

Flood Of Disinterest

A quest to set himself apart

By Sully

When I get lonely on the road, I call my wife and tell her how much I love and miss her, and I promise to be a better husband and father. I can see her eyes pinned to the top of her head as she reminds me I am a good husband and father and perhaps I should quit calling her after listening to country music.

That's it; I'm gettin' a drinking problem. Then the world will see how angst ridden I am.

Invariably I forget my plan five minutes later when *Seinfeld* comes on. Well, that and I only have two red-neck friends, and they're not here. One's doing rodeo and the other's been kidnapped by a Yankee sound company.

This is a theme with me. I come up with a good idea, I can sustain it for

one, maybe two minutes, then bang - I'm at the second window in the drive-thru and all I can think about are fries. My idea is trapped in some netherzone between the pay and pick-up windows.

This started when I was a kid. My parents got a new refrigerator and granted me lease to the four by eight cardboard apartment it came in.

Immediately I used a butter knife to hack it into a clubhouse with the full intention of starting a gang which would meet inside. I'd charge kids a buck and a half to join, and they'd have to do whatever I said.

No one had a buck and a half.

No one wanted to sit in a box with me.

Cardboard isn't waterproof.

Speed Racer came on.

Later, as my father piled the slagheap of cellulose into a garbage can and lectured me on careful listening and follow-through (or something like that, I wasn't listening) my mind wandered to how much money I could make by inventing an automatic shovel powered by the puppy dung I was forced to stalk as part of my punishment for being 10.

But then *Happy Days* came on...

The overwhelming need to be Bruce Springsteen was not an uncommon affliction when I was young. Cool and detached while simultaneously living the very lines he was reporting. What's not to love?

He was from Jersey, I knew people who lived in Jersey, He played guitar, I knew people who played guitar. He



wrote hymns for the proletariat, my mom shopped at Sears. We were comrades separated only by time, talent, distance and knowledge of each other. Aside from such surmountable trivialities, brothers.

So I decided to follow my dream and write a folk rock song that also used the word "aurora." I wrote the word, then scratched it out and decided to name the song "Aurora." I erased that and figured if I was going to cop one of Bruce's lines, I needed to be more casual about it, as if it occurred to me in the process, not as the process.

So here was my first line: "Mandy, you look lovely as the aurora rises behind you tonight."

I stared at my crippled plagiarism. Then, for the first of only three times in all of my teen years, clarity struck. I realized I didn't know anything about music beyond strapping five pieces of chalk to a coat hanger and making lines on a blackboard.

It was as if my attention span were made up of all the runners at the

Boston Marathon and the starter pistol had just gone off. I wanted to continue; persevere and bleed a little on this craft; I just didn't want it to hurt or require any more effort on my part.

Disinterest was flooding me uncontrollably...

Then I caught sight of myself in a mirror and realized another goal had been realized. The "Flock Of Seagulls/Duran Duran/Wham!" thing I'd been trying to get my hair to do had erupted from my scalp of its own accord, an obvious by-product of the arduous music penning process. It even had a little "Blown By Unseen Winds" casualness as a bonus.

The marathoners were not just jogging in an orderly fashion now - it was Pamplona, and the bulls were bringing up the rear. A new goal immediately supplanted adoration of the Boss: get to the mall before my hair degenerated into something Whitesnake-ish.

I was pretty positive only I suffered from this particular lack of follow-through. According to those in author-

ity, the most upstanding, well-behaved and attentive kids anywhere populated my block, my neighborhood, and my school.

Sans one.

This was vexing to me, pondering everyone else leaping ahead, using some vital bit of information I missed.

I needed an angle. Something to set me apart. My destiny unfolded in front of me as a never-ending series of jobs hawking widgets or stressing about the Smith file. A vanilla life with chocolate sprinkles only on the weekends was seriously contrary to the self-absorbed Peter Pan lifestyle I envisioned myself fitting into nicely.

My criterion was a bit hampering. I had to find a life replete with a blizzard of women and little or no responsibility.

I found it.

This is the part where you think I discover the joys of live sound.

This is the part where you're wrong.

I went to work for a car dealer.

Except for worldwide ill-repute, car guys had it all. You could be late. You could be obnoxious. You could be absolutely dumb as a bag of hammers, but if you could sell cars, people would do ANYTHING for you.

The big diamond pinky ring? Totally true.

Macked out Cadillacs? Cost of doing business.

Women? The bar at the Ground Round after 8 pm was like a tutorial on how to shop for a STD while discussing wing sauce.

This...This was my place. And these...These were my people.

I was a denizen of that dealership for six glorious years until the day my long-time public appearances girlfriend dumped me. I needed to replace her since I had a wedding to attend, so I notched up my charm and went a-courtin'.

It did not go well.

Within my band of Chevy brothers, I was a rock star; the outside world found me, well... distasteful. It all came to a head when a very promising petite blond looked deeply into my watery eyes and said I was great - but she could never be married to a car salesman. She slid her spandex



encapsulated body off the bar stool and melted into the crowd.

I got up from my stool.

I threw up.

I fell down.

Someone drove me home.

I took two aspirin, drank four glasses of water and went to sleep.

The next day I quit the Buick bacchanal.

A couple of weeks later, on a whim, I responded to an ad on a theater job board looking for a sound engineer for the summer symphony season. Imagine the final scene from Marky Mark's movie *Rockstar*...

It wasn't anything like that.

I knew NOTHING about sound, but managed to convince the harried tech director that I was her man. She believed me.

She also had the good fortune to hire someone who actually did know what he was doing. After a 60-second conversation in which I failed to identify a 58, the approximate directions to front of house or the gain knobs on a DC-150, my partner gently suggested I set up some mic stands.

The following show, without any fanfare or comment, I found small tags on all of the microphones indicating their model numbers and the outboard dbx 160s outfitted with discreet labels that read simply compressor.

Three months later I was confidently mixing a symphony orchestra.

Turned out, I was pretty good at it. People started hiring me.

They paid me. I didn't have to get up early, and since my personal ongoing episode of Attention-Span Theater had expanded to an unheard-of 75 minutes, I was able to complete almost every show.

Still, I wasn't sure if this was the ticket for me. It definitely didn't have "real job" written anywhere on it, but... Was it cool? More importantly: did it make me cool?

This cool thing; it had been sort of an unspoken part of the quest. Up until the little blonde (hereafter referred to as TLB) yanked off my Travolta suit and revealed the bright plaid one underneath, I'd been pretty confident I was the goods. Now, I didn't trust my own personal internal qualifier.

A poll would be needed.

I went back to the bars and after a careful pre-qualification interview, I told people what I now did for a living. Of the 30 or so people I talked to, only one young lady seemed genuinely disinterested. Her comment? "So you turn up the volume? Like on a stereo? Huh."

I pursued her for a year. Never happened.

Everybody else swiveled on bar stools to face me head on. My job fascinated them. It wasn't quite the crowd pleaser as being inexplicably rich, but still, I was making money while simultaneously detaining reality.

"You! Boy! Speak more of this REE-Cord industry - it interests us."

The results are comforting since I really love this job. To this day, 18-odd years later, I still wake up kind of expecting to see a pudgy rep from straight society leaning over my bed, waving the Smith file at me, explaining I've had my fun, now it's time to do something useful.

Still could happen. As an industry we've all heard the stories of our "recession-proofness," yet no one points out our reliance on label-generated tour support.

If Billy and Suzie suddenly decide that they'd rather pay 16 bucks for glossy liner notes enclosing the music they've been pirating for free, then its V-DOSC and D5s for everyone! If not, well, my beloved field will continue to witness Darwinism at its finest.

I've got to say this would not be fun for my wife, being married to a car salesman and all. ■

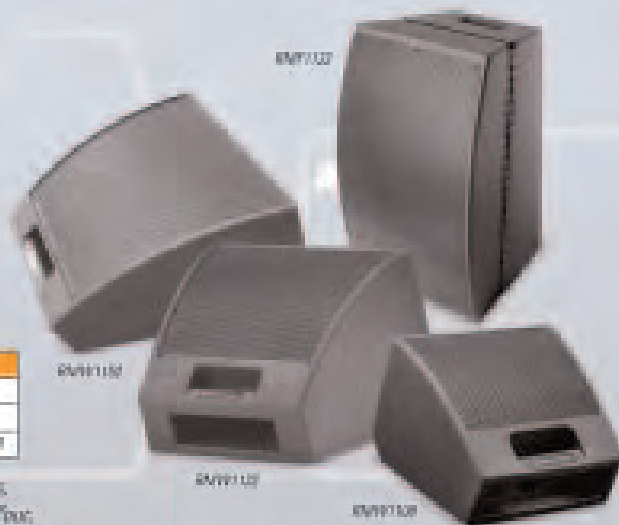
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