion we could have been having on the porch after practice, not right in the middle of our practice time. But they're both essentially right. Ben's right: The originals are what we live for; they excite us and sustain us. We never wanted to be a "wedding band." But Doug's right too: Covers are the dance with the devil that we have to do until we can find another cushy originals-friendly residency like we had at K's or The Sports Page. / /

I don't know how we resolve this, but this episode COMPLETELY stole the thunder from my 21 DEMOS disc that I gave the boys tonight.

September 3, 2010. I just want to state this for the public record. The typeface used in the BASICS LOGO is BOOKMAN, in either the Bold or Demibold font — that's the part I'm not entirely sure about. The reason I say this is because I was working up a variation on the logo that inlcuded "Doug Cowen and" at the top and I had it stored on my computer desktop at work. And then my hard drive died. Completely. Couldn't get a thing off it. And now all I have is memories . . . and my memory isn't so good anymore.

September 4, 2010. Juno Lake / Camp Wildwood Hog Roast ($350 / band)

Our return to Juno Lake. When we took this job, I knew it would conflict with Notre Dame's opening game against Purdue, but I figured I shouldn't be turning down jobs, ya know? But we beat Purdue quite easily today (23-10, the first win of the Brian Kelly era), so maybe we should book more game-conflicting gigs. / / When we arrived the game was already in progress. I had my radio, but there was a wide screen TV on the patio where we set up last time, and there was a huge projection TV and a smaller set inside, all tuned to the ND game. That's good; I was worried the place would be crawling with Rat-Bear (wolverine) fans. It was already a bit cool when we arrived at 4 and we weren't supposed to start until 7, so Doug and I persuaded our main contact guy (Gene?) to let us set up inside, in the corner just to the left of the projection screen. Ben arrived and he told me and Doug to just sit down and watch the game while he methodically set up his drums. Okay, fine by me. Ken showed up — I guess everything is cool with him again? — and he said that Ben was "in a mood." I didn't thnk so. I think Ken works too hard trying to "read" people. / / Sitting around waiting to play wasn't so bad this time because I had the game to hold my attention. And the food. There was a big slow line for the food table once they rang the dinner bell, so to speak. I joined the end of the line when I realized that it just wasn't getting any shorter. Doug and Ben stayed outside so they could finish their cigars. I finally got my pulled pork and potato salad and baked beans and I'm forgetting what else, oh and a cupcake and I sat down with some nice people and the tail end of the game. / / Ken solld some of our CDs, which is a big improvement over just giving them away. He called me outside while I was eating to autograph a couple of them. One was for a lady named Darla. I signed my name in the little space that was available after Doug and Ben signed it and she thought my "Charley" looked like it said "Woody," so she called me "Woody" the rest of the night. / / Ben had a special little fan here tonight. There was this nice fellow with his two little girls, about three and five, and one of them took a big liking to Ben back in the summer when we played here for the retirement party. The little one kept coming around while we were eating and the dad kept trying to corral her, but she was all over the place. Then when we plugged in to start, she and the sister knelt up on backwards chairs right in front of us so no one would spoil their view . . . of Ben, I am sure. / / We started playing about 20 minutes after the game (we won). I made tonight's set list. Ben wanted more originals, so I maded sure that every fourth song in each set was an original. (That was our originals percentage back in the original old days: 25%.) We tend to lump songs together: a couple Beatles in a row, a couple Monkees in a row, but i realized that we shouldn't do that with the originals. Give them something they don't recognize and then follow it with an oldie they will recorgnize right away. And I think it worked. The crowd was most appreciative; they even clapped for the originals. / / We were so comfortable with the crowd, we played a little trick on them. Doug started it by offering a free CD to whoever could name the artist that recorded the next song . . . and it was FLIGHT ENVELOPE. They guessed all kinds of things. Nope , sorry, it was Doug. They acted all mad at us (I hope it was an act). Well, four songs later, I told Doug to make the same offer for LUCKY DAY; I figured that SOMEONE would have to recognize a fool-me-once situation. They guessed all kinds of things again and then finally one guy pointed at Doug and said "him!" WE HAVE A WINNER! I threw him a copy of the GUILTY CD. We shouldn't be giving the full-length CDs away, anyway. (It was nice that Ken actually sold a few tonight. Some extra money to split with Doug.) / / And they danced. Some were pretty wild, too. And the more they drank, the more they danced. The dance floor was mostly drunk women by the end of the night. That was kinda fun, except for the two women who seemed to be ignoring everone else — including us — with their little line-dancing routines. Okay, I was out there dancing with little rolly-polly 60s-ish lady during the instrumental break of my Kinks song, and after a few seconds of dancing, she got behind me and pretended to fret my bass with her left hand while hanging around my waist with her right. Ooookay, little too friendly there. (To say nothing of the really drunk chick who after the gig wanted to find out what we all smelled like. I didn't let her smell me, although it would have made this story more interesting.) / / At the end of the night, Gene paid us in cash and even slipped in an extra $50; it almost looked like he was prepared to pay us more. And he asked if we were available for next year's hog roast. Sure why not? We've never been booked a year in advance. I'll have to put Sept. 3, 2011 on the calendar. Is that another ND home opener?

September 14, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Layed down bass for DO YA LOVE ME? I'm never sure about these songs that Doug has done home demos on. I usually like to come up with something that fits my style of playing and complements (to my ear) the rest of the song, kind of more like a string arrangement than a rhythm track. So I'm never sure if Doug is going to be okay with what I play or if he's going to want me to copy what he did on his home demo. That was the case on ROCKIN' TOWN. I had practiced something that wasn't quite the same as the demo and as I recorded my track, Doug kept pushing me closer to what he played on the demo. That's why i was a little nervous tonight. Doug's demo bass was just a straight line of 16th notes (or whatever — 16th sounded good anyway) and I came up with a riff and some variations to play throughout the long intro. Doug was okay with it; he said it was like a Michael Jackson groove. That's good, right? / / IN GIG NEWS: Looks like we're playing at the Carriage House on saturday night. Adrian called Doug today to see if we were available. We all said okay. This is, what, our third gig this year on short notice? This should be interesting. All the al fresco dining stuff sounds ready to go. This could be our trial run for a summer residency next year?

September 18, 2010. GIG CANCELED AT CARRIAGE HOUSE. Julie and I went to Shipsewanna this morning to talk to Casper Hochstetler at Wanna Cabinets about making a new CD cabinet because we're outgrowing the two that he made for us in 2008. We made a side trip to downtown Shipshewanna and Julie showed me this cool music store where I played about a half dozen tenor and concert size ukuleles — one was even electric. It was cloudy all morning and the chance of rain was up to 40 percent for tonight. We got home at about one o'clock so I could prep for the gig and there was a message from Doug that we were cancelled already. Darn. I could have played more ukes.

September 21, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Imported tracks that Doug recorded at home. First for DO YA. Now I'm not so sure my bass sounds right. Then for SUSTAIN. Lots of noisy distorted guitars. It all sounded good, except for some really discordant chords hanging right through the big riff section. I actually tried to object, but no, Doug and Ben both liked it. Really? It sounds like it's interfering with the most distinctive part of the song. We've got this nice clean riff, and then — BWAANNNG — a funny chord that siphons off the attention. I seem to be losing this argument; that's why it's not Charley and the Basics. / / We ran out of time before I could lay down a track for my bass on the next song: FLOATING ON.

September 23, 2010. E-mail from Doug: We're stopping at ten songs so we can finish up and have CDs in hand by Christmas. So I can stop working on FLOATING ON. (But I still want to lay down a reference track so I'll know what I wanted to do when we do come back to the song.)

September 25, 2010. Phone call from Doug while I was getting ready to go to the Stanford game: Now we're back to aiming for 12 songs on the CD, but we’ll make it ten if we don't finish the last two in time to get discs pressed.

September 27, 2010. E-mail from Doug: He has sent in the art work and the final playing order to Discmakers. Now we're committed to 12 songs. Just what I needed . . pressure. Here's that playing order: (If I remember to add it)

ROCKIN’ TOWN

01 WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG

02 ROCKIN’ TOWN

03 PATHETIC NEIGHBOR

04 DO YA LOVE ME?

05 GREAT BIG SKY

06 NUMB

07 SHE LIKES TO DANCE

08 FLOATING ON

09 KEEP ON ROCKIN’

10 THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW

11 SUSTAIN

12 GONNA MISS YOU

September 28, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Between Doug's GERD and Ben's back problems, I may be the healthiest one in the band — for the time being. Started out the night with importing tracks that Doug recorded at home for DO YA LOVE ME? — lead guitars and vocals. Ben played us his new mix of the intro, with the instruments building instead of all coming in at once; I think it sounds much better that way. Ben wasn't sold on Doug's new guitar. He objected outright early on, but after repeated listens, he zeroed on on two passages of fills that bothered him the most. I think it has a loose, live-in-the-studio feel. Ben just says it's out of time. / / Doug also had new keyboard tracks for three songs from his friend Jerroll. They're okay. But, this is just me, I think we could have done just as good. / / Finished the night starting on the bass and drum tracks for FLOATING ON. It's another song that already exisits on one of Doug's home demos, which I totally ignored when I came up with my ideas for the bass line. I'm always nervous that I'm going too far off the reservation, so to speak, but Doug gave me the okay and we plugged ahead. When I listened back to what I thought was my best take, I realized that this is one of those songs where I'll probably have to just play little sections at a time and let Ben punch me in. I'm throwing way too much tricky fingering around in this one. (Tricky fingering for ME. My fingers aren't quite making the sound I hear in my head. It's like the same same thing that happens when I sing and my mouth can't make the sounds that my head thinks it should be making.)

September 29, 2010. Call from Doug: He just got off the phone with Marv. We've been fired from our three remaining Legion gigs (in October, December and January). Not exactly fired. Marv had some made-up-sounding story about booking some other band for our dates . . . yeah, right. Doug didn't fight him; those two dates we played so far didn't really go over well. But this one really hurts me because Nancy and Sue were coming in town for the next one on October 15 and they were gathering a nice crowd for me. Rats. That’s show biz, I guess. / / Also tonight, I called Doug's mom. He told me to call her about helping her buy a ukulele for Stu for Christmas. Shhhh; don't tell Stu.

October 2, 2010. Oscar Schmidt by Washburn Concert Soprano Ukulele, model 55332. That's the uke I scored for Gramma Cowen and Doug at Simple Sounds in Shipshewana to give to Stu for Christmas. I was kinda hoping they wouldn't like it so I could keep it for myself.

October 7, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Got down a much better bass track for FLOATING ON. Ben had to punch me a few times, but I'm okay with that. I screwed myself by making the fingering too tricky (for me). Then I had another of my percussion nightmares, trying to find a groove on DO YA with egg shakers, tube shaker, tambourine and finger cymbals. Doug nixed the tambourine. Ben played the shakers better than me, and he had me playing the cymbals on off beats and that made me totally NUTS. I felt really good after finishing the bass, but the percussion was completely demoralizing.

October 14, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Listened to the latest mix of DO YA; sounds good. Listened to my track on bass for FLOATING ON. Sounds stiff and mechanical to me now, but it got a little better as Ben added the guitar and keyboard tracks that Doug recorded at home. Doug did a lead vocal right here in the basement for the first time in what seems like a long time. And I did a tambourine track in one take for FLOATING ON. One take? I'm sure it will sound awful when I hear it again next week.

/ / Afterwards, Ben started a fire out front and the beer-and-cigars conversation took an unexpected turn. Ben is hardening his line on not wanting to play covers; now he only wants to play originals-only jobs. I don't know what those would be. And he says that we need another guitar player if we want to duplicate the songs on the upcoming CD. First, he's wrong on that; we are quite capable of performing serviceable stipped-down versions of anything that we record. Lookit what we've done with BETTY BROWN, A TRAIN AND A ROON, et al. Second, who would join as our second guitar player with no paying jobs lined up? I'm hoping that this is all just another phase.

October 15, 2010. The day my gigging duffel bag died. I was off work today because I requested a vacation day back when we were scheduled to play the Legion tonight. Sue and Tom were going to come in and stay with us Thursday night and then have a big family gathering at the Legion tonight. But all that got scrapped when Marv fired us . . . I mean, accidentally hired another band for all of our remaining dates. Anyway, I kept this as a vacation day — even though Sue and Tom decided to come in tonight instead — so i could give the house a good cleaning. And I did, too. Except for this odd smell in my music room. It was strange. I couldn’t even identify it. It wasn’t a dead-crittter smell; things occasionally crawl under our deck to die, so I know that one. It wasn’t quite like a natural gas smell. Julie got home from work and she said that she had been smelling it for several days. I went outside where the gas line entered the house and I called Julie outside, thinking that maybe she’d smell it out there, as she has a better sniffer than the one in my (now previously broken) nose. Nope. No smell out there. “What it really smells like,” said Julie, “is a banana.” A banana? A BANANA! I ran inside, now knowing where to look. I stuck my nose in my black duffel bag that I have used to cart odd gear to gigs since 1999. The smell was very strong. I ran the bag to the family room and started pulling things out of it. And there it was: Left over from when I packed for our last gig, which was canceled because of rain . . . forgotten since that day (September 18) . . . black and liquefied . . . gooey and sprouting little white buds . . . a banana, now looking more like an unfortunate piece of roadkill than the delicious fruit that it once was. Ick. Ick. And double ick. The duffel bag itself could not be saved. It was buried in a garbage bag with its new fungus-growing resident. I blame the Carriage House for this.

October 21, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Listened to Ben's latest mix of DO YA? Sounds good. Ben and I added Keyboards to FLOATING ON, in addition to the keys that Doug already layed down. I think this is the first song EVER featuring all three of us on keyboards. Are we Kraftwerk yet? / / Finished the night with Doug doing reference tracks for the next two songs: SHE LIKES TO DANCE and SPRINGTIME AGAIN. That will put us at thirteen songs . . . going on fourteen?

October 22, 2010. Ordered Tascam DP-008 on line today. I'm starting to feel a little sick.

October 23, 2010 (Saturday). Tascam DP-008 arrived by FexEx today. That was fast; those people at Sweetwater are maniacs. / / I'll need to explain this purchase eventually I'm sure.

October 28, 2010. Recording at Ben's. It was all about me and Ben tonight. Bass and drum tracks for SPRING TIME AGAIN and for SHE LIKES TO DANCE. The latter might not be a keeper just yet.

November 1, 2010. Recording at Ben's. A rare Monday night session; too many other conflicts for everyone on the other nights this week. Doug brought in a bunch of tracks he recorded at home for SPRING TIME AGAIN: three guitars, organ and piano. A most excellent piano (who needs Jerroll?). Then I tried out some percussion tracks using nearly every tambourine in my arsenal. / / Finished up listening to the bass and drum tracks for SHE LIKES TO DANCE. Ben says he needs to just keep a disco-type beat on the bass drum. That'll make it sound like a dance number. / / Was kind of cold tonight; this could be our last night to sit outside by the fire after recording. The topic of gigging came up again. Ben sounds like he's not ready to close the door. Says he thinks he just needed a break. That's what I've been hoping. Now we just have to find a place to play.

November 4, 2010. Recording at Ben's. (Mmmmm; McRibs for dinner. ) Imported bunches of home-recorded tracks for Spring Time AGAIN and then Doug recorded vocals. The song is, like, done man. Doug was clowning around singing part of the song like Tom Petty; hey, I think we might be on to something new here. / / I was expecting to have to re-do my bass track for SHE LIKES TO DANCE, but Ben re-recorded his drums and "Quantized" my bass and it sounded like a finished rhythm track. I may want to dub in an octave-finger-picking-thing in the intro though.

November 15, 2010. I'm confused. I was getting ready to record my bass for I CAN'T WAIT tomorrow, but now Doug says I have to redo SHE LIKES TO DANCE because something on my track is conflicting with the stuff he has recorded at home. Huh? Really? I'm just playing root notes all the way through, really. So I don't know what's going to happen tonight. I couldn't practice much because I don't know what bits I played the first time aren't working. (Or maybe it's the new guitar? I'm not saying anything until I hear the tracks.) And I changed my strings on Saturday, so I can't punch in over a bad section because my tone is gonna be all different now.

November 16, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Tonight we got to address the issue of exactly what instrument is out of tune. I'm often out of time, but I always try to be in tune. Ben imported guitar and keyboard tracks that Doug recorded at home and there it was — a "woooo" sound of the bass clashing with the guitars. Or the guitars clashing with the bass?

-- detuned bass by ear to open A's

--Ben found pitch shift thing in ProTools; first shifted my priginal bass down but then changed dougs guitars and shifted them up-- sounded better against keyboards?

-- have to check out calibration of Doug's tuner at home????

November 23, 2010. Recording at Ben's house. New mix of DANCE. Percussion for DANCE -- my new yellow tambourine. Doug added Tommy's VOICE to GONNA MISS YOU. Um . . . I'll comment on this later. / / About an hour of bass and drums work on I CAN'T WAIT.

December 2, 2010. Recording at Ben's. Listened to ben's finished drum track for I CAN'T WAIT. I was expecting to do my final bass track, but everyone was satisfied with the last take that I did live with the drums last week. There's one spot in the two breaks that i may have to re-do. We'll know if it doesn;t fit with Doug's guitar track that he brings from home next time. / / We spent most of the night listening to the latest adjustments in the mixes of various songs, starting with Tommy's phantom cameo in GONNA MISS YOU. // And Ben handed off to me some tracks that he finalized for my outtakes bootleg that I'm trying to finish before Christmas (this will be the first bootleg finished before the official CD is released).

December 8, 2010. Doug has sent the final version of the liner notes for the ROCKIN' TOWN CD. Here it is:

DOUG COWEN & THE BASICS

ROCKIN’ TOWN

All Songs written by Doug Cowen © ? 2010 BMI

1. WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG

2. ROCKIN’ TOWN

3. PATHETIC NEIGHBOR

4. DO YA LOVE ME?

5. NUMB

6. GREAT BIG SKY

7. KEEP ON ROCKIN’

8. SHE LIKES TO DANCE

9. FLOATING ON

10. I CAN’T WAIT (TO ROCK ’N’ ROLL TONITE)

11. SPRING TIME AGAIN

12. THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW

13. SUSTAIN

14. GONNA MISS YOU (TOMMY)

Recognitions:

Doug Cowen

• Sang lead & back-up vocals; played lead & rhythm guitars.

Also: Keyboards on songs 4, 8, 9, 10 & 11; created additional noise on song 12.

Ben Hahaj

• Played drums and percussion; engineered and mastered this recording. Also: Back-up vocals on songs 8, 11 & 14.

Charley Neises

• Played bass guitar and percussion. Also: Additional rhythm guitar on song 7; keyboards on songs 9 & 12; back-up vocals on songs 8 & 14.

Our Special Guest:

• Jerroll Lehman played keyboards on songs 1, 2, 5, 7 & 14.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Recorded at NOBARN STUDIO in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Mixed and Mastered by Ben Hahaj.

Produced by Doug Cowen

Made in the USA

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Note: There are no obscenities on this CD.

CD SPINE:

doug cowen & the basics ROCKIN’ TOWN 50/2010-USA

December 9, 2010. I finished my outtakes bootleg and I'm sorry, but I can't stop listening to the track I recorded last night: my home demo of SHE LIKES 2 DANCE (title altered to differentiate it from the official version). I think I did a seriously adequate job on it, but more about that later. / / The cover art is the photo of a yellow Basics handbill taped to a brick wall that I ran by Doug as a trial thumbnail of a possible cover for ROCKIN' TOWN (but he already had his own concept in mind). Here's my liner notes for the bootleg, which I am calling EXILE IN ROCKIN' TOWN:

EXILE IN ROCKIN' TOWN

1. Rockin' Town reference vocal and guitar with click track

2. This Place That Has Me Now drums with ref. vocal and guitar

3. Studio work on DO YA LOVE ME? — getting the intro right

4. Sustain rhythm track and part of lead guitar

5. Pathetic Neighbor reference vocal and guitar with click

6. Studio work on DO YA LOVE ME? — getting off the click

7. Great Big Sky karaoke version

8. Portion of mystery song started but not completed

9. Studio work on DO YA LOVE ME? — getting the verse right

10. Numb rhythm tracks

11. While You're Young drums with reference vocal and guitar in

original key of E; later changed to E-flat

12. Studio work on DO YA LOVE ME? — getting the ending right

13. Sustain play-along-at-home version

14. Not Billie Jean, not even close

15. Intro section of DO YA LOVE ME? — Doug's home demo

16. Rockin' Town online radio promo

17. She Likes 2 Dance; CPN's demo of 2003 alternate version

18. Doug's favorite toy

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Doug Cowen and the Basics. A product of Nineteen/82 Records, sort of.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

My additional comments about the record, for the record:

The title — The Rolling Stones released a massive reissue of EXILE ON MAIN STREET this year, so that's what got me going. And it does feel like we're a little bit in exile now that we're not gigging at the moment. (And it would make an EXCELLENT title for this chapter of my journal, although I don't want anyone thinking the chapter is about the making of the booteg.) I considered replicating that photo of the guy with the three — what are they? mangos? tennis balls? — in his mouth on the Stones' cover . . . but with olives in my mouth instead. / / This project didn't produce as many oddity tracks as we have done in the past. Having Doug bring in guitar, keyboard and vocal tracks recorded from home really streamlined the process and we didn't end up with a huge variety of alternative mixes and such. I tried to locate a live version of GONNA MISS YOU; I listened to a number of K's gigs, but I couldn't find it anywhere. We must have done it only on nights when Ben's recorder ran out of batteries.

-- comment on # 2, 11, 13, 17 --

December 14, 2010. Recording at Ben's — the last time for this project? We'll see. We added percussion and Ben did one backing vocal and we fiddled with the mix of I CAN'T WAIT. I dunno; I'm getting an odd vibe on this track so far. Maybe it's because it's new or because we don't have a final mix, but it just feels slapped together . . . it's more just a feeling at this point, can't exactly put a finger on it. / / Is this it? Are we done? I left my box of percussion toys up there, just in case. Doug wants to start recording a Christmas CD right away for release in 2011. I'm not entirely sold on that idea. / / On the drive up, Doug related some possible difficulty in getting the Discmakers "design studio" to pull off his CD art concept. He's paying them huge bucks to do the design, but it sounds like this "studio" is just some desktop operators pushing around pre-set templates and stock photos and clip-ish art. Doesn't sound to me like any actual artists or designers are involved. Doug's concept is very specific and very elaborate, so I'm holding my breath to see what they deliver. / / We made plans to have our annual Christmas party next monday at Barnaby's. Mmmmm; i can taste the green olive pizza now.

December 20, 2010. Barnaby's for Basics Christmas Party and then back to Doug's house.

\*\*from Ben: Neko Case LP (1967 Cougar!!) / \*\* from Doug: beatles mugs, coffee, wind-up flashlight

\*\*GAVE TO BOYS: Mojo tour tracks CD, Journal chapters 12 and 13, EXILE IN ROCKIN' TOWN bootleg, which we listened to in its entirety -- Doug was surprised that i had some of the mixes that appeared on the bootleg.

December 25, 2010. Got a call from a very excited Doug thanking me for the help i gave his mom in picking out the ukuleles for him (a Lanikai Tenor) and Stu (an Oscar Schmitt Concert).

January 2, 2011. I have now taken my first stabs at home practice on all fourteen of the tracks on ROCKIN' TOWN. I wan to get all my fumbling and re-learning out of the way before we all sit down to work on them at Doug's . . whenever that happens. Relearning my own parts from our CDs is sometimes a difficult process. Sometimes my notes will accurately reflect what I'm playing on the record. Sometimes they don't; that's because sometimes I'll practice a song at home and make extensive notes and then get to the recording studio and for whatever reason I'll end up playing something different. And that becomes a problem when I don't go back and amend my written notes to reflect the final recorded track, which seems to have happened a lot especially on the BITTER/SWEET album. But most of my notes seems to match up pretty well with the recording this time around. Either I did better with my home practice this time around, or the guys have given up trying to get me to play different than I normally would.

January 20, 2011. We did it. We played all the songs on the new CD all the way through and it wasn't half-bad. My practicing payed off. Ben obviously has been working at home on his parts. And Doug was mostly winging it, but they're his songs so he's got a bit of an advantage there to start with. Ben did a dirty trick on me. I told them that i hadn't practiced any of our back catalog, but he made me reach down deep and pull BETTY BROWN out of my butt. I was mostly okay by the second refrain, but good thing we weren't recording this. // Doug says the finished CDs should be here any day now. We need to nail down a time and place for our (first-ever) release party and then get in some more practices so we can play well at said party. We discussed some Big Issues for the party: Do we want to hire extra musicians for the night? (No, just us.) Do we want Scott to provide lights or use our own? (Our own lights are fine.) Do we want an opening act? (No again, still just us.)

January 21, 2011. The CDs are here! The CDs are here! I feel like Steve Martin when he finds his name in the phone book in "The Jerk." Julie and I stopped at Doug's after dinner (at Five Guys!) and picked up our copies, plus ten copies that Doug is letting me sell on consignment. (He did the cash outlay for this pressing, so he's the record company boss this time around.) / / This was my first look at the cover. Doug had warned me that the designers at Discmakers were balking at the myriad instructions that he outlined for them, so I wasn't sure what to expect. Based on Doug's description of his requirements, my mind concocted a streetscape looking much like a New Yorker illustration, so I had a moment of eyeball-shock when I saw the final product: vintage stock photo of the Vegas strip at night with some kind of late-'50s car on the left and the stick-figure guys in red on the right. Hey, I didn't know my stick-guys were going to be featured so prominently. That's cool.

January 23, 2011. Today the Bears (yay!) play the Packers (boo!) for the NFC championship. But first, I woke up to a writing assignment: Doug needed a paragraph or two of product description (and he added "bio" but I don't think he's looking for a full-blown band bio). He gave me an example of what the first line should read; it was something like "Doug Cowen and the Basics invite you to take a trip to ROCKIN' TOWN." Okay, that's a good clue of what he wants. Here's what I came up with from that germ:

<< Take a trip to ROCKIN' TOWN with Doug Cowen and the Basics. It's a magical place, this ROCKIN' TOWN . . . the streets are paved with gold records and the alleyways ring with tunes that are fresh and new, yet as familiar as songs you've known your whole life. There's a million stories in this town and a lot of ways to tell them, from fun traditional three-chord romps ("Rockin' Town," "I Can't Wait," "Keep on Rockin'") and energetic powerpop ("Numb," "She Likes to Dance"), to touching love songs ("Great Big Sky," "Spring Time Again") and dark explorations of modern life ("Pathetic Neighbor," "Sustain").

Singer / songwriter / guitarist Doug Cowen has been working the streets of ROCKIN' TOWN solo and with the band since the 1980s . . . in addition to his own home town of South Bend, Indiana. With Ben Hahaj on drums and Charley Neises on bass, they create a sound that's bigger than just three guys but just basic enough for one fan to proclaim "It's what rock and roll used to sound like." >>

Got that out of the way before I woke up Julie to go to church. Didn't want homework hanging over my head during the game. (Go Bears!)

January 27, 2011. Practice at Doug's. Ran through the new songs. In order. Twice. Doug wanted to omit THIS PLACE and FLOATING ON but I'm lobbying ti keep them, even though they've been two of the most difficult songs for me, too. I think if we just concentrate on playing simple versions of both, they'll be impressive. / / Doug has a call out to the manager of that place that used to be the Ramada Inn on 31 north, can't think of what they call it now. That's where he and Ben want to have the release party. We're sitting on boxes of CDs and we've agreed not to sell them until the release party. This is gonna be hard.

Jan 28, 2011. Got our date for the release party -- Feb. 19.

Jan 29, 2011. Gromit sick (we thought he was dying — he actually PASSED OUT in my arms while we were trying to hydrate him with an oral syringe). Practiced about 4 hours today. Managed to get Doug mad at me because I jumped the gun on copying his release party notification and sending it to my e-mail list.

Jan 31, 2011. Moved practice to monday night because we're expecting a blizzard on tuesday and wednesday. Ran through the whole new CD twice and stabbed at some of our old originals.

Feb 3, 2011. Had to cancel practice tonight. I have an ice dam and water is dripping in my family room. Spent two hours chipping at the ice built up over the gutters in the back of the house.

Feb 7, 2011. Finally, practice again at Doug's house. Ran through all new songs, plus 15 originals for the second set.

Feb 8, 2011. E-mail from Doug today. Now he wants to cut our list of new songs to only seven and incorporate them into a long-ish single set. I'm not sure, but I think Ben and I may have talking him out of that idea already.

Feb 9, 2011. Another e-mail from Doug: Now we're adding more covers to the second set because the management of The Waterford is expecting a group of people to show up around 10 pm and they were hoping we'd be still playing by then. So I guess we will be.

Feb. 10, 2011. Practice at Doug's. Doug was interviewed for a Tribune article today by Andy Hughes AND we got a review online by that Charlie Ricci guy again. Here's what he had to say about ROCKIN' TOWN:

<<Thursday, February 10, 2011

Doug Cowen & The Basics - Rockin' Town (2011)

the+basics+rockin.jpg

Bloggerhythms has been a fan of Doug Cowen and The Basics ever since the release of their first CD, Bitter/Sweet, back in 2003 and I’m happy to report that one of the Midwest’s very best roots rock bands is still playing and going strong. Rockin’ Town, their latest independent, self-produced CD shows the veteran trio to be at the top of their game and that is because this collection of fourteen songs rocks harder than either their debut or it’s follow up, Private Drive (2006). While there are a few songs from those discs that are stronger than the fourteen tracks featured here, Rockin' Town is their best complete package because it's more consistent throughout the entire album.

This time around The Basics sound more like 70s hard rockers than a 60s garage band and they are at their very best when kicking butt. The group proved this earlier with the opening tracks from Bitter/Sweet. Both "Does the Bottle Burn," and "Bittersweet Road" should have been played on rock radio, and "In a Crowded Room" deserved to be a smash hit. All would have fit in well on Rockin’ Town.

The new disc offers the boisterous "Do Ya Love Me," a track with a long instrumental introduction that needs to be played loud. Without turning down the volume "Keep On Rockin" Cowen channels The Beach Boys well enough to make Brian Wilson proud. "Gonna Miss You (Tommy)" may be the most personal song Cowen has ever written. It's about his close friend and former member of The Basics, Tommy Thompson, who passed away last year. He obviously misses his friend and by motoring down a highway that hard rock hardly ever travels he makes the song quite heartfelt. Other highlights include "While You're Young," which would make a solid hit single.

Once again, the liner notes advise the listener that there are no obscenities on the CD. That makes The Basics a rock band for mature listeners even though everyone else is free to enjoy it too.

Lead singer, guitarist, and producer Cowen wrote all of the songs and, as always, he is ably assisted by Charley Neises on bass and drummer Ben Hahaj who also engineered the recording. Together the latter two make up a rhythm section worthy of any major rock band.

The trio almost broke up a couple years ago. However, both their friendship and their love of music prevented them from passing into musical history so Cowen and the guys continue to prove that they are one of Indiana's top unsigned bands. It’s a crying shame that The Basics have never broken nationally.

You can find out a lot more about these underappreciated rockers at their web page where you can hear a lot of music samples courtesy of Reverbnation. You can also listen to them on their music player below. >>

Feb. 11, 2011. Practice . . . at Ben's this time. Doug and I took a side trip to The Waterford on the way up. The guys are right; the place is really nice, but doesn't appear to be stuffy-nice like, say, The Carriage House or pretentious-nice like Club Noma. Met Barb the bartender and our contact Ed and the resident tech-guy Mark. Found all the outlets. Real stage with a projection TV. Doug has a brainstorm to show the video while we play GONNA MISS YOU. I'm not sure. (It's a projection TV, so we'd pretty much be silhouetted against the video, plus i don't want to have everyone sit there watching us trying to get the TV working instead of playing the song, AND our live version of the song is at least a minute shorter than the duration of the video. Too many potential pitfalls.) / / Ben had been hinting that he was working on something new -- a surprise for us. Didn't know what it could be. Got to the basement and found out: It's his real drum set retrofitted to be an electronic drum. The cymbals are from the elcetronic set and all the drum heads have been replaced with those mesh midi-trigger heads just like on the electronic drums. And my first thought: Great, now we're back to not being able to fit everything in two cars. (Both Doug and Ben said "Don't worry about that.") / / The sound was a little odd at first. The PA and Ben's bass drum and my bass all needed a little tweaking and we were okay by the end. We got off to a rough start; we may have done WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG four times. I was ready to run through a set's worth of covers, but Doug says we'll just concentrate on a handful. And it looks like we're going to do our remaining practices here to get used to our PA again. / / I had the guys sign a CD for me and Julie to give to Steve Austin for his retirement from the Air Force (ceremony at Grissom tomorrow afternoon). Plus we signed about a dozen more to have ready at the release party.

Feb 13, 2010. Doug sent the final set list for the release party today. We'll see if this one sticks:

Set List -- Feb 19, 2010, CD Release Party

SET ONE

1. WHILE YOU’RE YOUNG

2. ROCKIN’ TOWN

3. PATHETIC NEIGHBOR

4. DO YA LOVE ME?

5. NUMB

6. GREAT BIG SKY

7. KEEP ON ROCKIN’

8. SHE LIKES TO DANCE

9. FLOATING ON

10. I CAN’T WAIT (TO ROCK ‘N’ ROLL TONITE)

11. SPRING TIME AGAIN

12. THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW

13. SUSTAIN

14. GONNA MISS YOU (TOMMY)

SET TWO

01. THE ONE I LOVE

02. CINDERELLA

03. LUCKY DAY

04. FLIGHT ENVELOPE

05. A TRAIN AND A ROOM

06. DON’T TELL THE MOON

07. IN A CROWDED ROOM

08. NOTHING BUT TIME

09. BABY RUN

10. SOMEBODY LIKE YOU

11. BETTY BROWN

12. SO LAME

13. ALL I WANNA DO

14. EVERY DAY RAIN

15. AROUND THE BLOCK

16. RED LIGHTS

17. CALIFORNIA SUN

18. DANCE WITH ME TONIGHT

19. AIN'T THAT A SHAME

20. ALL THE DAY AND ALL THE NIGHT

21. BLOOD & ROSES

22. BORN TO RUN

ENCORE

01. GLORIA

02. BORN TO BE WILD

Feb 14, 2011. Valentine's Day, and a nice romantic practice at Ben's. Much smoother than friday night. Ran through the first set and most of the second set and then through most of the first set again in about three hours, with no breaks other than to retune Doug at one point. Ben has perfected his special effects of adding sleigh bell and vibra-slap and tambourine sounds to the secondary trigger pad on the peak of his ride cymbal. Sounded cool. (It'll be evn cooler if we can pack all his gear in one car.) / / Scott Thompson called Doug today. Scott offered to do a light show for us. I'd almost rather just go with what we got; I'm getting nervous about adding extra complications, even though we don't have to get personally involved when Scott does lights. / / Discussed some details about the release party: Who should introduce us? Do we sell the autographed CDs for more? (And if so, do we charge people for autographs?) Do we hang out in the club before the first set or do we appear out of the wings for the first set like at a concert? Do we video the show?

Feb 16, 2011. Practice at Ben's. Last practice befire the gig, I think Not a stellar performance for either me or Doug. Not sure what that's gonna mean for saturday. I haven't told anyone — nobody, not even Julie — that my left arm has been hurting me ever since I worked at raking more of that heavy slushy snow off my back roof on Sunday. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. / / Sat at Ben's basement bar listening to BITTER/SWEET and the Tommy CD. (After Ben vacuumed the broken glass off the floor — we vibrated a glass off the shelf while we were playing.) Doug and Ben go into an argument about whether we are "professional" or not. I think they just needed to agree on a definition of terms. Plus Doug re-told a Tommy story that I'm sire I knew but had just slipped my memory: The last thing Tommy listened to was one of our CDs; apparently it was playing in his truck when they found him. And Suzie Q has the disc and she recently told Doug that she's been listening to it.

Feb 17, 2011. 8:00 am. From today's SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE:

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Basics relocate to 'Rockin' Town' in new CD

By ANDREW S. HUGHES

Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND — When The Basics released "Private Drive" in 2006, the band said it was done.

And it almost was.

Just after the album's release, illnesses and injuries sidelined two of the band's three members, guitarist and lead singer Doug Cowen and bass player Charley Neises, for more than a year.

"I thought, 'This is it. We've had a good run since 1982, off and on,' " Cowen says. "I thought, 'I'm done.'"

He'd said it before and should have known better.

One day in 2007, drummer Ben Hahaj told Cowen he was looking at buying a new drum set.

"I said, 'Are you going to join a band?' " Cowen says. "He said, 'Yeah, Doug Cowen & the Basics.' ... I felt I owed it to Ben because I've always pulled him into my projects."

Cowen formed The Basics in 1982 so that he would have a band to record the songs he was writing.

"In 1982, when we were young punks, I was headstrong that we would get a record deal," he says. "After a year and a half, Ben and Charley said, 'Whoa, we've got to put the brakes on this.' "

That headstrong approach might have made for a tight band with its four practices per week and regular gigs where it would play Cowen's originals, but it also made for a pressurized atmosphere.

"We were so serious that if we would make one mistake onstage, you could feel the tension," Cowen says. "But the reality is that nobody heard it out there. If you made a mistake, you could feel the anger."

After the band broke up in 1983, Cowen continued to record and had a regional hit with his recording of the song "Easy Love" in 1988, and former Monkee Davy Jones covered Cowen's "Girls Come Out" in his concerts in the early '90s.

In 1993, Cowen released "This Is My Life, This Is My Home" and, at 33, thought he'd retire from music, but WNIT Public Television picked up on the album and invited him to perform on its "Across the Dial" program.

Cowen's lifelong friend Tommy Thompson then invited him to join his new band, The Benders, and in 1999, the original Basics reformed — guitarist Randy Simpson left the band in 2001 — and began gigging and recording again.

"It's just more fun now," Cowen says about the band today. "We're relaxed and we're not trying to be the next Beatles or the next big thing."

But the band does continue to evolve.

Although the songs on its new album, "Rockin' Town," still have The Basics' identifiable power-pop and rock 'n' roll foundation, Cowen's guitar has a deeper and thicker tone and more of the songs contain layered harmony vocals than on 2003's "Bitter/Sweet" or "Private Drive."

"Do Ya Love Me?" opens with an extended, stinging guitar solo on top of a heavy bass line, for example. "This Place That Has Me Now" features shimmering picked guitars and layered vocals, while "I Can't Wait (to Rock 'n' Roll Tonite)" has the desperate urgency of early Cheap Trick, and "Sustain" has an angry, bruising power to it.

For some of The Basics' signature sound, "Keep on Rockin' " vacillates between a '60s garage band groove laid on top of a '50s rock 'n' roll piano and a Beach Boys-style harmony break, while only "Great Big Sky" has a breezy pop sound to it.

"I would say the title speaks for itself," Cowen says about the album. "It's more of a rockin' album. There are a couple of slower songs on there, but even the slower songs have a rock feel to them. In the '80s, I was known for doing ballads, and I wanted to do a rock album."

Cowen wrote five of the album's 14 songs in the last few years, while the rest come from throughout his career, songs he'd never finished and revisited for "Rockin' Town," including the title track, a song from 1993 whose lyrics got rewritten for the album.

"I thought of 'Rockin' Town' as a fantasy place where I can get away from what I consider crap," he says. "One of our slogans is we grab traditional rock 'n' roll by the roots and we like to prove that the great old formulas can still make great new music. That's where I'm coming from on this record."

But Hahaj, the band's drummer and recording engineer and mixer, had reservations about the deeper and thicker sound Cowen wanted for the album.

"He wasn't thrilled by it, but once he started hearing it, he got into it," Cowen says. "His only concern was whether we could play these songs as a three-piece."

The band will find out Saturday night when it debuts the album — from start to finish — as the first set of a release party at the Waterford Estates Lodge.

The album's release and the band's return to performing last summer, however, both have a bittersweet underside.

When Hahaj first proposed reforming the band in late 2007, he and Cowen spent several months playing together in Cowen's basement as a duo because Neises was still recovering from shoulder surgery. Eventually, Thompson volunteered to play bass, which surprised Cowen because he had always been a guitarist and front man, but Thompson and fellow Benders guitarist Lee Madison soon joined Cowen and Hahaj for rehearsals with a projected return to gigging in spring 2008.

"You should have heard it," Cowen says. "It was just fantastic."

Then on Jan. 30, 2008, Thompson died suddenly of a heart attack.

"He was scheduled to come by the next night," Cowen says. "I got the call and fell to the floor. I cried like a baby. It was so sudden and unbelievable. ... I thought, 'I'm definitely done now.' "

But several days later, Cowen went back into his music room, where he'd been when he received the call about Thompson.

"(I was) thinking it was all over, and I grabbed my guitar," he says. "It wasn't even deliberate. It was a reflex, and all of a sudden, I was playing this (riff) and singing 'I'm gonna miss you.' "

Within an hour, Cowen had finished "Gonna Miss You (Tommy)," whose lyrics reference memories Cowen has of Thompson, while the music contains a powerful guitar riff on the chorus and a tension-filled guitar solo that never quite finds release in its melodic theme to close it and the album.

"It's my tribute to a man who I dearly, dearly love and dearly, dearly miss," Cowen says. "I didn't intend to write a song. It just happened, and it wound up while I was doing it like therapy. I had tears coming down my face while I was writing this song. It was kind of like me sharing my feelings through my guitar. ... It was a very comforting feeling. It was a release for me, and that's when I knew I wasn't done playing music."

SIDEBAR:

In concert

The Basics release "Rockin' Town" with a CD release party at 8 p.m. Saturday at Brigid's Irish Pub in Waterford Estates Lodge, 52890 Indiana 933, South Bend. Admission is free. CDs are $10. For more information, call 574-272-5220 or visit the website myspace.com/dougcowen.

PHOTO CAPTION:

bilde.jpg

Tribune File Photo/SANTIAGO FLORES

Shown in 2003, The Basics -- Doug Cowen, left, Charley Neises and Ben Hahaj -- returned to Hahaj's No Barn Studio in 2010 to record the new album "Rockin' Town."

>>>

Thanks again, Andy. (Not sure why he opted to go with a picture from 2003. That's my only complaint. It's us recording in the basement and it looks like every two-bit teenage band they feature in the paper. They should have used the shot that Doug sent; it was a posed picture of us on stage at K's the night we did our Tommy tribute in 2009.)

Feb 17, 2011. 12:15 pm. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain.

Feb 17, 2011. 2:03 pm. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain.

Feb. 18, 2011. Today would have been my parents' sixty-first wedding anniversary. Plus it's Mark's 53rd birthday; that was always easy to remember. / / Last night I bought a new duffel bag at Dick's and I packed and repacked it with gear. Put batteries in my pedal and a new 9V in my bass. And I practiced. Again. Maybe for the last time before saturday. I remember this feeling from school: No matrter how much I studied before a test, it still never felt like I was entirely prepared. / / Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain.Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain. Please just be a strain.

Phase Sixteen:

THE GOOD STAGE

February 19, 2011. CD RELEASE PARTY FOR "ROCKIN' TOWN." Brigid's Irish Pub at the Waterford Estates Lodge. 8pm. (No pay, other than a $150 band bar tab)

GUESTS: Julie, Julio, my mom, Janine and Tim, table of Janine's co-workers, Karen and Steve, Jon and Adrianne and Kaylan, Sue and Tom, Judy and Julian, Diane and Dan, Len and Carol Kuzmicz, the Stuckeys, Lesleys, Scofields, Mihelichs, Frietags, Donita from MCO, all the Cowens and Freskes, Dawn's folks, the Gaskills, Vinnie and Carrie and Johnny, Mark and Val, Craig and Marlene, Lee and Sally, Jaimie Miller, Andy Hughes, Scott Thompson, Mr. Flannigan, Mike and Sue

<< I totally fucked up tonight. >> Okay, I didn't really. That's what I wrote in my journal yesterday, mostly to try to reverse-jinx myself. Maybe it worked? More or less. It was such a big day, I'm going to have to tell this story in bullet-points:

- Driving to pick up Doug and load the gear, I recieved a text from Ben: "room to spare." That was good news. I was certain he wasn't going to get everything in his car now that he was back to using the "real" drums retrofitted to electronic status.

- Doug and I packed up the gear. No Stu's guitar— Doug is going with WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG in "E" instead of E-flat. We practiced it so many times in 2 diff keys, all i have to do is start on the right note and I'll automatically play it in that key. The only thing up in the air by this point was Doug's confidence in hitting the high notes in "E."

- Arrive at the Waterford at noon, Debbie at front desk opened the side door of the Kitchen so we could wheel our stuff to the stage.

- There was now a baby grand piano in the corner near the old red British phone booth in place of the tables and chairs that had been there the other night.

- Dale Earnhardt Jr. cutout with birthday balloons on stage — for Ken from daughter Jen. We moved it to in front of the piano and I accidentally BROKE one of the balloons.

- Setup was slower than usual. Ben experimented with hooking up to their PA speaker; couldn't get more than one speaker at a time and it sounded horrible. Our desion to go with our own PA was eventually validated.

- Ken arrived — the birthday boy — with an assortment of autographing markers for us. They were a multicolor pack and I told him that they weren't going to work very well on our mostly-black CDs. Sorry Ken. But the kids will have fun coloring with them. I showed him the special silver pen for signing the CDs; it's more like a metallic paint than ink.

- Ben and Doug hooked up Doug's DVD player to the video connection on the stage, but player played slow and acted like the disc was jamming. Doug sent Ken to get other player at his house and food from Arby's.

- It was maybe 2:30 when we started sound check, was hoping to be home and napping by 3.

- I thought we sounded good, but Stu and Frank showed up and suggested more bottom or middle in the guitar mix; Doug thought he couldn't hear his leads with the bottom-heavy guitar, so Ben did more fiddling — I thought we sounded worse by end of the sound check, but Ben listened to his tape at home and confirmed that the sound was better; okay I'll trust him

- Big drama moment: I BUTTED HEADS with Doug over the video. The overhead projector wasn't responding to the power button on the remote and I strongly suggested that if it took too long to fire this baby up during the show, we just forget it and play the song. No, Doug strongly insisted that it was going to work and that's that — It was an uncharacteristic escalation of emotions for an exchange between me and Doug. But we were at cross purposes, the way i see it. He was determined to play the song in front of the video and I was equally determined to not let a technical glitch become the Thing That Ate The Show. (We later apologized for jumping on each other.)

- We ran through most of the first set, stopping at I CAN"T WAIT because Doug's voice was getting rough.

- Made it home by — what? 4:30; this was about the time I was expecting to be getting up from my nap. Layed down for 30 min, got to see Julie for about 30-minute overlap, frozen pasta dish for dinner, back out the door by 6:35.

- Arrived back at Brigid's at 7-ish, parked by kitchen door; it was nice this afternoon but really getting cold by now (freezing rain in forecast for tomorrow? No way!). Stowed my bananas with gear stashed behind the piano in corner next to red British phone booth (door screwed shut— we tried), poured my Gatorade into an oversized ND sports-type cup; figured that would look better than drinking it right out of the bottle.

- Table set up by the door to sell CDs, this would be manned by Dawn and Marilyn.

- Case of Irish beer (Smithwick's — pronounced "Shmiddick's") by the stage with a note of congratulations from Jim Cowen; Jim's benevolence resulted in our not using the $150 bar tab that was our payment for the night.

- The place was filling up with a lot of early arrivals. Dave and Pat Lesley were seated with Jon and Karen Scofield (the first time I've seen Jon since he got let go by Mossberg — I still have a little survivor guilt). Dave and Pat gave me a Batman figure that they scored at a garage sale. (That Batman caught the eye of Scott Thompson later in the night.)

- I tuned the guitars. Len and Carol Kuzmiczcame up to say hi. Terry and Paula arrived with gifts of cigars and chocolate. Flannigan showed up.

- plugged in the lights, hooked up my bass to pedal , made sure all my set lists and notes were in order, put extra picks in my pocket, put on my knee wrap (left knee, as usual)

- the plan was to be scarce the last 15 - 20 minute before the show, but there really wasn't any place we could disappear to, so just kind of hung out

- Doug asked Chloe to introduce us. She said yes, but then she said no, but then she said yes but then she said no. I gave her a line to memorize ("They're better than Justin Bieber -- Doug Cowen and the Basics!") but I told Julie to be ready in case Chloe ended up on "no." But then Doug asked Ken to do it and Ken said he and Julie would introduce us together; this did not need to be that big of a production.

-- Kicked in to WHILE YOU'RE YOUNG. In "E." Doug sang it fine. I felt a little off on the "ooohs" but the "while you're young"s felt less strained than when we practiced the song in "E." As has been happening at most recent gig, I was perfectly calm as we started but -- as also happens -- I get this little touch of jitters as the opening numbers progress. Don't know why, but this is a lot better than I used to be. Maybe someone gave me a post-hypnotic suggestion that I'm not aware of.

- ROCKIN' TOWN had been giving me fits in practice. It's that bass solo part. I did my best on the record to copy Doug's demo and it's a rhythm with the right hand that does not come naturally to me at all. I really practiced it a lot and sometimes I'd nail it when we'd get together and sometimes I'd start fine and then stumble badly about midway through. I finally developed a strategy of looking intently at my transparent green pick while I played the bit and concentrated as hard as I could on keeping just the smallest part of the tip as possible in contact with the "A" string and that's been helping me. I Nailed it okay this afternoon at the sound check, so my main concern now was to keep my nerves under control and watch the tip of the pick. We made it to the drum break, but then instead of the verse that's supposed to lead to the bass break, Doug went right into a refrain. Oooops; we all did that look-at-each-other-at-once thing. Where to now? Back to a verse and refrain, then around to the bass break. Well by that time I must have been so far into Emergency Mode that I forgot to be jittery about the solo and I guess I did okay. Oh, I did punt the final open "A" of the song, which I did numerous times in practice.

- We got back on track with PATHETIC NEIGHBOR; Ben had that vibra-slap sound going on his magic cymbal.

- We got off to a bit of a fast start on DO YA LOVE ME? I tried to signal Ben — we discussed a "signal" in practice; I would stick my tongue out at him if we were going too fast — but he never looked up. So we chugged right ahead. Doug got a little bit lost in the guitar intro, but I think we did okay overall; Julie told me that it was "better then the record" and I think we got our biggest crowd reaction of the night.

- Made my first flub of the night in the first refrain of NUMB. Ding-dang, there goes my perfect game, still in the first inning.But I did fine on GREAT BIG SKY; that was the song that i kept messing up in practice. Doing it back-to-back with NUMB has been difficult for me because I do some similar things on bass in those trwo songs.

- By this time Jon and Addrenne arrived and little Khaylan (okay, I never know how to spell her name) was already out on the dance floor. She was moving all night long.

- Doug dedicated KEEP ON ROCKIN' to his dad; apparently it's his favorite song on the CD. Mom and Dad Cowen did manage to get out on the dance floor for at least the final refrain. I did my finger-in-the-ear trick during the break that helped me during practice to hear myself in the harmionies but I couldn't hear myself at all tonight, so I hope it sounded okay. And speaking of harmonies, Ben and I sounded a little thin on SHE LIKES TO DANCE, although it sounded fine during practice.

- Doug told the story of how he came to write FLOATING ON, starting with a fishing expedition on Donnell Lake with Tommy and Lee and Lee's loopy observation that "it looks like there's white grass on the water." I'm not anyone know what that means, but thus the song begins. I think I played okay, except for a little goof in the last refrain.

- I CAN"T WAIT felt especially good. People were clapping in the break at the end even before my well-rehearsed prompting. And we had dancers, especially that one drunk chick sitting over on the left. Don't know who she was, but she seemed to be digging the whole show and she had a rotating cast of people accompanying her in her booth — first it was this guy, then a bunch of teens and twenty-somethings, and then it was Ed, the manager. (Remind me to find out from Ed who she was.) I thought she was one of the old Benders hangers-on, but Doug and Ben didn't recognize her.

- Doug called the birthday people up to the stage. This was totally spur-of-the-moment; I thik we had talked about doing this in the second set. He called up Ken (his birthday today), Chris (hers tomorrow), and Julie's dad (also today, but he declined to get up on stage), and we played HAPPY BIRTHDAY for them. I tatally overlooked Mark's birthday yesterday; sorry Mark.

- SPRING TIME AGAIN was good, just as we always practiced it.

- THIS PLACE THAT HAS ME NOW again started with the story of how Doug wrote the song, this one from a deeply philosophical comment from Tim Bennett. I didn't know that Doug was going to do a long introduction; I had started my "C" and "F" vamping when he started his story, so I just quietly continued while he told his story; I hope it sounded like the start of a Bruce song (that's what I was thinking at the moment).

- SUSTAIN, our prog-rock song. I always have to imagine myself as Chris Squire while I play this one. Hey, if Lee ever sits in with us, I can imagine that he's Steve Howe — that wouldn't be such a stretch, in a physical-resemblance sort of way.

- And finally, the moment we had all been waiting for — or dreading, depending on which one of us you asked. We drew back the drapes to reveal the big movie screen behind us. Someone (Stu?) dimmed the overhead lights. Ben hit the remote to turn on the proection TV. I hit the remote to turn on the DVD player. And on the screen appeared . . . a BASKETBALL GAME! This was not how we rehearsed it. Someone at the bar had apparently switched the input on the projection TV after we left this afternoon. Um, waiting. Um, not saying a thing, just holding my remote for the DVD player — that's my only job at this point. It really does feel like forever when you're standing ther doing nothing and people are watching (although later when I listen to Ben's tape, the whole gap was about a minute fifteen, which is still a lot of time in stage-time). While the scurrying to rectify our glitch continued, Doug started his introductory remarks, telling the story of Tommy and his connection to Doug, both personally and professionally with the Benders and the Basics. Then the basketball game turned into a blue screen. That's it. Excited, I hit the power to the DVD player. The menu screen appeared. I hit the PLAY button and the video started rolling. Doug was still in his introduction. And the video was rolling. Ooops; I realized that I should have waited until he was done. "Pssst. PSSSSST!" I tried to get his attention. "The video's going!" I whispered as loud as I could (or was it, shouted as quietly as I could?). Doug started playing about 30 seconds in. I kept glancing back to see where we were in relation to the pictures on the screen — we had no idea if everyone out in the club could see this or not, plus I had to keep telling myself to stand off to the side to not block the projector and make shadows on the screen. We knew that we played this faster live than on the record, but by the time Doug said the line "when I'm with the boys in the band," we had CAUGHT UP with the video. And next when he sang "and Scotty gives us a hand," there was the picture of Scott Thompson right there behind us. We could not have done this if we had planned it. Providence just smiled on us. I was so wowed by this that I forgot to play quietly on the bit that leads into the final guitar break. Just caught up in the moment, I guess. And we finished the song with time to spare on the video. It was still rolling when we put our instruments down for our break.

- The first set ran a little over an hour and the break was a big blur for me. Mike and Sue Mackey came up to the stage to greet us; it was good to see them, as we hadn't heard from them since the anniversary party in the summer. I quickly tuned up the bass and the guitar. I ran over being the grand piano where we stashed our gear to get a banana. Standing up, hit my head on one of those hanging lamps. BANG. Ow! They should not have moved the tables that were previously placed under these lamps. I quickly visited with the Stuckeys, the Mihelichs, Sue and Tom and their entourage, Jon and Adrianne (who were talking with Ben Hahaj). Karen Scofield stopped me; she wanted a CD autographed. Marilyn was at the CD table but she didn't have the silver pen that I left with the CD boxes that afternoon. Darn. So back to my gear I went to get the other pen. I bent down, got the pen, grabbed another banana, stood up and. BANG! hit my head on that damn lamp again. This time harder. So hard that i lost my balance and fell onto the stack of empty drum cases (glad they're not hard shell). I stood up — still dizzy — and bowed to the applause of the drunk chick and her full table of twenty-somethings. I found Karen again and signed the CD; I can't remember if I helped her track down Ben and Doug for autographs. I hope I did. Did I mention that the break was a blur? There were so many people there that I didn't have more than ten seconds to visit with any of them; I hope they all had a good time.

- Started the second set with THE ONE I LOVE withd the big Benders intro; I have to keep reminding myself to do it in "E" instead of in "G" like when we did it for A HARD DAY'S NIGHT. I did make one goof in the middle of the song, but I was so relaxed by this point I recovered mid-goof and it probably didn't sound like anything at all. Then CINDERELLA; I punted the first note and restarted after a split-second, so I hope no one noticed. LUCKY DAY had me back in my groove; now we're getting into the autopilot part of the night. Really relaxed by now. Or maybe I just have a concussion from hitting my head so hard on that damn hanging lamp.

- For FLIGHT ENVELOPE, Doug introduced Steve Austin and told about him recently retiring fromt he Air Force and how this is his favorite song. That was very nice. Karen and Steve got out on the dance floor for this one. A TRAIN AND A ROOM was good, as was DON'T TELL THE MOON; the drunk chick over on the side acted like she knew this one — who is she? Nobody seemed to know.

- Doug nixed IN A CROWDED ROOM from the list, but we chugged ahead with NOTHING BUT TIME, BABY RUN and SOMEBODY LIKE YOU. Karen's favorite BETTY BROWN got people out on the dance floor.

- SO LAME started out with my second biggest goof of the night: I've done this before. I played G-flat (okay, actrually F-sharp) instead of A-flat on that opening not where I hit the wah pedal. It sounded awful. Really. Couldn't cover up how bad that was. I'm going to have to practice practice practice that ONE NOTE! Okay, so I was rattled and it affected my timing and concentration throughout the song and then carried over to my BIGGEST GOOF of the night in the intro of ALL I WANNA DO. Instead of waiting for the end of Ben's drum roll to play the A-B, I just banged out A-B right over the drum roll and, being two chords ahead of the rest of the song, I had a hard time finidning my way back. I was okay by the time the first verse was underway, but it was my only occasion of that totally-lost-where-am-I feeling.

- Someone yelled "Freebird!" There's one in every crowd. Actually, EVERY DAY RAIN was next up. I thought I did okay, singing-wise. And it helped that all my sisters (and Julie and Janine and Chris and Ken and Patty and several other I am sure) were all out on the dance floor — did I mention that Brigid's has an actual dance floor? I finished to their applause. Doug introduced me and I gestured to the dance floor and said "All my sisters, everybody." And someone in the back of the room started chanting my name (really, heard it on the tape, too). So Doug went off the set list and started ALL THE DAY AND ALL THE NIGHT. How about that? My own encore. (It helps that I accounted for over 40 of the people there.)

- Two more Tommy songs: AROUND THE BLOCK and RED LIGHTS. (I thought I made a bad goof on RED LIGHTS but later when I went back and listened to the tape, it sounded like I was starting to solo but pulled back abruptly.) Then CALIFORNIA SUN, and this was the first time platying it out since I changed up the way I'm playing part of the refrains (listened to some other bands doing it on YouTube and I realized what I was doing wrong). Doug went off the list and started AIN'T THAT A SHAME and i had to scramble to get to my octave pedal; gotta warn me when you do that, Doug.

- Doug announced we had one more song and he started thanking everyone for coming out. I whispered that Ben hadn't sone his song yet, so he introduced Ben and we did DANCE WITH ME TONIGHT. As we finished the song, Sue came over to my side of the stage to say goodbye. As I was trying to say goodbye, I could hear Ben starting BLOOD AND ROSES. It was like we were in free-for-all mode. So I had to start playing and saying "bye Sue!" at the same time. Then it was BORN TO RUN and we kicked it good. That's it , we were done. Wait . . . encore? Okay. Ken tried to do his usual "BBS" roundup while we started BORN TO BE WILD. I told Julie to coax as many women in the place up to the stage as possible, but only Carol Kuzmicz was game. Bless her. We finally finished for real with GLORIA.

- At sme point we decided that we would come back and tear down on Sunday, so we had more than our usual amount of time to hang with everyone who was still there. We signed a CD for Len and Carol and I got to talk to them and the couple they were with. I settled a question for them. The friends thought I was slurping up a margarita all night from my giant Notre Dame sippy cup, but Len was certain that it was Gatorade. Needless to say, Len was right. / / I finally got to have one of those Smithwick's beers that had been on ice at the side of the stage all night. (Pronounced "Shmiddick's," so the girl behind the bar told me as she opened it for me — not a twist-off cap.) / / I was sitting with Janine and Tim and a bunch of Janine's co-workers when Julie came up to say goodbye because she was taking her dad home (Mom had already left with Diane and Dan). One loopy friend of Janine's said it was odd that I called Julie "Julie" and not "Sweetie" or "Honey" or "Dear" or something like that. Nope, sorry; we don't talk like that in public. (We have things we call each other at home, but no one but us is ever going to hear them.) / / I wandered back toward the stage and Doug was engaged in a deep conversation with Andy Hughes, who I thought was supposed to be heading to the Rock and Roll Hall ofFame tonight, but his plans must have changed. I grabbed another banana from by gear and I stood up and. BANG! Hit my head on that hanging lamp for the THIRD TIME tonight. I'm stowing my gear someplace else next time — if there is a next time. / / Jaimie Miller was there and we chatted briefly. He called me his "new favorite bass player." I gave him one of my personalized picks and that just seemed to increase his apparent amusement. / / Andy Hughes kind of looked a little lost when he was done visiting with Doug, so I went over and started talking to him. I showed him the modifications that Ben did to his drum set to make it all electronic in spite of its regular-drums look. I admitted to being dubious about it at first, but he really did a good job with it. / / Lee was also there, of course. and I spent the tail end of the night talking Batman stuff with Scott Thompson. He's a HUGE Batman guy. I gave him an assignment to find out WHY there were NO toys licensed from the recent Green Hornet movie, specifically a Hot-Wheels-type Black Beauty.

- That's it, we did it. I know we were rough at times tonight, but that's gonna happen after a five-month layoff. But we climbed a pretty big hill tonight. We set a goal to do the entire new CD live and we did it, in the first set no less. That's pretty big in my book.

March 1, 2011. Practice at Doug's. I delivered a box of that Smithwick's beer for Doug's birthday (phantom birthday neither on Feb 28 or March 1). A good night, we ran through nearly 30 covers that we hadn't touched in months.Got severely stuck on LAST TRAIN TO CLARKSVILLE; I have to go back and listen to the record. / / Afterwards, i think I polished off about a third of the canister of Doug's birthday cashews. Mmmmm, cashews. / / Ben says we have to practice at his house again because he has ANOTHER surprise for us. (I'm hoping it's Charlie Sheen's hookers this time.)

March 4, 2011. A de facto birthday party for Ben tonight at Brigid's. Music by The Reasons. The boys were good, but maybe a little off their game. John and Xavier are singing much stronger, but the attempts at harmonizing were way off.

March 6, 2011. Ben found this on line; it's our first bad review, I think. It's from a guy named "Greg," but I guarantee it's not our Greg.

<< As far as CDs go, it’s a good idea to keep things brief. Rockin’ Town is a 14-song effort from South Bend trio Doug Cowen and the Basics. The group plays self-described roots-rock and the band’s press-kit boasts that Rockin’ Town contains no obscenities, disco, hip-hop or Auto-Tune. That might be true, but Rockin’ Town also contains a ton of generic, by-the–book compositions that far outweigh the disc’s few charms. Debuts are certainly allowed to be uneven, but had the band employed restraint and more importantly, brevity, Rockin’ Town might not be so disappointing.

As with most things, it’s not hard to find positives. For starters, The Basics construct songs that have a good deal of timelessness to them. Like Texas’ Big Blue Hearts or New York City’s short-lived Red Radio Flyer, there’s a good chunk of Roy Orbison, Elvis Presley and Chet Baker in their songs. But mimicking one’s influences doesn’t automatically make a CD great. When the disc is strong (”While You’re Young,” “Pathetic Neighbor,” and “Great Big Sky”) there’s glimmers of promise that point to something scintillating on the horizon. When it stumbles however (”Keep on Rockin’” Do Ya Love Me” and “I Can’t Wait To Rock N’ Roll Tonight”) the disc is boring and utterly disappointing.

But that’s the end of the negativity. Truth be told, Doug Cowen and the Basics has been rocking the states of Michigan and Indiana for nearly 30 years. Formed in 1982, the band took a 16-year hiatus before reforming in 1999. Now 12 years into their second leg, the group is certainly doing something right.

The question remains, is it enough? >>

The web site is called Resident Media Pundit. Maybe Doug sent them a disc. Let's take them off the mailing list.

March 8, 2011. Practice at Doug's. Ran through two-thirds of the set list for April 2 at Brigid's. Doug's been scouting gigs: The Phoenix looks like it's gonna happen and Houlihan's is promising. But here's where it gets weird . . . The Monkees (minus Mike, of course) are coming to the Morris Civic this summer and Doug is mounting a one-man campaign to land us the opening-act spot. Not sure what to think of this one. (Craig and Kellirae and the whole EVERYDAY PEOPLE band opened for Loretta Lynn at the Morris a few weeks ago when the scheduled opened canceled at the last minute.) Okay, it's best if I don't think about it.

March 10, 2011. E-mail from Doug about that Monkees thing:

Hey Boopers,

I wasn't kidding when I said I wanted

to be the opener for 'the Monkee's.'

Looks like you bozy are off the hook.

I was busy all day yesterday trying

to make it happen. Here's what I

found out.

First of all I called the phone # that Davy

gave me back in '91'. I left a message on the

machine. Don't know if he still own's that # or not.

Second of all I contacted Craig by email and he

had no idea how to go about it. I also sent an

email to Chip Douglas. His response is below.

Last of all I sent an email off to Andy Hughes and

he looked into it for me. He was able to contact

the promoter directly. He found out that there will

be no OPENER. It's simple an evening with 'the Monkee's.'

They will play two sets and no opening act.

Oh well...no one can ever say that I didn't chase my dreams

down. I gave it my best shot.

BOOP!

Doug Cowen

Doug Cowen & The Basics (Reverb Nation)

Doug Cowen (MySpace Music)

Doug Cowen & The Basics (CD Baby)

Doug Cowen (CD Baby)

Phone: (574) 302-5270

From: Chpdgls7@aol.com

Date: Wed, 9 Mar 2011 23:21:38 -0500

Subject: Re: Davy Question

To: d.cowen@sbcglobal.net

Doug, I forwarded your email to Davy. Best of luck, Chip

In a message dated 3/9/2011 10:40:37 A.M. Hawaiian Standard Time, d.cowen@sbcglobal.net writes:

Hi Chip,

Doug Cowen here. How ya doing?

I've got a question for you.

As you know "The Monkee's" are

getting ready to tour and I just got word

that they will be plaaying a concert here

in my home town of South Bend at the

Morris Civic. I would love to find out if they

could use a warm up act - if they don't have

one already for this venue. It would be

so cool to be able to do that. I'm trying to

go directly through the Morris but have not

made any connections as of yet. I also called

Davy's old number that he gave me way back

in 1991. I left a message but I don't know if

he still own's that number or if he even

lives in PA any more. Last I heard he was

living in Florida.

In any case, I'm contacting all of my resources.

I believe the concert date is June 28.

I know it's a long shot but hey...what the

hell. You never know.

If you have any suggestions please let

me know.

Thanks for your time.

Doug

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Just for the record, I KNEW he wasn't kidding.

March 12, 2011. Drove up to Bridgman, MI, to see HEY ANNIE.

March 14, 2011. Sent out e-mail for the next gig:

<< Basics back at Brigid's Sat. Apr. 2

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

Doug Cowen and the Basics

will be back at Brigid's Irish Pub

Saturday, April 2, 8 pm - midnight

-- No Cover Charge

-- All ages welcome / Non-smoking

-- Full dining menu, casual atmosphere

-- Our new CD, ROCKIN' TOWN still

available for purchase ($10 -- cheap!)

Brigid's is located in the Waterford Estates Lodge

at 52890 SR 933 North in South Bend, just north of Cleveland Rd.

(It's the old Ramada Inn!)

See you there?

>>

March 15, 2011. Practice back up at Ben's. He has a new drum module he wants to try out; it's run through a Mac laptop. Ben says it's the best computer he's ever owned. Of course. Doug says that the band is like Ben's hot rod — he has to keep working on it and making improvements and modifications. / / Ran through the entire new CD and then picked up the set list where we left off last time. After the gig I really want to play EVERYTHING that we haven't touched since we restarted gigging. / / New business of the night seems to be talk about getting some kind of vocal effects unit to thicken up our backing vocals. Plus, I had us all sign copies of BITTER/SWEET and PRIVATE DRIVE. Why? Why not?

March 16, 2011. I'm not sure, but I think Doug just bought one of those vocal-enhancement pedals. Is this gonna be like those male-enhancement pills they sell on TV?

March 20, 2011. Apparently Ben has the new vocal pedal-thing nd he approves. Says he's eating crow because he was lobbying for a different unit.

March 21, 2011. Picked of PVC pipe and joints from Lowe's after work to do a little crafts project: trying to construct a frame to hang our "Basics" banner whereever we play. I think I'm getting there. It's wide enough (if the drums will accommodate it). Now I just need to make it tall enough. I need to measure Ben's head when he's sitting on the throne. Wow, did that sound weird or what?

March 22, 2011. Pracice at Ben's. Ben had Doug's new vocal gizmo (BossVE-20?) hooked up to his mic and mine using a sub-mixer. This thing does a lot, but we're gonna use it just to "double" (like the chorus effect on my old Memory Man) the backing vocals. A little bit subtle, but effective nonetheless. It has a footswitch so we can turn it on and off as we need it. // Measured Ben; the top of his head is 54 inches tall when he's on his drum throne. So I'll raise up the sign frame so the bottom of the Basics logo will be about 56 inches above the ground.

March 29, 2011. Practice at Ben's. I was running a little late because I had a 3:45 appointment with Dr. Moloney. He took a look at my ear because it still feels funny and I was afraid that my ear infection wasn't cleared up. He said my ear was fine, but I still needed to use an anithistamine to drain the gunk clogged up in the tube between my ear and sinus. / / A rough practice, so we'll play okay on Saturday? We'll see about that. Ben doubled the list of songs that he doesn't want to use the vocal doubler; I have to add these to my notes because I'll have the pedal by my mic. / / And speaking of doubling, I practiced using my "double" effect during some of Doug's guiatr solos. The tape of the next gig will help me judge if this going to be effective.

March 30, 2011. This can't be happening. We thought this kind of craziness was over. Ed called Doug this afternoon to tell him we were canceled for Saturday night. The story is that the owner (Mike-something, not Golic) booked some other act and we got bumped. That's that. That bites. Gonna stop now before I write something worse.

March 31, 2011. Still Mad. GRRRRRRRR!!! / / I told Doug that I’m going to keep practicing because when Jaimie Miller sees Doug’s cancelation notice on Facebook, he will offer to let us open for the Whistle Pigs at the Phoenix on Saturday. That's my fantasy. / / Turns out Ben already made other plans for saturday. Bad move, Ben; gotta keep it open for when Jaimie calls.

April 2, 2011. E-mail from Doug today:

<<<From: "Doug Cowen" <dougcowen@hotmail.com>

Subject: charley has esp

Fellas,

Just got in from running around/checking my emails

before heading out to watch the Butler game with

some buddies. Got this from Jamie Miller.

Charley has ESP.

Jamie Miller posted on your Wall.

Jamie wrote:

"Sorry about your cancellation, it sucks no matter the reason. Feel free to bring your guys to the Phoenix and play during our breaks if you need a gig fix! First break @ 11:00. Enjoy the day!" >>>

Okay, not ESP; just deductive reasoning — like Sherlock Holmes . . . or Dr. House.

April 8, 2011. Last weekday of my Julie's-Spring-Break vacation. Wild thing happened today: Julie was gone with Georgia and I typed out the lyrics and chords of a new song that I finished up earlier in the week ("SHOES") and then I started digging around for the other fragments of songs that I'd been carrying around in my lunch box for months and I finished the lyrics and arrangements for seven more (!) songs. I need to take more vacations.

April 12, 2011. Our return to practice canceled. Chris has the flu and Doug doesn't want Ben infecting anyone at his house. Plus, the gig mixing board blew up; either Ben's gonna get it fixed or Doug's gonna buy a new one. In other news, we're close to getting a signed contract from Ed and Mike at Brigid's for our remaining dates. Doug says we won't play there without it. And by the way . . . Ed says it was deadsville on the night they canceled us and Mike had to eat crow. Just hoping that's not a new menu item.

April 13, 2011. Doug received our contract for the remaining 2011 dates at Brigid's today. That's good news. And then he got a phone call from Mike, the owner of the Waterford, offering a New Year's Eve gig. Sounds like we get steak dinners, rooms for the night, AND he said to name our price. Doug's thinking something in the $750-$900 range. That's pretty cool. We've never done a New Year's gig before.

April 19, 2011. Practice at Ben's. Good mojo going down tonight,and a lot of storylines going on. I'll try to recap: On the ride up, I played for Doug the brand new comeback CD "2011" by the Smithereens. I just got it last week and it is most excellent. That got my brain in high gear, music-wise. (And then on the ride back at the end of the night, I played another new comeback CD "25 On" by the Rainmakers, also a very good effort for them.) / / Doug had news about Brigid's — we're off for New Year's; it appears that they had no intention of paying us any cash on top of the rooms and bar tab. / / Felt like an exceptionally good practice tonight, even after a three-week layoff. Doug started running us through a new cover song he wants to do: ROCK THIS TOWN by the Stray Cats. I'll have to pracrtice at home a little, but I think it'll work for us. And for various reasons, Doug wants ME to try singing NOT FADE AWAY. I took a stab tonight . . . this is going to take a lot of practicing if we're gonna do it this way now. We'll see. We trotted out a couple oldies that felt really good. I think we may have played our best-ever rendition of GIRLS COME OUT tonight. (I was using the "double" effect on my bass pedal, not sure if that any effect on the result.) Plus we winged our way through THAT"S WHAT SONGS ARE FOR and that sounded pretty dern good too. Like I said, good mojo.

April 20, 2011. It's been a long time. Lyric sent to Doug today:

BUSNESS

BID-NESS

THIS BUSINESS IS CLOSED

(possible titles)

Well, he worked that man /

'til the end of the day

And he screwed that dummy /

out of most of his pay

I know it didn't seem right /

but he got his way

'Cause he owned the business /

and he had his say

"It's bid-ness, son"

So my Daddy said

"It's bid-ness, son"

And I shook my head

"It's bid-ness, son"

Well I don't think so

"It's bid-ness, son"

THIS BUSINESS IS CLOSED

I got a friend in need / and I answered the call

To pull with the team / and I gave it my all

[To move a mighty heavy load / And I moved it all]

With his wallet in hand, he / backed me up to a wall

But I had to help my friend / so he wouldn't take a fall

[But I had to be there /to make sure he didn't fall]

"It's bid-ness, son"

That's what he said

"It's bid-ness, son"

And I shook my head

"It's bid-ness, son"

Well I don't think so

"It's bid-ness, son"

THIS BUSINESS IS CLOSED

The dollar's almighty /

and it's mighty good to spend

And what's a few dollars /

between a couple friends?

Keep the stockholders happy /

as happy as you can

But ev-ry little thing /

don't fit a business plan

"It's bid-ness, son"

So my Daddy said

"It's bid-ness, son"

And I shook my head

"It's bid-ness, son"

Well I don't think so

"It's bid-ness, son"

THIS BUSINESS IS CLOSED

April 23, 2011. My play date with future nephew-in-law Michael Mayne. He and Tracy were in town for Danielle's bridal shower. We hung and played guitars like a couple teenagers. Later in the day found out they're moving up their wedding date from December to June. Because Tracy is expecting. (Also like a couple teenagers? Not my place to say.)

April 26, 2011. Practice at Ben's. We're back on for New Year's Eve at Brigid's and we'll be getting $600 . . . and dinner . . . and rooms for the night. Whoa. This is almost too good to be true. / / Doug and I listened to the new Shoes Cd on the way up, it's not new, exactly. It's a collection of home demos of their frist two LPs. Yeah, I'm kinda nuts like that. / / Doug got his new 12-string. It's a Remini Italia (or Italia Remini?) — never heard of that brand, but it's a very good copy of the Rickenbacker and it plays really nice. Much lighter than my Surfcaster. He did the reasearch and bought it online. Wow, I'd never have the nerve to do that. / / We took another stab at NOT FADE AWAY and I guess it's getting better. The trick here is to figure out cue to get us into and out of all the different parts. It's a jammy-type song for Doug on guitar, but we need signals to let each other know when to go on to the next part. / / And we had a hail storm hit tonight. My car got pelted pretty bad out in Ben's driveway. Got a few dimples, and not the ones in my cheeks.

May 3, 2011. Practice at Ben's. Ben showed us his new Zoom video camera. There's always new toys for Ben. Now he's gonna video the gigs digitally. / / It felt like a bad mojo night for me. But NOT FADE AWAY is getting better . . . I guess.

May 5, 2011. New review in today from this web site: http://www.getreadytorock.com/reviews2011/doug\_cowen.htm

<<<<<<

DOUG COWEN & THE BASICS Rockin' Town Nineteen/82 Records (2011)

Michigan's Doug Cowen & The Basics is the kind of band that would turn a routine night at your local rock club into something a little bit special. And on the evidence of 'Rockin Town' they are only a good producer and a couple of songs away from establishing their own melodic pop rock niche, full of jangling guitars, occasional searing guitar breaks, cool harmony singing and an ever present sense of melody.

In fact 'Rockin' Town' is a pretty good record with a good time feel but one in search of the kind of edge and bluster that gave the likes of Tom Petty crossover appeal. The problem Doug has is that he doesn't quite want to ditch his pop rock roots on 14 songs that occasionally come close to hitting bull's-eye but on occasions settle for the predictable rather than the excellent. In fact this is album that flatters to deceive in as much as it suggests possibilities that the band are only happy to occasionally pursue, before retrenching behind a satisfying but unessential mix of rock boogie and pop rock. Its classic case of their glass being half empty and half full, and they don't help their cause by confusing the listener's expectations with the well crafted Beach Boys influenced 'Keep On Rockin'. It's the kind of song that stands in sharp contrast with their rockier efforts.

From the opening expansive chorus of 'While You're Young' and the guitar rush of the title track to the retro twang of 'Pathetic Neighbour' and the guitar rumble and big groove of 'Do Ya Love Me' the band appears to be trying to be all things to all people. Near the half way point on 'Numb' they embrace a big sounding Diesel Park West meets U2 approach, something they replicate on the broad sweep of 'Spring Time Again', with its Byrds feel on a song that stops all too quickly.

And if 'Numb' is a high point then the melodic 'This Place That Has Me Now' is a shade more contemporary with a clever double guitar and vocal melody line that sweeps along all before it. It's with songs like this that you feel the band really have chance of stepping up to the plate and this is compounded by the following U2 flavoured 'Sustain', with its big drum sound, compelling hook and more soaring guitars for good measure.

'Rockin Town' is an apt name for a band that positively leans into their grooves, who explore some impressive solos and works their way towards booming choruses. All that's missing is a rockier edge to help bring home the bacon.

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Review by Pete Feenstra

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May 10, 2011. Practice at Ben's. Ran through songs for Saturday. Doug previewed a couple Christmas songs that he wants to start recording for our Chistmas CD project. I tried to remember the chords to my HEAVY METAL CHRISTMAS song but to no avail. Oh well, wouldn't be a serious contender anyway.

May 14, 2011. Brigid's Irish Pub. 8 - 12. (No pay, just $200 bar tab)

Guests: Julie, Pa fa, Janine + Tim, Karen + Steve + friend Joe, Diane + Dan, Mark + Val, Craig + Marlene, Jon + Karen Scofield, Dave + Pat Lesley, Dave + Shannon Lee, Jerry + Steph Wozniac, Mark + Kevin Alstott, Ron + Cheryl Stuckey, Ma + Pa Cowen, Ron + Pam Florey, Stu + Frankie, Ken Wiggins, Jeff + Renee, a BRIDE and GROOM (!)

Bartender-lady: Barb

I think I might have a drinking problem. Last night I practiced for about three hours while Julie was at Mayfest with her dad. When I finished, I opened a beer, drank it, mellowed out and later slept like a baby (an actual sleeping baby, not the waking-up-crying baby). Is that a drinking problem? / / Left at 11 am this morning to pick up Doug and set up. He had stuff piled in the garage and I was able to put most of it in myf car before he came out of the house. But the lights weren't there. I knew what was going on — Ben a few weeks ago decreed that we shouldn't use our lights in addition to the parmanent stage lights at Brigid's. I disagreed, but Doug was willing to give it a try. / / We met Ben at the side door and took all the gear in through the kitchen like last time. I wanted to set up my new sign frame in the corner between the piano and the red phone booth. See, I made this frame myself out of 3/4-inch PVC pipe and joints and stuff and none of it is glued together so I can take it apart and reassemble it, so I'm still not entirely sure at this point that it won't fall down at some time in the night. That's why I didn't want to put it on stage behind the drums, at least for this first time out. But no, Ben insisted that I put it behind the drums. and so i did. It looked pretty good and wasn't as awkward to assemble as I had anticipated. And Ben and Doug were mildly impressed with my rudimentary engineering (and even that I had painted it black). / / In addition to the new sign, we also were dealing with a new mixer, new Mac-driven drum software for Ben, new backing vocal effect, new sub-mixer, and a new arrangement Ben has figured out for the monitors (he's rigged it so my vocal will come out louder in MY monitor and help me sing better — in theory). Plus, Ben was back trying to hook us up to the house PA; this still doesn't seem to be good thing, but he keeps fiddling wih it. / / Sound check concluded at 3:30, again much later than I had planned. But vocal mix in monitor sounded great. My bass sounded a bit muted, but I'll trust Ben's ears until I hear the tape of tonight's show. I got to run through my new lead-singing role on NOT FADE AWAY and I guess I did okay. / / Dropped Doug off at home. Went home. Fitfull nap attempt. Ate some dinner. Showered (again). Headed back to Brigid's and schlepped in my bass and Doug's guitar (we opted to not take a chance in leaving them on the stage like we did last time) plus my gatorade and bananas and a bag of stuff for Dave Lesley and Jon Scofield. Jon and Karen Scofield were already there. I visited with them for a few minutes and I gave Jon his sweater that someone discovered stashed in a cubby in the Platmaking Department at Mossberg. (Jon was not given very much time to gather up his stuff on the day that he was most unceremoniously terminated.) Plus i turned over custody of the stuff I brought for Dave: small boxes with pictures of trains that Dave placed on the viewing booth at work years ago. / / Tuned up my bass and Doug's Telecaster. Doug and Dawn arrived with the new Italia Remini (?) 12-string in tow and I checked the tuning on that. With one guitar Doug has tripled the number of guitar stringd to tune. Good thing we're just using it in the first set; I won't need to check it at the breaks. / / The place was filling up with more Mossberg people: Ron and Cheryl Stuckey, Dave and Shannon Lee. And three-fifths of HEY ANNINE were there: Jerry (and Stephanie) Wozniak and Mark and Kevin Allstott. (Curious subplot invloving Kevin Alstott and my nephew Joseph Wilson: Not sure if I mentioned it here, but after I saw Hey Annie up in Bridgeman a couple months ago, we established that Joe's girlfriend Jessica was Kevin's daughter. It's a small world after all, as those creepy dolls at Disney World have said all along. Anyway, Joe and Jessica recently broke up and I guess it got kind of nasty and now Joe is afraid to come see the Basics because he doesn't want to run into Kevin. As Rodney King once said, can't we all just get along?) / / Chatted briefly with Jeff and Renee right before we went on. And . . . was that a bride and groom I saw at the bar? Yes indeed. A groom in a tux and top hat (he looked like the guy from the "Monopoly" game) and a bride in a real-live bridal gown. According to Ben, their names were "K.P." and Gordon and they did get married that day. They had a wedding and they had a reception, and we must have been the post-reception party. / / We had a so-so turnout tonight; at least 50 people. It would have been a good crowd for K's, but 50 people kind of look like not so many at Brigid's. We were instantly spoiled by the packed house at the CD release party. And where was Terry Gaskill? And Ron Freitag? They said they'd be here but never showed up. They have some s'plainin' to do. / / We had a fairly smooth first set. Doug did some adjusting to his guiatr volume over the course of the first few songs, but I think it was pretty good overall. At this point I wasn't entirely sure what my bass sounded like coming out of the mains. My tones are a bit different because of the new board, but I'm going with Ben's judgment after the sound check — until I hear the tape of the show; that'll be the real test. About midway through the first set, one of the waitresses handed me a napkin. It was a note from Janine: "Are you going to play 'HAPPY BIRTHDAY' for Julie?" At this point, Doug was strapping on his new 12-string. We called Julie up to the stage and played our standard HAPPY BIRTHDAY for her. Yeah Julie. Ben asked her if she wanted to sing a song. No way, she said. Doug baptized his 12-string with really nice sounding versions of NOTHING BUT TIME and TICKET TO RIDE. / / Jerry and Stephanie took off during the first break. Mark and Kevin Alstott peppered me with questions about our gear. Like most other musicians who see us, they were trying to figure out where the amps were. We get that a lot. I directed them to talk to Ben for technical stuff. Not my area. / / For reasons that were not clear to me, we skipped MARY JANE, BETTY BROWN, and NUMB in the second set. Doug and i made a couple of goofs in the set; I personally think I was a little too relaxed and my mind was wandering a couple times. I noticed Mark taking pix with his big digital SLR camera. Plus, Julie was crawling around on stage to "get up in there" (Craig's expression) on Ben. "See Mark," I pointed at Julie. "THAT'S how ya do it!" I didn't realize that he was also filming at the same time; he got a good portion of the second set. I ended the set with a fair EVERY DAY RAIN and a pretty good ALL THE DAY AND ALL THE NIGHT. Although Jeff Sieg said that EDR was "better than the record." Not sure I'd go that far. / / Mark and Kevin Alstott took off after the second break, but not after Mark walked around the stage taking video close-ups of all of our gear. Mark says he videoed most of the second set; that should be interesting — hope I didn't goof up too bad. / / Ben skipped turning on his recorder before the third set, and sure enough, Doug played a MOST PRIMO solo on RED LIGHTS. Was bound to happen. We ended up skipping about six songs in the third set. I think maybe we need to plan out shorter sets so we don't end up throwing out big chunks of the show. As we were picking songs to end with, we opted to include NOT FADE AWAY and boy did I mess up this one. First, I actually sang all the verses, but I got them way out of order. I wasn't looking at my cheat sheet and they got way scrambled. Then during the instrumental break, Doug did the harmonica intro for the "Desire" part, but never sang the "Desire." Instead, he looked back in Ben's direction, saying "okay." Now, this looked to me like he was signaling Ben to end the song. I told Ben to start the "hey"s. He said "Hey!" and we "hey!"-ed along, four times, thinking that was the end. Ben and I stopped on cue. And Doug kept playing. So Ben and I kicked back in. I counted out the start of the third verse, still, I think, getting the words wrong. But we managed to finish from there. Another bit of the high-wire act of things going not-quite-right. / / I'll wrap this up with the biggest success of the night: My banner did not fall on top of Ben's head. Total success for my engineering skills.

May 24, 2011. Happy Birthday, Nancy (her 50th . . . get over it, kid). Shot our video for PATHETIC NEIGHBOR at Doug's house tonight. I'm playing the part of the "neighbor" in this video. My costume is a plaid flannel shirt, ripped up jeans and old work boots. I've been carrying these around in my car for about three weeks. Glad we finally shot it tonight; it's starting to get too warm to be hoofing around in a flannel shirt. And Doug had me working, lugging a metal signpost up and down a hill and heaving into the brush and then doing the same with large bricks, all several times to get different angles and stuff. Not sure what any of the footage will look like; I'm a notorious bad actor. Make that over-actor. We'll see what kind of cinematic silk purse Doug can make out of what I gave him. / / Afterwards, we got engrossed in the DVD of footage that Mark Alstott shot at the May 14 gig. And we ended up not actually practicing anything. Highly unusual night for us; I think we have a pretty good work ethic.

May 25, 2011. My left shoulder hurts. I think I threw that sign too hard. Damn that Method Acting! (PLEASE just be a muscle strain.)

June 6, 2011. Our actual first practice since the last gig. We've had a series of cancellations and interruptions since the May 14 show and tonight we needed to get down to business. Doug made up a set list for June 18 at Brigid's. That's Sir Paul's birthday, so we're doing an entire set of Beatles and that's where we got started. We were a little rusty in spots but mostly okay. Until we got to TWIST AND SHOUT. I don't thnk we've ever done it as a three-piece. And it showed. We got the instrumental parts mostly ironed out and then I crashed and burned on the three-part harmony "aahhhh"s. Oooohhh . . . YUK! And then Dawm came in the back door with Doug's old buddy Duane. And that's where we ended, after about an hour of practice. At least I have a list to work on at home. But I don't know what I'm going to do about those "aaahhh"s. / / Oh yeah, and . . . Doug wants Stu to join the band.

June 7, 2011. Here's my text for a Facebook entry that I posted today:

The Basics MEET THE BEATLES

at Brigid's -- June 18, starting 8 pm

In honor of Paul McCartney's birthday,

THE BASICS will play an ALL-BEATLES

2nd set. Come Twist and Shout the night away!

(I might have to take my HOFNER bass out

of mothballs for this one.)

June 8, 2011. E-mail to Kurt today:

Kurt -- i know this is a long way to come just to hear some noise, but if there's anychance you're gonna be in town, we're doing something special for our gig at Brigid's on Sat. June 18: In honor of Sir Paul's birthday, we're going to play an All-Beatles second set. We made this decision a little too late to include it in my mass e-mailing last week. Bring the whole family -- it's an actual restaurant, not like a seedy bar-thing. (And if you must know, YEAH, I'm trying to hustle people out this time because all my family will be out of town for a wedding and I'm trying to make up for what I'm imagining will be a lot of empty seats.)

June 9, 2011. Practiced at home the last two nights, and my left arm is hurting like mad. I am totally freaking out. Took a leftover Naproxin this morning; not sure how many I have left. Once said I would hang myself in the basement before I went through another round of shoulder surgery and physical therapy.

June 11, 2011. Spent much of the afternoon practcing at home for next week's gig. I found a way to practice hitting my note in the crucial "aaahhhh" section of TWIST AND SHOUT. I hope it works with all the band playing aloing. Now the bad news: I made a HUGE mistake about a year ago when i put roundwound strings on my Hofner. It's making fret noises that it never made with the flatwounds. I wanted to play it for at least part of our Beatles set, but now I'm not sure I should play it at all. I gotta find flat strings (plus short scale and light gauge — this is gonna be tough) before then.

June 13, 2011. E-mail that I sent to Mike and Chris today. I'm desperately trying to hustle people out because I'm terrified of too many no-shows.

<<Hi Chris and Mike --

I understand the lady-folk are having a shower for Kristi on Friday the 17th . . . so i just wanted to get a word in early in case you are planning any kind of gathering, meet-up, bachelor-do for saturday the 18th and you're looking for a nice place to hold it. Have I got the place for you . . . you KNEW I'd say Brigid's because we'll be playing there 8 to midnight (with the added bonus of an all-Beatles 2nd set just for that night). OKAY, I know it looks like s SHAMELESS HUSTLE on my part, but it's really just a brother trying to do his part for the party planning (entertainment division). >>

June 14, 2011. Practice at Doug's. Finally. A good serious practice. Ran through all of sets one and two and highlights of three. Gonna do it again on Thsursday. If we do this weel on Saturday, we'll be fine. I even nailed my "aaahhh"s on TWIST AND SHOUT. / / E-mail from Amazon today. My flat strings shipped at 1 am this morning. Now the clock is running. By Monday I had made runs to Guitar Center, Woodwind and El Vegas; not one of them had the strings I need. And I can still remember walking into RD Music in 1980 and scoring exactly the strings I needed for that bass.

June 15, 2011. Today's posting on my FACEBOOK page:

<<DOUG COWEN & THE BASICS will play an ALL-BEATLES 2nd set on Sat. June 18, 8 pm, at Brigid's (inside the Waterford Estates Lodge on 933 N. -- contact me if you need directions). A SPLENDID TIME IS GUARANTEED FOR ALL. (No cover charge and screaming for your favorite Beatle is allowed.)>> / / Later in the day, my sister Sue posted "PAUL! PAUL! PAUL!"

June 16, 2011. Got my hair cut last night. Should have left it long for the Beatles Tribute, but what the heck. I needed it bad. / / I'm fretting over waiting for new strings for the Hofner. That's keeping me from fretting about how much my shoulder hurts. But the upside is that it keeps me from fretting about playing in a few days. / / Practice at Doug's tonight. Ran through the entire Beatles set with my Hofner and it wasn't too bad at all. The guys told me to keep these strings on even if the flats arrive in time. I tried out different settings on the pedal to optimize my sound, but I think mostly I'll just have to goose the volume about ten point to compensate for the weaker signal compared to my Precision. That was the longest i had played the Hofner in years. I reacclimated to the short scale okay, but switching back to the Precision was really weird; my hands didn't want to go back to the long-scale neck. Doug will play his 12-string for about half of the Beatles set and switch to the Telecaster. When he played the 12-string lead on A HARD DAY'S NIGHT, my hair stood on end — it sounded just like the record. / / Doug's news for tonight: Stu will start practicing with us next week to sit in on the July 16 Brigid's gig.

June 18, 2011. Brigid's Irish Pub. 8 pm to midnight. (no pay)

Guests:Jim and Jackie Huber, Mark and Kevin Alstott and 3 women, Dawn's folks and a table of people, Stu and a table of kids, Doug's friend Bob and his family, The whole Wiggins clan, Dave and Pat Lesley, Jule and Pa Fa and Janine and Tim, Angie Paris and her guy-friend, some guy named Jay Parker, Mark and Val, Craig, Yvonne and John and their family

Bartender: Barb, Mangaer: Ed

I gotta get more sleep the night before we do these things. Don't know why I've been stayng up late on friday nights these days. I blame the new reclining couch that Julie and I bought; it's just too comfortable to sit there watching TV, recline it a little, lay my head back, recline it some more, doze a bit. The next thing I know, it's one in the morning and we drag ourselves upstairs, brush our teeth, go to bed and then I lay there awake trying to get back to sleep. That's it; it's the couch's fault. / / I got my gear ready to go today as usual, with some new twists: I have the Hofner all ready to go for our special Beatles set. I'm going with the ill-advised round-wound strings after all. Plus I took down the Beatles rag dolls that I bought for Julie years ago (at Scottsdale Mall — THAT's how long ago it was) and dusted them off. And boy, did they need dusting. Those raggedy mop-tops had been on top of Julie's bookshelf in her doll room ever since we moved into this house and they were caked in dust. I took off their little guitars and cleaned those and then I took each doll out to the driveway and smacked at them with a dusting rag. I'm sure it looked like I was abusing little black-suited babies; I hope the neighbors weren't watching. / / Setup was still slow. That big piano (a baby grand? but still big to me) was sitting on the dance floor. Doug and I had to roll it over to the side by ourselves. There was a wedding going on the the big ballroom next door. We asked Ed if it was okay for us to do a sound check and he said yes. Ed even joined in; at one point Doug let him play the Telecaster and he cranked it up and we did some wild Neil-Young-type jamming. / / We first tried out sound with Telecaster and Precsion then switched to 12-string and Hofner. Doug wasn't sure about using the 12; he's having second thoughs. On the Hofner I mostly fiddled with my tone control and pickup selector and I settled on middle position with the tone slightly on the treble side. My new flat Rotosounds arrived yesterday, but I didn't put them on; didn't want to change after practice went so well on thursday. Plus I worked really heard to get the panel off the back of the Hofner to put in a 9V battery for the preamp; I tested it out and the preamp did not work at all, even tried a couple different batteries; no luck, so I sealed it back up again with no battery inthe compartment and I guess it's gonna stay that way. / / I was STARVING by this point — I have to pack a lunch when we set up at noon. Pack a lunch and get more sleep the night before. / / Ben made an interesting comment: He gave us a guitar stringing tip, which is funny because he has no strings to change himself. He heard that we should change one string at a time to maintain the tension across the neck — I knew that one. Doug says he takes all strings off and cleans fretboard; I wipe down the fretboad in the space of each missing string as I go. BUT THIS REMINDED ME OF FIRST TIME I CHANGED STRINGS on Hofner: took off all 4 strings and the BRIDGE FELL OFF! I did not know it was held in place by the tension of the strings. That was a huge scare. / / We were setting up and checking sound until four o'clock. It was raining when I drove home. There wasn't much time for a nap (again!), so I pretty much showered, ate and headed back to Brigid's (Doug rode with Dawn) The first thing I did was tune the basses; I set the Hofner on a stand next to the baby grand and under one of those hanging lights so it looked like it was on special display — someone asked me if it was just for show or if I was going to play it. Silly question. I didn't tell Julie to do so, but she did get a picture of it. / / Jim and Jackie arrived early. first thing Jim noticed was the drums. Hey, he sadi, Ben has his acoustic drums back. Not quite, so I had to explain. Later in the night — it must have been in the beak after the second set — Jackie remarked on our rendition of BABY IT'S YOU and sha said her favorite version was Dusty Springfield's. Dusty Springfield covered that? I asked. Yeah, said Jackie; and then she started singing the slow, sultry "Smith" version. So I HAD to set her straight on that one. Sorry Jackie. / / We had a moderate crowd tonight, maybe fifth to sixty people throughout the course of the night. Of course, it's big room so that doesn't look like that much. / / During the frist set, Ken requested DON'T TELL THE MOON so he could slow dance with Patty. Ben said my defretter patch sounded distorted. Not sure why that would happen. Also in the first set, we dedicated BORN TO RUN to Clarence Clemons, who had a stroke last week. {We found out after the show that Clarence died tonight.] / / I was sweating like mad — I could feel my brain not working right; I went to change my patch setting for BOTTLE and I don't know WHAT I changed, because when I hit the pedal for the Phase effect, it was still on Double; other than that, I thought we pulled off BOTTLE very well after not playing it much ever. My biggest goof of the first set was that I started AROUND THE BLOCK on E instead of open A; ow-my brain! I really think I was starting to dehydrate at this point. Maybe I need to start bring THREE bottles of Gatorade. / / DOUG kicked ass n the soloing on RED LIGHTS as usual and DO YA LOVE ME? felt very powerful tonight; I think those were the hihg points of the first set. / / During the break, I tuned Doug's 12-string; it was mostly okay. I made the rounds for a quick schmooze with everyone. Dave and Pat were leaving; Pat hates the Beatles and Dave had been hiding my e-mail notices from her all week so she wouldn't know. I ate two bananas and refilled my Gatorade cup. I tuned my Hofner. Jim motioned me over so he could touch it. It's like a holy relic; I'm sure he remembers when i first brought it over to his basement in 1980. Then I went to talk to Craig at the bar. One of the waitresses said "oooh, pretty guitar!" and I told her that it was the prettiest thing I ever touched until my wife came along. Craig made one of those curious looks of his and then blurted out "I thought your wife came along FIRST." Yeah, okay. Ruin a good line, will ya? (Craig knows too much.) / / The Beatles set went exceedingly wel. The 12-string was good, the Hofner sounded okay in mix — the tape will tell, though. We got some big hands for the first few songs and someone out there yelled "Beatles Reader!" Really they did. Doug switched to his Telecaster after THINGS WE SAID TODAY and I made some remarks about the songs by their favorite artists that the Beatles covered, like Little Rich and Carl Perk and this guy — who barely anybody knows today: Larry Williams (SLOW DOWN). Ben tried to interject about THE BEATLES READER, but I hushed him up. I have a complicated relationship with my own publishing history. I only made some flubs in BABY IT'S YOU; some of my sha-lal-a's were off (I'll hear from Ben on this) and I took a bit of chord detour in the bridge. Kids (Stu and his crodwd) hit dance floor at end of Beatles set — TWIST AND SHOUT, I SAW HER STANDING THERE, SHE LOVES YOU — we should have kept going, but we took a break. / / During the 2nd break I had a weird encounted with a man who I think identified himself as Jay Parker. Looked to be mid-60s, maybe 70-ish? Was a little tipsy and he REALLY wanted to talk to me . . . about how it . . . FEELs . . . to make music, like . . . THAT. It was a bit like how I imagine a conversation would go with Lee Madison when he gets to be that age. Not sure who this guy is, but he says he's seen us here before and he'll be back when we play again in July. / / Also during the break, Ken was wandering around with Ben's set list, saying "We need more BBS songs!" I told Ken that Ben would need his set list back. And of course, when we got to the stage for the 3rd set, Ben STILL didn't have his lsit, so we had to page Ken over the PA. / / Doug and I made the same goof on JUST LIKE ME; we both went for the long pause at the end of the final verse instead of going right into the ending. Ben did his best to follow our goof. / /Tim got mad that Stu's gang got up and left in the middle of Doug's awesome soloing on BLOOD AND ROSES; like they didn't even notice how great Doug was playing. I guess we didn't take it as personally as he did. And speaking of Stu, Doug announced at the end of the night that we would have a speacial guest next time: Stu Cowen. / / While we were packng up, a woman with no hair came up and greeted me with a big hug and she told me how great we were and how she's SO GLAD she finally got to come and see us and . . . and . . and WHO is this person?! Okay, maybe it was the residual dehydration from earlier in the night, but it took me longe than it should have to recognize Julie cousin Bill's daughter Angie (with no hair!). She had hair the last time I saw her. She took part in one of those charities where you take donations for a cancer charity and they chop off your hair, I think to make wigs for Chemo patients — Julie and I even sponsored her. It was nice that she and her boyfriend made the trip out (I think she lives in Bristol). / / At the end of the night, Barb says we overdrew our bar tab — what? we hardly drank anything and only Jule and Dawn ate meals on the tab — or so we thought. TURNS OUT that the young waitress, I think she's new, was asking everyone who showed up if they were "with the band." Julie saw this happening. Janine and Tim said no, but who knows who said "yeah, we're with the band!" not knowing that it would get them added to the band's tab. So we needd a new system here, like just giving Barb a list of names; that should be easy.

June 21, 2011. Doug asked today for a two-paragraph description of our music, I think to give to potential venues. Haven't I done this before? Here goes . . .

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Doug Cowen and the Basics play a mix of rootsy, traditional, and British Invasion rock and roll with the same energy and enthusiasm that they had as twenty-somethings (we won't say how many years ago). Each show also includes a generous serving of the band's own songs -- retro-originals that blend seamlessly with the more familiar radio classics. The members of the band have been friends for decades and their chemistry and shared sense of fun are a key ingredient of every performance.

Doug Cowen has been a locally known recording artist since 1982 and he has numerous CDs to his credit, both solo and with The Basics. The latest, "ROCKIN' TOWN," was released in 2011 on his own NINETEEN/82 RECORDS label. Ben Hahaj on drums and Charley Neises on bass fill out the sound for the band's high-energy approach to basic rock and roll.

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And then tonight we had our first practice with Stu. He has a lot of our material down already; he played rhythm, some leads, sang GLORIA and WHAT I LIKE ABOUT YOU, and even nailed my guitar fills from EVERY DAY RAIN.

June 27, 2011. Message to Kris N.-- (regarding this week's release of his new CD "HEART SCARF")

Kris,

I just downloaded HEART SCARF this morning. I'm listening to it in bits and chunks between my tasks at work, and it's time for me to write another fan letter. I CANNOT convey just how much excitement I get when I hear your new songs. I feel bad that I got a free download; I'll make it up to you by trading a copy of the new Basics CD next time I'm in Dayton, okay? What I really need to be producing -- instead of another Basics record -- is MY OWN stuff. Have I said this before? I know how much work YOU have to put into a project like this; add that to parenting your kids and I get nothing but mad at myself for my own laziness for not even TRYING to make decent recordings of the dozen or so songs that I've written in the last year. / / Wait, sorry . . . this was supposed to be about YOUR stuff. Color me excited. Color me inspired. Color me whatever color you have reserved for the charter members of your fan club.

-- charley

July 5, 2011. Practice at Doug's with Stu again.

July 7, 2011. Practice at Doug's with Stu again, again. Chris's baby chicks arrived this morning. She called during practice and told Ben that she thinks she just fed them quick-dry concrete mix instead of sand (for their little gizzards?). Ben took off early (turns out she gave them sand that was stored in a concrete bag). "Are the baby chicks gonna be okay Uncle Lar? . . ." / / Ben bought a white bass drum head that I'm taking home so Julie can paint on it a Basics logo and the stick-figure guys.

July 8, 2011. Hey, I'm a Video Star, just like the old Touchtones song said! Doug dropped the video for PATHETIC NEIGHBOR today, and baby I'm a star (Prince). I hear that playing against type is the way to get one of them acting awards.

July 12, 2011. Last practice at Doug's before the gig.

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CONTINUED IN “Charley’s Stuff > Journal Work Part 3” (AND BEYOND>>>>>)-- ON HARD DRIVE on MAC AT WORK. See Brian Finch or Matt Griggs.-- love, cpn 10/26/11

THE PHASES

Phase One: SITTING OUT / SITTING IN

Phase Two: BREAKING IN THE NEW GUY

Phase Three: A BAND AT WORK AND PLAY

Phase Four: THE BEST SUMMER

Phase Five: GUILT COMPLEX

Phase Six: A TALE OF TWO BANDS

Phase Seven: THE CROWDED ROOM

Phase Eight: BEN THERE / DOUG THAT

Phase Nine: THE BITTER AND THE SWEET

Phase Ten: MEDICAL HISTORY TOUR

(Or: RUDE AWAKENING)

Phase Eleven: PRIVATE DRIVING

Phase Twelve: EPILOGUE; THE END OF THE BASICS

Phase Thirteen: THE THING THAT WOULD NOT DIE

Phase Fourteen: A YEAR AT K’s

Doug and Ben,

Here’s another chapter in the continuing saga of . . . me. If for any reason this saga ceases to continue, you may find the complete journal (most likely with the most recent yet-unprinted portions) on the hard drive of my iMac at home.

To navigate to the journal:

Desktop > Documents > CPN Documents > Charley > Basics > \*BASICS DIARY [v6.0].cwk

Craig is Mac-savvy if you need any help.

-- cpn