


FOUR MUSICIANS, TWO NIGHTCLUBS, AND A BOTTLE. PART 1

 round late 1987 or early 1988, while sharing the job of lighting director at the Chuck Landis Country Club in Reseda, California, with my friend Tom Hamilton, we worked on a three-day music video project. Back in those days, the atmosphere was more enjoyable and less rigidly corporate. At that time, I was just twenty-three or twenty-four years old, having spent about seven or eight years in the production business.

Tom and I served as liaisons to the film crew for their lighting and electrical needs. As the first people arrived for load-in, someone who worked with the band informed me that the drummer's roadie couldn't make it to the production. They asked if I knew how to set up a drum kit. Given that, at the time, I had a side gig assisting a local band as a drum roadie and lighting tech, I volunteered for the task. I liked this particular drummer and was willing to help out for free.

I figured I wouldn't be able to set up his kit perfectly, but I aimed to be close enough for him to adjust it quickly when he got there.

During the second morning, the person I believed to be the director of photography (DP) and the singer of the band, Mick Jagger, had a

disagreement at the edge of the stage. True to my stupid loudmouth nature, I chimed in with my opinion. (By the way, this is not advisable if you are just starting your career in show business.)

The DP was arguing that the rather large audio monitors be positioned lower than the stage floor, or removed altogether. This way, they wouldn't obstruct the cameras as they swept over the heads of the audience. On the other hand, Mick argued that he needed to hear the playback and himself and couldn't do so if the monitor wedges were on the floor.

"Hey man, he's been singing in a rock band for a lot of years and is getting old," I said to the DP. "His hearing is probably pretty shot. Maybe the wedges need to be closer."

Both of them turned and looked at me.

"Maybe we can put them on apple boxes just under the stage level," the DP suggested.

"Thanks?" Mick Jagger said to me as the DP walked away. In the end, the wedges got axed for the video anyway.

As the day's work went on, shots were filmed of the band performing on stage without the audience and in various areas around the club, including the dressing rooms and other locations. Occasionally, I found moments to chat with the band members. Given that Tom and I had completed our stage lighting tasks, I wasn't very busy.

The guitarist, Jeff Beck, told me a story of how he had been in the English countryside at his home during a freak storm. Strong winds blew many trees over into the road, causing the lengthy driveway leading to his house to become blocked. He was trapped alone, with just his dogs, unable to get out. Tree-cutting crews took a long time to come and clear the road. He told me that the entire incident was "pretty scary." He was so friendly and unpretentious that he made me feel like a friend.⁸

Earlier, I had been introduced to the drummer as “the guy that put your kit together.” He thanked me for saving him some time with his setup. He also shared how he’d got involved in the music video.

He recounted how Mick Jagger had personally phoned him to invite him to drum for the video. “I couldn’t believe it,” he said. “I thought my friends were pranking me.” “Very funny, guys,” he’d told the caller before hanging up. But when the phone rang again and he picked up, he’d heard the voice on the other end say, “Please don’t hang up on me again. I’m really Mick Jagger, and I do want you to come and play on my video.”

This time, the drummer had stayed on the line. As he spoke to me, his excitement grew. “I couldn’t believe that Mick Jagger wanted me to play with him, and that he had called me at home to ask. Unbelievable. It was incredibly cool!”

“Well, I’d be excited too,” I said. “But it’s not that surprising to me. I mean you’re a great drummer, and I happen to love your music. Why wouldn’t he call you? I mean, you are Terry Bozzio.”

The third day of the shoot included a performance with an audience. I stood on the balcony with Mick Jagger and Jeff Beck as the audience entered and milled around on the first floor.

From our shadowy vantage point, we gazed down at the girls in the audience. There were all sorts of good-looking women down there. One, in particular, caught our attention: a tall girl with a cropped hairstyle patterned with leopard spots. She wore an enormous green paper-mâché bow top and a big pink taffeta tutu. On her feet, she wore long shiny thigh-high laced-up combat-styled high-heeled boots. She had lots of tattoos and piercings and was a “stripper-hot-looking woman.”

Mick Jagger remarked to Jeff Beck and me that she was probably the oddest-looking girl he’d ever seen. Well, that’s a statement! We laughed. Then the girl lit up a cigarette. Mick was disappointed.

“Shame she smokes,” he said⁹.

Now, they had to prepare to go onstage. We exchanged farewells. Chances were I wouldn't cross paths with them ever again, but it had definitely been fun meeting them.

The video, titled "Throwaway,"¹⁰ was from the 1987 album *Primitive Cool*, Mick Jagger's solo release.



Somebody stole my crew pass, but here is the ticket given to the film audience.

FOUR MUSICIANS, TWO NIGHTCLUBS, AND A BOTTLE. PART 2

This story's not over. So far, I've only included three musicians, one club, and not a single bottle. Six years after the "Throwaway" video shoot, I found myself working on the payroll at the Whiskey a Go Go in Hollywood. I had been working there for a few years, thanks to my friend Teri. My work mainly involved filling in for the regular lighting director, Jeff, whenever he took time off.

When Louie Stetzel, the Front of House (FOH) audio engineer found out I could mix audio, he had me start coming in to mix monitors too. As time went on, Louie would also have me mix at the house console, when he wanted to take an evening off.

On the night of June 22, 1993, I was the house lighting director. The band Toto had brought along their own lighting director for the evening. So, after the gelling and focus of the light rig were complete, I had the rest of the evening to babysit Toto's lighting guy at the board and wander about the club.

The Whiskey was jam-packed that night, a full house. Numerous celebrities had turned up for the show. I slipped backstage for a few minutes, where it was a little bit quieter. During my time there, the security guard asked if I

could watch the backstage door. He needed to take a piss, or whatever. “No problem,” I told him.

“The band’s manager told me not to let anyone in except the waitress—not even their wives,” he told me before walking away.

I heard a knock at the backstage door. When I opened it, I recognized the guy standing there, who said, “Hey, man, let me in!” He had a group of eight or ten people with him.

“I can’t. Only the waitress can come in,” I explained.

“Don’t you know who the fuck I am? Let me in!” he yelled in my face, looking at me like I was stupid. Wow, he could have been cool about it. I hate when people say shit like that.

“Yes, of course, I know who you are! You’re Eddie Van Halen, but you’re not coming through my door!” I slammed the door in his face even as he cursed me out.

A few minutes later, there was another knock. I opened the door, half expecting Eddie, but it was someone else, who seemed a bit familiar.

“Hello, don’t I know you?” he asked. “Hmm, maybe we’ve worked together.”

People say that all the time, but I was pretty certain I had indeed worked with this guy.

“Jeff,” he introduced himself, extending his hand.

“Dave,” I reply, shaking his hand.

“My friends are playing guitar in the band tonight. Would it be alright if I come in for a minute and just say hello quickly?” Jeff asked.

“Sure,” I responded, and I let Jeff in.¹¹

Jeff Beck is a nice guy, treating everyone around him with respect and kindness. Eddie, on the other hand, not so much, at least not that night. I kind of felt a little bad, though. Maybe Eddie was just having a crappy day? I glimpsed Eddie Van Halen in the background, outside the door, and he

looked seriously pissed off. I might not be famous, but in that moment, I owned that door. It was tough luck for him. If you're cool, you get in. If you act like a dick, you don't.

FOUR MUSICIANS, TWO NIGHTCLUBS, AND A BOTTLE. PART 3



A few years later, my roommate Jack told me this story.

Jack was out driving around with some friends in his pickup truck, navigating through the hills on their way back from Hollywood. He was pointing out the houses of celebrities to one of the passengers, who happened to be drunk. As they passed by Eddie Van Halen's place, the drunk passenger asked to stop so she could relieve herself. Jack pulled over, and she hopped out. Jack jokingly drove off down the road. After a few minutes, he turned back, only to discover that the woman had actually rung the doorbell at the end of Eddie Van Halen's driveway.

His drunk passenger was talking to someone in the driveway. It turned out to be Eddie himself, drinking from a wine bottle he held in his hand. They seemed to be engaged in a cheerful chat.

Suddenly, one of the other passengers in the truck shouted, "Hey, Eddie, we love you!" Just like that, Eddie's mood took a sharp turn, shifting to anger. Who could really blame him? It's the middle of the night, and some intoxicated fans he doesn't know have rung his doorbell and are now yelling at his front gate.

When Eddie started to argue with the drunk woman, Jack and his buddies stepped out of the truck. They managed to grab the drunk woman and began pulling her back into the vehicle. Eddie was still angry, and he continued shouting at them. As Jack drove away, Eddie ran down the road and hurled his wine bottle at the truck. The bottle crashed through its small rear window and landed in the cab.

Jack kept the broken bottle's neck and displayed it in his home, where it remains on display to this day.

Despite his behavior when drunk, I have to admit that Eddie has excellent aim. He's also undeniably one of the planet's most gifted guitarists. It's disappointing when people don't live up to the image we hold of them. I sure would have liked to run into Eddie on one of his brighter days. After all, he was one of my rock star heroes during my younger years. However, for now, he has two strikes against him in my book.

Regrettably, on October 6, 2020, as I was working on editing this book, I received the unfortunate news of Eddie Van Halen's passing.



The remnants of Eddie Van Halen's wine bottle.