

= Bill Szymczyk =

William Frank " Bill " Szymczyk ( / ʒsʔmzʔk / ; born February 13 , 1943 ) is an American music producer and technical engineer best known for working with rock and blues musicians , most notably the Eagles in the 1970s . He produced many top albums and singles of the 1970s , though he retired from the music business by 1990 . He re @-@ emerged in the late 2000s , taking on select projects including the 2007 Eagles album Long Road Out of Eden and the 2008 eponymous debut of Brian Vander Ark .

Unlike many music producers , Szymczyk has no background as a musician . He was originally a sonar operator for the U.S. Navy and took some audio production classes as part of his Navy training . Besides his work with the Eagles , he has produced hit songs and albums for such diverse artists as B.B. King , Joe Walsh , The James Gang , and Elvin Bishop .

= = Early life = =

Bill Szymczyk was born in Muskegon , Michigan on February 13 , 1943 . His mother worked as a nurse , and his father held several jobs , including factory worker and maintenance at a school . Growing up , his first introduction to music and electronics was when he built his own crystal radio from a kit . Using his radio , he became a fan of blues and R & B while listening to a station out of Nashville , Tennessee .

He joined the United States Navy in 1960 , where he worked as a sonar technician . It was in the Navy that he took his first course in radio and television production . Upon leaving the service in 1964 , and without much of an idea of what to do for a post @-@ military career , he enrolled at New York University 's Media Arts School .

= = Professional career = =

Bill Szymczyk began working at a firm which produced demo recordings for Screen Gems Records and worked extensively with Brill Building songwriters such as Carole King and Gerry Goffin . He also worked as an assistant to music producers and songwriters Quincy Jones and Jerry Ragovoy , eventually working his way up to chief engineer at Ragavoy 's Hit Factory recording studio . His first work as the primary producer on an album came for a Harvey Brooks solo record . He dropped out of NYU to work full @-@ time in the music industry .

He left the Hit Factory and took a job at ABC Records , taking a large pay cut in exchange for the opportunity to move from engineer to producer . He successfully lobbied ABC to let him work with B. B. King , whose own record label was a subsidiary of ABC and who was a long time idol of Szymczyk 's . After convincing King that he could improve his sound to make him more appealing to a wider audience , King himself agreed to let Szymczyk produce for him . Among the albums he produced for King are the 1969 live album Live & Well , King 's first ever top @-@ 100 album . He produced his follow @-@ up studio album Completely Well , which featured " The Thrill Is Gone " , the biggest hit of King 's career and his signature song . He would continue to produce blues albums throughout the early 1970s for the likes of King and Albert Collins .

Szymczyk was moved several times while working for ABC Records ; first to Los Angeles when ABC acquired Dunhill Records and Szymczyk took over production for the West Coast operations , and later to Denver when he decided to form his own label , Tumbleweed Records . He worked for a while as a disc jockey at radio station KFML , and continued to produce albums in New York and Los Angeles , such as the J. Geils Band 's 1971 album The Morning After , recorded at the Los Angeles Record Plant . He did extensive work at the Colorado studio Caribou Ranch , where would be the center of his operations for the rest of the 1970s .

After producing the James Gang 's first three albums , he followed singer @-@ guitarist Joe Walsh when he left the band , first as a solo artist with the Szymczyk @-@ produced albums Barnstorm ( the first recorded at the Caribou Ranch studio ) and The Smoker You Drink , the Player You Get and later with the Eagles . His most prolific collaborations have been with Walsh ; the two have made

over 15 albums together in many settings . Walsh himself moved to Boulder , Colorado in 1971 in order to work with Szymczyk and the location would inspire one of Walsh 's biggest solo hits , 1973 's " Rocky Mountain Way " . Besides work with Walsh in his band The James Gang and as a solo @-@ artist , he also brought Walsh in to work on several albums he was doing with other musicians , using him as a session player for the B. B. King album Indianola Mississippi Seeds and the Michael Stanley album Friends and Legends . It was at Szymczyk 's suggestion that the Eagles bring in Walsh to give them a " rock " edge ; Walsh remains a core member of the band to this day .

His long relationship with the Eagles began with their 1974 album On the Border , an album he took over from London @-@ based producer Glyn Johns . He would be the sole producer for the next three Eagles studio albums , including 1976 's Hotel California , the first to feature Joe Walsh . Szymczyk was instrumental in giving the Eagles a more " rock sound " and helping them to move away from their country rock roots .

Among the other acts he worked with extensively through the 1970s include Michael Stanley and the The J. Geils Band . While working with The Outlaws , he coined the term " Guitar Army " to describe the band 's sound ; the name continues as a nickname for the band . He worked in the studio for the Edgar Winter Group 's biggest hit , the Rick Derringer @-@ produced " Frankenstein " , and later produced Derringer 's best known solo album All American Boy and its hit single , " Rock and Roll , Hoochie Koo " . At the start of the 1980s he was a highly sought @-@ after producer , and worked on such albums as Bob Seger 's 1980 album Against the Wind and The Who 's 1981 release Face Dances . During this time period , Szymczyk produced such hit singles as Elvin Bishop 's " Fooled Around and Fell in Love " , The Who 's " You Better You Bet " , The Eagles ' " Hotel California " , and Bob Seger 's " Against the Wind " .

His workload tailed off in the mid @-@ 1980s , due mostly to his own financial success . He officially retired from the music industry in 1990 , but re @-@ emerged in 2005 , producing Dishwalla 's self @-@ titled fourth album . He returned to work with the Eagles on the 2007 album Long Road Out of Eden , and followed that with the 2008 solo debut of ex @-@ Verve Pipe singer Brian Vander Ark .

He now lives in Little Switzerland , North Carolina with his wife , Lisi Szymczyk . The couple has two sons , Michael and Daniel , and have become involved in their local community , having raised money for a local shelter for victims of domestic violence , among other charity work . He still works as a producer , but is more selective about projects he works on .

= = Production style = =

Bill Szymczyk 's has frequently been noted as the sort of producer who pushes bands to expand their musical horizons ; he has been brought in with the specific intent of changing a band 's sound . He himself has credited this tendency to his lack of musical knowledge , stating : " I 'm a professional listener . I listen and I react . I never was a musician , so I don 't bring any preconceived prejudices to the table ; I don 't favour the guitar over the keyboard , and so forth . I just listen and try to figure out if I have anything I can bring to a song . "

For his work with the Eagles , he has been cited for his innovative mixing of drums , laboriously working to get the right microphones and placements for just the right sound . Rather than recording harmony vocals individually , and mixing them together later , as was common , Szymczyk preferred to capture the Eagles singing in ensemble , often spending many hours to record each phrase " just right " .

For the Elvin Bishop hit , " Fooled Around and Fell in Love , " it was Szymczyk who suggested the inclusion of the song on Bishop 's Struttin ' My Stuff album , feeling the blues @-@ oriented album lacked a pop single . The song would go on to become Bishop 's biggest hit . Such a pattern was repeated throughout his career . The Eagles brought him in to refine and improve their " rock " sound , and all of their biggest selling albums and songs were Szymczyk @-@ produced . Martin Turner of Wishbone Ash has called him " my all time favourite producer " . While the two did not always get along during recording , usually over Turner 's bass @-@ playing style , Turner does credit Szymczyk with giving the band a more commercial sound on one of their most successful

albums , 1974 's There 's the Rub .

= = Selected discography = =

All credits as producer unless otherwise noted .

= = = B. B. King = = =

Live & Well ( 1969 )

Completely Well ( 1969 )

Indianola Mississippi Seeds ( 1970 )

Live in Cook County Jail ( 1971 )

= = = Silk / Michael Stanley / Michael Stanley Band = = =

Smooth as Raw Silk ( 1969 )

Michael Stanley ( 1972 )

Friends and Legends ( 1973 )

You Break It ... You Bought It ( 1975 )

Ladies Choice ( 1976 )

Stagepass ( 1977 )

= = = The James Gang = = =

Yer ' Album ( 1969 )

James Gang Rides Again ( 1970 )

Thirds ( 1971 )

James Gang Live in Concert ( 1971 )

= = = Joe Walsh = = =

Barnstorm ( 1972 )

The Smoker You Drink , the Player You Get ( 1973 )

So What ( 1974 )

But Seriously , Folks ... ( 1978 )

You Bought It , You Name It ( 1983 )

Ordinary Average Guy ( as engineer ) ( 1991 )

Songs for a Dying Planet ( 1992 )

= = = The Eagles = = =

On the Border ( 1974 )

One of These Nights ( 1975 )

Hotel California ( 1976 )

The Long Run ( 1979 )

Eagles Live ( 1980 )

Long Road Out of Eden ( 2007 )

= = = The J. Geils Band = = =

The Morning After ( 1971 )

Bloodshot ( 1973 )

Ladies Invited ( 1973 )

Nightmares ... and Other Tales from the Vinyl Jungle ( 1974 )  
Hotline ( 1975 )  
Blow Your Face Out ( live , 1976 )

= = = Jo Jo Gunne / Jay Ferguson = = =

Bite Down Hard ( 1973 )  
Jumpin ' the Gunne ( 1973 )  
All Alone in the End Zone ( 1976 )  
Thunder Island ( 1978 )  
Real Life Ain 't This Way ( 1979 )

= = = Others = = =

Ford Theatre - Time Changes ( 1969 )  
Edgar Winter Group - They Only Come Out at Night ( as technical director ) ( 1972 )  
Johnny Winter - Still Alive and Well ( as technical director ) ( 1973 )  
Rick Derringer - All American Boy ( 1973 )  
Wishbone Ash - There 's the Rub ( 1974 )  
Johnny Winter - Saints & Sinners ( as engineer ) ( 1974 )  
Elvin Bishop - Struttin ' My Stuff ( 1975 )  
Rick Derringer - Spring Fever ( 1975 )  
REO Speedwagon - This Time We Mean It ( as Executive Producer ) ( 1975 )  
Elvin Bishop - Hometown Boy Makes Good ! ( 1976 )  
The Outlaws - Hurry Sundown ( 1977 )  
The Outlaws - Bring It Back Alive ( live , 1978 )  
Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band - Against the Wind ( 1980 )  
The Who - Face Dances ( 1981 )  
Santana - Shango ( 1982 )  
Dishwalla - Dishwalla ( 2005 )  
Brian Vander Ark - Brian Vander Ark ( 2008 )  
Brian Vander Ark - Magazine ( 2011 )  
Tide Brothers - High Water Mark ( as mixing and mastering engineer ) ( 2016 )