BOOK FOUR

BY: HE'S ABOY

"O is very useful.
You use it when you say:
'Oscar's only ostrich oiled
an orange owl today.' "

DR. SUESS; Dr. Suess's ABC

35. SEE HE'S. SEE HE'S WRITE.

Yeah, well, it's back to me, dude. I hope you survived Annette's part of the book. If you were starting to lose interest, don't worry. It'll get much more interesting now.

So, anyway, it was time to record our defused album. I mean, "debut," dude. Although it was really our third album, it was still our first as FIFI. The reason we didn't change our own personal names was because we felt no one would notice we were the same people who were in BLUDGEON. Besides, we couldn't think of any other names.

Yeah, well, here we were. FIFI, the poodlemongers. We had a new mascot to emphasize our toughness - FIFI, The Death Poodle. The Prescient Pooch, who one day cast off the rhinestone leash of bondage, and the cute little puppy sweater of oppression, to stand up as the leader of all other poodles against mankind, under the sign of the blood-stained paws - The Pup With The Pink Fur. The Pup Who Spoke Up: "No more 'Do it on the paper!' "

I first read about this Poodle Of Destiny in a book of ancient Lebanese mythology . . . or on the back of a Bazooka Bubblegum wrapper, I can't remember which, but anyway, it was still a good idea, and I wrote an astoundingly astonishing song called, "Death Poodle (Beware Of Dog)." This won first place in the first annual Mountlake Terrace Poetry Contest. Here are the controversial, award-winning lyrics:

DEATH-POODLE (BEWARE OF DOG)

It's getting close to midnight
And the darkness fills your room
But don't you fall asleep because
You might be feeling safe too soon

You wake up in a cold sweat
Rising from a dream
Open your eyes and what you see
Makes you try to scream

An evil poodle at your neck
You can feel his breath
An evil poodle, his fur dyed pink
The scary color of death

"Get up and get me some Milk-Bones!"
He screams with a terrifying wail
"FIFI want to go for walky!" he barks
With foaming mouth and wagging tail

No more, "Get me my slippers!"
And no more stale dog food
No more, "Do it on the paper!"
Time for revenge - mean and rude

Throw down your rhinestone leash and collar now
Because they're poodles without a cause
Led by the one known only as "FIFI"
Under the sign of the blood-stained paws.

At one point, while recording this song, three dogs burst into the studio and began howling and chasing Annette around the room. It sounded good, so we left it in.

Then, the second tune, called, "Wood," was my expression towards wood. You see, my dad was a forestry expert. He worked part-time visiting schools dressed up as Smokey the Bear, and taught me, like, a deep appreciation for trees in all their forms. These are the lyrics for that song:

WOOD

Wood
Wood
Wood
Wood
Wood is good
U never should
Hurt wood
If U could
Wood is your friend
Wood will never end
Rip, tear or bend
Why don't U send
A friend
Some wood
Wood
Wood
Wood
Wood
Wood is good (yeah)
Alder-wood (yeah)
Birch-wood (yeah)
Cedar-wood (yeah)
Oak-wood (yeah)
Maple-wood (yeah)
Poplar-wood (yeah)
Wood comes from trees
If U please
Don't tease
The bees
Wood

U know, baby, wood is your friend. (wood is your friend)
That's right - wood. Wood will never make U sad or ruin your party.
(make U cry) Listen up! (what?) When all your friends have left
U and you're alone and crying, (bye, bye love) who's still around
for U to cry on? (uh . . . wood?) That's right - wood. Wood is there
for U to cry on - always and at all times.

Wood
Wood
Wood
Wood

(FADE)

I was sick when we recorded the vocals for "Wood," so I did the song over the phone. If you listen carefully, you can tell. On this song, The Filler had laid down the drum track by banging his head against a burnt-out stump. Paul played his bass by setting it on the stump and watching it vibrate when The Filler butted the stump.

I worked for a long time to create the unique guitar sound needed. I finally laid every effect box we had in a line, plugged them all in, and cranked up every knob I could find. I was quite pleased, dude. At one point, Joey missed his cue, and started drumming in a completely random, alien tempo. It sounded good, so we left it in.

"Yogurt From Another World" was the next song. We called it part three of a series called, "Evil Dairy Products," which Annette presumptuously explained earlier, so I won't re-explain it now. We called it part three because we felt that dairy products are, in general, so twisted, perverse, and . . . out of order, that it would only be natural to record the songs in a random order. Also, we couldn't really remember how many parts (if any) we had done so far.

Here are the lyrics:

YOGURT FROM ANOTHER WORLD
(PART III OF "EVIL DAIRY PRODUCTS")

Ancient wise men and books of the past
Tell of when terror reigned over the land
A time when yogurt fell from the sky
An evil deluge, fruity and bland

Feigning innocence in waxy cups
Quietly waiting on dairy shelves
Secretly mating, communicating
For the takeover training themselves

Finally it came; the bubble burst
The fascist yogurt regime was here
Proud kings became slaves; trained to behave
And men felt the paralysis of fear

Men fought their chains and lived with the pain
Blood of the rebels ran deep and red
The anger of the oppressed festered
Finally one man stood up and said:

"Hey, this yogurt is past the pull date!"

So the people returned the unused portion to the
manufacturer for a full refund. The world was saved,
and there was much rejoicing. (ya-a-ay)

For that song, I took distortion, flanger, and phaser pedals, and cranked 'em up as far as I could. As Annette started to record the vocals (while barefoot), he stepped on some Legos I had been playing with, and screamed really loud. That was okay, though, because it covered up the sound of me switching guitars. It sounded good, so we left it in.

"In Celebration Of Toasters" was the only song on the album written by Annette. When I asked him about the lyrics, he said, "Once, some years ago, I had a beautiful Amana toaster that I valued very highly. One day, it disappeared. Along with my Nautilus weight machine, my TV, my microphone, my favorite chair, my -"

"Yeah, well, there's no use crying over spilled milk, dude."

Annette glared at me, and I remembered about our parents.

"Er . . . or water," I continued, "or . . . pop, or anything. Not milk, though. Definitely not milk."

"I'm just hoping that someday it will find its way back home. **There's nothing wrong with hoping, is there**?" Annette sobbed.

That Annette is one strange guy. Well, whatever - here are the lyrics:

IN CELEBRATION OF TOASTERS

Toasters are the neatest things
All chrome and shiny steel
The bread goes down, comes up brown
What a nifty deal

Some are big, some are small
And some can take four slices
Of all the small appliances
Toasters are the nicest

How would you heat Pop-Tarts
If the toasters all were gone? ("Well, there's - CLANK! - OW!")
You'd still have jams and jellies
But nothing to put them on

Men and their toaster brothers should unite
It often has been said
Abolish the horrible slavery
Of these obedient heaters of bread

At one point in this song, I tried to make it better by adding some improvised lyrics of my own, only to get rapped in the head with a cowbell by The Filler. Annette said it . . . sounded good, so we left it in.

Also, all during this recording session, we felt the presence of Eric Creery, High Priest And Prophet of He Who Used To Be Known As Jason. When we were finished, Joey was so moved by the proximity of the legendary High Priest Eric, he cried out, "You did it <u>this</u> time, Eric!" It also sounded . . . well, pretty good, so we left it in.

The song "Sorry 'Bout That" is a highly personal song for me, and is extremely difficult to talk about. It was based on my courtship of Who's. I thought about her a lot after writing this song, and got pretty depressed, but . . . I really don't want to talk about it, dude. Um, here's the words:

SORRY 'BOUT THAT

I stepped on your dog
And then I ran over your cat
I kicked your mom in the face
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

I insulted your Dad
Said he was fat
Hey, it was a joke!
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

I didn't like your mama's cookin'
So instead I ate a rat
Prepared 'im in your blender
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

I didn't like your sister's face
So I whipped the little brat
She'll be out of the hospital soon
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

(DRUM SOLO)

CHORUS:
I don't know why I do these things
Sure feel like a fool (like a fool)
When I came to dinner that night
You stopped thinking I was cool (he ain't so cool)

(GUITAR SOLO)

(BASS SOLO)

I laughed at the funeral
Of your uncle Matt
Threw food at the preacher
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

Your brother got mad
'Cause I sat on his hat
He was still wearing it
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

I borrowed your Porsche
All the tires were flat
Now the whole car is
And I'm Sorry 'Bout That

Yeah, well, while recording this song, Annette got pretty hyped, and was running around the studio ripping off his clothes, kicking over any equipment in his way, and just basically being himself. The only problem was, The Void was still practicing for work, and, in trying to navigate around him, Annette stepped on my Morley volume pedal, causing this one chord to be five times as loud as anything else in the song. Embarrassed, he said, "Hey, sorry," forgetting that his mike was on. It sounded good, so we left it in.

Finally, we recorded, "Day-O," a song we learned from Harry Belafonte while in Jamaica. During the mixing of "Day-O," the popsicle man drove by outside, and everyone ran out to buy something. Suddenly, we remembered we had left the reverb on the "four-minute" length setting, and the final syllable of the song was left reverberating for the full four minutes. We ran back in and shut it off. We tried covering it up by recording Annette and I laughing and saying, "Hah! Just kidding!" like we <u>meant</u> to do it, which was, of course, a complete and utter lie. It sounded good, though, so . . . we left it in.

We finished the album, "Rabid," and released it, and it was, not surprisingly, a smash hit. The only song that didn't sell too well was the song that Annette wrote, "In Celebration Of Toasters." Hmmmm.

After the album hit top forty, we had a big party to celebrate. I started to think about Who's an awful lot, and I got real depressed. I just couldn't stop thinking of her, and I started to cry. Just then, Annette came up to me and said sympathetically, "Stop yer bellyachin', ya big sap! Who's is just <u>no good</u> for you, He's! I never <u>did</u> like her - Who's is a <u>loser</u>! You need her like you need emphysema, He's!"

"Yeah, well -"

"Probably <u>less</u>!"

"Well, I don't know . . . " I argued.

"Trust me, He's. Who's is a devil woman!"

Two months later, during our tour throughout the greater Bangor, Maine, area, I was sitting backstage, cleaning my guitar with Comet cleanser and steel wool pads. Annette came up to me, put his hand on my shoulder, and said quietly, "He's, there is someone who's here to see you."

"Who is it?"

He hesitated. "It . . . is Who's"

"Who?"

"No, Who's."

"It is? Who's?"

"It is," he affirmed, "Who's."

36. 'TIL DEATH DO US PART . . .

"WHO'S? HERE?" I hurriedly hedged.

"Here. Who's." Annette hissed haughtily.

Yeah, well, I went to the back door and, behold and lo, there Who's was, standing under a hole-ridden gutter, in the middle of a storm.

"Hi ho, He's!" she hailed, "It's me, Who's!"

"Who's! It's you!" I hallooed happily.

"How . . . how have you been, He's, honey?" she hesitated, and hastily hearkened.

"Horrible," I heaved heavily.

"I was worried about you when I heard the Reverend Father Ayatollah Mente talk about you saying 'We're not half as popular as Je -' "

I put my hand over her mouth, since several people were standing around.

"Sshh! Don't mention that! Do you want to ruin us?" She shook her head, and I continued. "If anyone hears that I, He's of FIFI, is the SAME HE'S THAT WAS IN BLUDGEON WHO SAID HE WASN'T HALF AS POPULAR AS JESUS CHRIST, WE'D BE RUINED!! IS THAT CLEAR?"

"Mmmmmnnph."

"Good. Now then, what brings you here, hon'?"

"He's, I just wanted to let you know that I'm sorry. I was wrong." Who's looked at me and began to cry. "I love you, He's, and I always will! I need you! Please, come back to me! I knew once you were gone I needed you. We just . . . got along too well! Besides, now that you're a star, I can look real important," she finished.

I took her hand and said, "Great! Let's get married tonight, babe! Whoooo! Onstage! Yeah, killer! Bring on the cows! Hit me, hit me!"

Who's and I were married that night, onstage, by a priest dressed in a flame-spewing poodle costume, right before "Sorry 'Bout That." It was killer.

We were so happy. We had a glamorous two-room apartment, complete with He's and Who's hand towels, and our pet chihuahua, It's. It was the happiest two weeks in our lives, until Who's ran away with a concert bassoonist, telling me in her note that she wasn't made for rock guitarists. Her love was for the bassoon, and a bassoonist would always hold the key to her heart.

Oh, she said, "Goodbye," too.

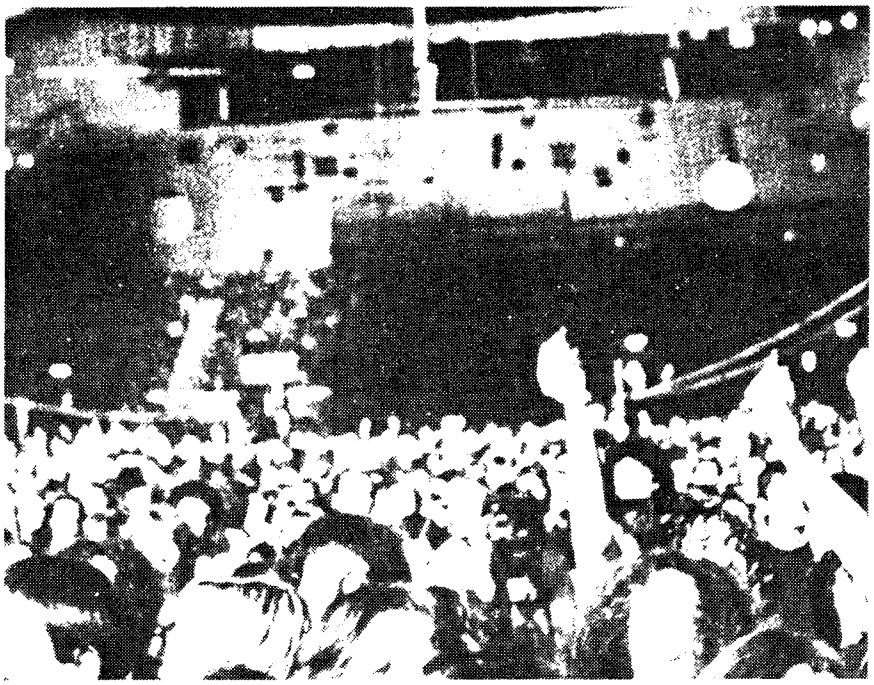
The next time I heard from Who's, she had married the antelope . . . er, "interloper." Unfortunately, his career never got very far - he had a harelip.

I never understood that - she always told me she didn't like my moustache.

I was shattered. Paul DeVoid was the only one I could cry to.

"Paul, I loved her! I loved her with all my heart! Then she goes and marries a hare-lipped baboonist! I mean, 'bassoonist.' But anyway, Paul, I just want to know: Why do my loved ones ignore my, like, pleas for sympathy and understanding, just when I need them the most?"

Paul sighed as if deeply moved, put his hand on my shoulder, looked me straight in the eye, and said, "He's . . . did you guys ever find my dog? I'm getting sorta worried."



FIFI FANS IN BANGOR, MAINE, SQUEAL THEIR UNBRIDLED APPROVAL OF HE'S'S MARRIAGE TO WHO'S

37. COMING HOME

Yeah, well, I knew that I would have to get over my recent loss, so I took out my frustrations on my guitar. Needless to say, because of my great guitar work, the tour was a smashing success. We had over ten thousand people come to see us on our "Rabid" tour! Just divide that by the over one thousand places we played, and you get an average attendance of about . . . on an average . . . oh, I guess approximately . . .

Well, anyway, after we finished our tour, we received a letter from my Alma Mater, Mountlake Terrace Senior High School, where I failed to graduate from. At first, I thought it was just another warning slip regarding the seventy-eight library books I had never returned, but then I read it, and . . . it wasn't.

I read the letter, and my eyes welled up with tears and my nose started to run.

"Annette!" I sobbed, "Come on over here! And bring some Kleenex, would ya?"

Annette came over with the floral print Softique facial tissue, and we both read the letter together, at the same time, simultaneously.

Annette's eyes welled up with tears, too, and his nose also started to run.

"Hey, pass me that (sniff) Kleenex, would you, He's? Quit hogging it all!"

The letter read:

Dear Mr. He's Aboy,

The faculty and students of Mountlake Terrace Senior High School have read with great pride and admiration of your recent success. It's always nice to hear of former students making good, especially in the exciting world of the performing arts. Not many former Terracites have become as famous as you have, and even fewer have made it big on the merits of a flame-spewing poodle or by spitting blood in front of a paying audience. We were especially happy to hear about your recent divorce. Seriously, He's - Who's was a devil woman.

I looked up. Dip Au Jus! I mean, "Deja Vu!" I continued to read.

Therefore, we, the faculty and students of Mountlake Terrace Senior High School would consider it a privilege and an honor and a privilege again if you and your band, FIFI, would return in glory to your Alma Mater, even though you never really graduated. If you will consent to play at our upcoming Homecoming Assembly, we're willing to forget the cost of replacing the Science Lab (and the three teachers), from the time you proved that you could indeed make nitroglycerin from Pop-Tarts and Apple Jacks. PLUS - A FREE GIFT! A COMPLIMENTARY MEAL in the world-renowned Mountlake Terrace Senior High School Cafeteria. We promise it'll be your favorite - mashed potatoes and hamburger gravy. BUT WAIT - DON'T ANSWER YET!! We'll also agree to forget about the 78 books you obviously intended to return.

We hope that you will agree to come.

We would especially appreciate it if you would agree to write a song specifically for Homecoming. We only ask that you delete any portions of your performance that could be considered offensive or inflammatory, such as the infernal sacrifice of a virgin porcupine, or the staged beheading of your bass player. Other than that, you have complete artistic freedom.

Please reply to this letter as soon as you can. We love you, as we always have, and hope that we can renew our bond of trust and friendship soon.

Besides, now that you're famous, we'll look really important.

Sincerely, Mountlake Terrace Senior High School

"Whoa," I intoned, "that sounds great! We'd have complete autistic -"

"Artistic."

"- artistic freedom. They must really love me. They always did, I guess."

"He's, I thought you said the English Department tarred and feathered you and ran you out of town on a rail."

"Aw . . . they were just kidding! They loved me there!"

"He's . . . I thought you told me that your Remedial Math teacher burned you in effigy at a school assembly."

"Yeah, well, it was presented in a humorous fashion, though! Everybody laughed and cheered. It was all in good fun. Besides, I really want that free meal! I love that hamburger gravy. They only use the best, most succulent, most tender, moist part of the hamburger - the fat! And they use only the finest mashed potatoes. I say, 'Let's Do It, Dude!' "

"I say, 'You're An Idiot, Dude!' " retorted Annette.

I grabbed him by the throat, and he re-worded his statement.

"I meant, uh, 'That's A Great Idea, He's!' Great! Heh, heh!"

We wrote a letter back to Mountlake Terrace Senior High School, consisting of only four words:

"You're On, Dudes."

So, we went and picked up Paul at work, and cruised over to Ed's Grub 'N' Suds and worked out a deal with Joey's boss so Joey could go to Mountlake Terrace and perform with us.

"Okay," Joey's boss said amiably, "Joey, you're fired."

We each boarded our private scooters (The Only Acceptable Vehicle In The Eyes Of Pat, The Janitor, Father Of The One Known Only As Jason), and headed for Mountlake Terrace, our native homeland, where we were originally born, except me, since I was born in Ouagadougou, Bourkina Fasso (before it became Upper Volta), and, of course, Annette, who was supposedly born in Jamaica.

But anyway, we scooted off down the freeway, singing scooter-riding songs.

"Bo-orn to be wi-i-i-i-i-i-ild! Born -" sang Joey above the menacing buzz of the scooters.

"Yeah, well . . . yeah, 'Born,' dude!" I shouted along.

"In a Gadda-Da-Vida, huh-nay! Don't you know that I Lo-o-o-ove You!" Paul thought riotously to himself.

"Da-doo-ron-ron-ron, Da-doo-ron-ron! Whoooo! Yeah! Allri-i-i-i-i-i-ight!" Annette chimed in, adding his feeble half-penny's worth to our joyous chorus.

After ninety-six hours of continuous driving with no rest stops, you'd think we'd be tired. But we weren't, because we had smartly thought out a plan to take turns driving each other's scooters.

Hey, we're not stupid.

Finally, we arrived at New York Harbor, and realized we had gone the wrong way, so we turned around, and sang the songs backwards.

"!Thgi-i-i-i-i-i-irllla !Haey !Oo-o-o-ohw !Nor-nor-ood-ad, nor-nor-nor-ood-ad," began Annette, just as feebly, if not more so, dude, than before.

Paul screamed frenziedly (in his mind), "!Uoy evo-o-o-ol I taht wonk uoy t'nod !Yenoh, adiv-ad-addag a ni"

I shouted along, getting into the spirit of stuff that was going on, "!Edud, 'Nrob,' haey, llew, haey"

Joey rounded out the singing with his lusty, "- Nrob !Dli-i-i-i-iw eb ot nrob"

When we got back to Duluth, we synchronized our watches, put our clothes on the right way, sat on our scooters facing forward again, adjusted our gyroscopes, and headed in the right direction, singing, like, normally once again.

As we passed Mount Rushmore, I heard Annette behind me, singing.

"You took me to that PLACE!
You spit in my FACE!
It's time - time to
THRASH ON YOU, DUDE!"

"Yeah, well, alright! You did it, Annette! You sang 'Thrash On You' correctly, dude!"

"I know! Ain't it great?!" Annette squealed, after which he crashed headlong into a maple tree.

We must have looked pretty rough and tumble - especially 'tumble,' since Annette crashed headlong into a tree an average of once every ten miles - but, anyway, 'rough and tumble' - yeah, that's how we looked.

Wherever we went, you could, like, hear the ominous, hellish buzz of our scooter engines.

At one point, we were driving through a sort of mountainous-type area, and Joey said, "Hey, He's? I'm getting pretty tired, and my butt is real sore - let's stop at this playground up the road here."

"What playground?"

"Well, there was a sign a ways back that said, 'SLIDES AHEAD,' and I figure they probably have swings and stuff, too."

I said okay, so we kept our eyes peeled for the park, but we never did find it, probably because we were too busy swerving to avoid the big rocks that were all over the road.

In central Montana we stopped at a bar called "Tavern." When we walked in, we noticed that everyone had backed into the corners of the room, looking horrified. The sheriff inquired of us nervously, "Was those . . . SCOOTERS . . . you boys rode in on?"

"Yeah, they were, dude. What's it to you?" I replied intimidatingly.

"Oh . . . you isn't one of them 'scooter gangs' that have been busting up the towns 'round these parts, is you?" he asked with trepidation.

"Maybe we are," I answered, "and maybe . . . we are. Not. I meant 'are not,' dude."

Just then, a man pushed a woman toward us, and sobbed, "Here! You can do what you want to my wife, but for God's sake, please, leave me alone!"

"All right," I said, "we won't hurt anyone in here, as long as you . . ." I paused, swept my steely-marble glare . . . I mean, "steely-eyed" glare across the frightened crowd, and then continued, " . . . tell me where the restrooms are. I really gotta take a whiz. My bladder's about to burst!"

When I came out of the bathroom, the mayor said to me, "Look, we'll give you all of our money, if you just leave our town peacably."

"Oh, okay," I complied, "I guess we'll get something to eat in the next town, dudes. Let's move 'em out!"

As we were riding into the sunset, we heard the high-pitched revving of scooters behind us. We looked back - to see a group of what appeared to be renegade girl scouts, shooting cap guns, twirling plastic lassos, and singing Tex Ritter songs, pulling into the parking lot.

Nothing happened in Idaho.

THE "RABID" TOUR STOPS IN TUSCALOOSA

WE ALWAYS HAVE TIME FOR OUR FANS!

38. HOMECOMING

Yeah, well, once in Mountlake Terrace, we were furnished accommodations at the luxurious "La Cugaracha" motel. In the corners of each room, there were these little boxes that said "Coach Motel" or "Roast Motel" on the side. We asked the motel's manager what the boxes were for, but he apparently didn't understand, because he kept, like, pointing at the sign out in front that said "La Cugaracha" motel.

Unfortunately, none of us could speak Spanish. Actually, some of us, like Paul DeVoid, could barely speak at all. But, you know what they say - still waters die young.

Finally, the day of the Homecoming Assembly came, and we thought we'd better start writing the song we were going to perform.

After about a minute of really hard work, I said, "Why don't we take the intro from 'Yogurt From Another World,' the music from 'Sorry 'Bout That,' the words from 'Wood,' change the words around a little bit to make it fit the concept of Homecoming, and do that? That way, only Annette would have to learn anything new!"

"Wait just a darn -"

"Okay! We'll do it then! Wait about a minute, Annette. I really gotta take a whiz - I'll write the words while I'm doing that. I'll be right back."

A minute later, I came back.

"Here they are! And they're great!" I said.

This is what I wrote:

HOMECOMING

Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming is great
Pick up a date
Don't be late
There's no debate
Homecoming is great
Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming is great (yeah)
Lynnwood Homecoming (yeah)
Alderwood Homecoming (yeah)
Edmonds Homecoming (yeah)
But the best Homecoming
Is Mountlake Terrace Homecoming
Homecoming is Great!
Let's congratulate
The football team when they win!

You know, baby, Homecoming is for friends. (Homecoming is for friends)
Homecoming will never let you down or ruin your year. (make you cry)
Listen up! (what?) When all your friends have left you behind, and you're

alone and crying, where can you go? (uh . . . Homecoming?) That's right!
The organizers of Homecoming are there for you - always and at all times.

Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming
Homecoming

(FADE)

Later that day, we were backstage at Mountlake Terrace Senior High School, waiting to go on. Skip Carlson, the Auto Shop teacher, was giving a speech to the school out in the main gym.

"Let me tell you, boys and girls, we're really excited about this new carburetor we've got in the shop right now. Now everybody in Auto Shop can observe the rarely-seen inner workings of a carburetor. Let's remember that a CAR-BUR-E-TOR is an apparatus used to charge air or gas with volatile hydrocarbons to give it illuminative or explosive power."

We thought for a second that he was nearing the end, but then he continued, "Let's repeat it together, shall we? An-ap-pa-rat-us-used-to-charge-"

He had already gone ten minutes overtime, and he kept right on going. Ms. Klein came backstage, where we were running into the locker doors as fast as we could to help us get in the mood.

Paul practiced for work with a vigor he had never shown before.

"Remember," Ms. Klein began shrilly, "you have only <u>five</u> minutes to do your show, or else you're <u>expelled</u>!"

We courageously showed our utter defiance and open rebellion by sticking our tongues out at her after she had turned her back on us.

Just then, we noticed a silence out in the main gym.

It was time.

"And now, students," began the announcer, "a former student has put together a group to put on a little show for you. Yes, the band that no one would take responsibility for - the band that insists on playing their own instruments, no matter how bad it may sound - we're proud to have them here for you students today - they've just completed a massive tour and are now due to release a new album, entitled, 'I'm More Humble Than You Are,' in the next week or two. I'm sure you know who I'm talking about - I can't give you their name, but I can give you the name of their dog . . . <u>FIFI</u>!!"

A wild, frenetic chant began as the lights dimmed, enshrouding the main gymnasium in darkness. The Void, The Filler, and me got into position, and began playing the awe-inspiring intro theme from, "Yogurt From Another World." Annette waited backstage.

The chants grew louder and faster.

"Don't play - don't play - don't play!" was what we <u>thought</u> they were chanting at first, but then, we figured they were probably saying, "Yoplait - Yoplait - Yoplait!" like, yogurt from France - France being another world.

The lights came up slowly, with a hellish red glow focused on our twenty-foot FIFI monster, flames spewing from his mouth, his left paw turning a spit on which he was roasting alive a virgin porcupine (purchased at Antony's Sacrificial Supermarket). We were gonna have Pat, The Only One Who Would Ever, <u>Could</u> Ever Be The True Father Of The One Known In This World As Jason, You Bet, play the part of the Death-Poodle, but he was too busy disinfecting the toilets at the Pietro's Pizza Corporate Offices.

Annette slowly walked to center stage. He was wearing a tasteful pair of slacks and an attractive purple sweater. Hugh "Mungus" Rainey, our official bodyguard, stood behind him.

While we played the moody intro, Annette slowly surveyed the crowd. After a couple of minutes, he drawled, "He-e-e-ey, Mountlake Terrace! Are you ready to - as the saying goes - ROCK?"

His question was answered with screams and cheers, the crowd showing their unbridled approval with a volley of live porcupines. One of the porcupines hit Paul in the side of his head, and stuck there throughout the entire show.

Luckily, Paul didn't notice.

Annette ripped off his sweater and slacks to reveal a daring backless shirt composed of the ripped remains of about twenty different shirts stained with fake poodle-blood and blackberry jam from breakfast. His legs were covered with at least forty bandanas tied around leather chaps, with a dog leash for a belt.

He removed a pair of black sunglasses from his pocket, put them on, and screamed, "I THOUGHT SO! LET'S GO-O-O-O! WHO-O-O-O-O!! BRING ON THE COWS!"

At this, a flashpot exploded under The Void's feet, vaulting him fifty feet into the air. As he hit the ground, he started the bass line in perfect timing, and Joey kicked in with his drums.

I had a real feedback problem whenever I came within about twenty or thirty feet of my amp, so I started dancing out to the center of the gym. This was possible with a wireless amp system that I had borrowed for the occasion.

Annette jumped up and down, screaming incoherently. For some reason, he decided to change the opening lyrics of the song to, "WHO-O-O-O-O-O! WE FORGOT TO GROUND THIS MIKE! WHO-O-O-O-O-O! O-O-O-O-O-O-O-OW! A-A-A-A-A-AA-A-A-A-H! SOMEONE HE-E-E-E-E-ELP ME!"

What a moron. Always showing off. As the poet said, "He thinks he's so hot, but he's just a piece of snot."

I love poetry.

After I had danced to the other side of the gym, I turned around to see that everyone had left their seats and had crowded onto the floor, blocking my return to the rest of the band.

There was only one thing to do.

I ran out of the gym, through the parking lot, into the side door of the wrestling gym, down the hallway, up the stairs, opened the main gym door with my foot, and ran back to the stage. I had kept perfect time with the rest of the group.

It was just possibly the most incredible thing you might ever have seen, dude.

The entire school was crowded around the stage, slam-dancing with each other (and us), ripping off our clothing (and their own), and throwing bricks and steel ingots at the teachers. They threw smaller kids into the air, while the porcupines scurried for cover. They even burned their school books, and tore their team outfits to shreds.

Then came my favorite part: As we had rehearsed, The Void strolled over to me, knelt down, and put his neck on a papier-mache chopping-block. I raised my guitar over my head and pushed a hidden button, exposing what appeared to be a razor-sharp blade that rimmed the body of my guitar. A strobe light flashed, concealing our true actions, and I appeared to bring my guitar down on The Void's neck, completely severing what appeared to be his head. Blood appeared to gush out of his flailing body and pour all over the audience. I held aloft what appeared to be The Void's head, bounced it on the floor twice, and threw it into what appeared to be a basketball hoop.

The crowd cheered and roared for more.

"Yeah! Who-o-o, dude! BEHEAD ANNETTE, TOO!" they shouted gleefully.

The Void stood up and continued to play bass - headless.

Ms. Klein ran up behind The Filler and screamed, "STOP! STOP! Your time is UP!" pointing at her watch the whole time.

The Filler pretended not to hear her frantic shrieking and "accidentally" flicked the back of her skull with his drumstick. She slumped to the floor, unconscious.

But we weren't finished there. We lowered an effigy of Donny Osmond before FIFI, The Death-Poodle's mouth. Flames shot out, and the effigy was reduced to ashes. The whole time, we chanted, "Death to Don! Death to Don! Death to Don, and all of his kind! Hail to FIFI! Hail to US! C'mon, let's hear you out there! Hail to FIFI! Yeah, bring ON THE COWS!!"

The entire school chanted, "Hail to FIFI! Hail to YOU!" They raised their fists in the "bloody paw" salute, and FIFI did likewise.

Finally, as a final finale, we finished by setting off flashpots, dynamite, nitroglycerin, gun cotton, hand grenades, and depth charges, while we fled the city.

Scared, we had scarcely scurried to our scarlet scooters, when we heard Ms. Klein, screaming scornfully, "You'll never, ever play at this school again, for as long as you live, you scurrilous scalawags!"

We yelled back, "Hey, Sorry 'Bout That!"

HE'S RIPS LOOSE, LETTING THE HOMECOMING CROWD FEEL THE FULL SONIC FORCE OF HIS TRONIX MINI-AMP

ANNETTE WHIPS THE NUBILE TEENS INTO A VERITABLE HORMONAL FRENZY

39. I'M MORE HUMBLE THAN YOU ARE

Yeah, well, after we had returned to Duluth, we settled back into our normal domestic life. One evening, a week and two days after our electrifying performance in Mountlake Terrace, I was sitting in my favorite easy chair by the fire, reading the paper. Annette brought me my slippers and knelt beside my chair. I scratched behind his ears as a reward for his obedience.

After a couple of minutes, Annette said, "Boy, we really were excellent, weren't we? I guess we showed 'em who's boss, didn't we?"

"Yeah, the only bad part," I, like, reflected, "is that I guess now I'm not going to get that honorary sewing diploma the principal promised me before the show."

"Well, life always has its little . . . uhm . . . ya know?" Annette consoled.

"Um, yeah, yeah - I've always found that to be true. Definitely," I agreed. Sometimes you just have to overlook Annette's super-dumbness.

"You know," Annette began again, " what I thought was really funny?"

"When the mechanical FIFI monster put its paw down and crushed Joey's drum kit?"

"Well, yeah, that, but also -"

"When one of the depth charges went off prematurely right in time with the music?"

"Yeah, that too, but -"

"When the Science teacher tried to grab Paul's bass away from him and he got electrocuted?"

"Well, sure, all those things were real funny, but what I thought was really real funny was when the announcer said that we were coming out with a new album, 'I'm More Humble Than You Are,' in the next week or two! I mean, where in the world did he hear that?"

I was frozen in my seat. The announcer had said that! Who cares where he heard it - now all of our fans were expecting a new album. I glanced down at the paper in my lap, and groaned.

The front page headline blared:

NEW FIFI ALBUM - A HOAX?

Only 5 Days Left Before Time Runs Out For Struggling Rock Group.

What were we going to do? Our fans had been promised a new album within "the next week or two." Already, one week and two days had gone by. These are the times that fry men's souls. I mean "try." I turned my inner eye inward and looked deep within my inner self.

Ah, there's that spinach I had for breakfast, I thought. Whoa, dude - I had always wondered what my lungs looked like - ooh, they're all grey and rubbery-looking, like a whoopee cushion. Wow, there's a whole bunch of little blue -

"He's?"

"Uhm . . . yeah, what? Oh! Right! Annette," I said sternly, "make a pot of coffee. We've got to get to work."

Instead of making just a pot of coffee, Annette wisely mixed up some instant coffee in our bathtub and threw a space heater in to warm it up. We put a few logs and some of our smaller pieces of furniture

into the fireplace, and got plenty of paper and pencils. I got my guitar and my tape recorder, and Annette got his Mr. Microphone.

"Hey, good-looking! We'll be back to pick you up later! And it's great fun at parties, too! Jingle bells, jingle bells -"

"Knock it off, Annette! We've got work to do, dude!"

So, we started writing. Actually, I could have done a better job by myself, but Annette needs to feel included, you know? Plus, he kept my coffee cup filled, sharpened my pencils, and operated the tape recorder.

Three hours later, I had written all ten songs to go on "I'm More Humble Than You Are". Although we had only five days left to release the album, I felt we should try some new ideas to expand our interrogative style. I mean, "innovative," dude. We knew we could do it, so long as we could round up Joey and Paul.

We were just about to leave to begin our search for the two duds . . . er, "dudes," when, behold and lo, verily and forsooth, there Paul was. He was wearing a white suit, shirt and tie, and white patent leather shoes. He had a beautiful woman at his side, and he was clean-shaven. This was unusual, seeing as how Paul hadn't shaved ever when we had known him.

"Whoa, Paul, where are those hummingbirds gonna live now?" asked Annette.

I intervened, "Paul, it's great to see you. We have to do another album and release it in five days! C'mon, let's go to work!"

"I'm glad you brought that up," Paul answered. "I don't want to be The Void anymore. I'm sick of it all."

I put my hand on his shoulder. "Look, Paul, you can be Paulina DeVoidus, The Immortal Demigod Of Bass Guitaristry if you want. It's just that we don't have much time to -"

"That's not what I'm talking about. See, I went to go see Zig Ziglar, and I'm a different man."

"Who are you, then?" Annette asked.

Paul smiled benignly.

"I learned that today, or, actually, last Tuesday night, was the first day, or . . . night, of the rest of my life. I need my space, you know? Some . . . quality time to myself. You know, I've been thinking. Time . . . time is the slippery, viscid powerful tool of a malignant prestidigitator with nineteen thumbs. "

"What in the -"

"Ignore him, Annette. That's just his ghostwriter trying to make Paul look more intelligent in the book than he really is."

Annette gesticulated wildly.

"Listen, Paul, I don't think you understand, man! This project is going to be the raddest, most kick-horse -"

"Annette," I interrupted, "that's not how the phrase -"

"SHUT UP, HE'S! I'M ON A ROLL! Anyway, where was I? Oh, yeah - most kick-horse, butt-boogyin', wick-ed, violently vehement album ever commited to rubber!"

"Annette," I interrupted again, "I'm sorry, but the phrase is 'commited to vinyl,' not -"

"SHUT UP! I mean, if you don't do this album, Paul, you're a shrimpy, spineless little twerp! I swear to God, I'll kill you with my bare hands!"

"Annette, just calm -"

"SHUT UP!" he screamed, kicking our neighbor's beagle a full fifty feet.

"PAUL?! WHAT'S IT GONNA BE?"

Paul came closer and embraced Annette tearfully.

"Annette, I see where you're coming from, and I can get behind it - intellectually, but not philosophically. I'm sorry, but our roads to fulfillment have forked, much like Christianity in the Middle Ages. I just want to say that I love you both dearly, and wish you the best of luck, but I've got to follow my own path to personal enlightenment, wherever it may lead me. This is a time when friends need to recognize each other's differences, and respect them, and go about their own walks of life, and say goodbye.

"Besides," Paul added, "I got a promotion at work. Now, I'm a front window mannequin, and I'm working full time - sometimes even when the store is closed."

"You're sure you won't reconsider?" I pleaded.

"Listen, now that I've finally got some self-respect, you think I want to be in FIFI? Just remember, guys - today is the first day of the rest of - Aaaaaack!"

"I'LL KILL YOU, PAUL - I'LL KILL YOU! I SWEAR I WILL! I HATE YOU!"

"C'mon, Annette - let go of Paul's tongue, dude . . . "

We were not to see Paul until years later, a little while before his tragic death in a nuclear meltdown and his participation in the apocalyptic "soccer-game-to-the-death." But that's another story.

Joey had somehow gotten a new job assisting a dentist. Even though he had no previous experience, Joey was immediately hired as an anaesthesiologist and part-time tooth-loosener.

We spoke to Joey's boss, and worked out an arrangement so Joey could come to the studio with us.

"All right," said Joey's boss amiably, "Joey, you're fired."

Joey promised to meet us at the studio - Metrix studios, in Everett, Washington.

We never saw him again. (Okay, that's a slight exaggeration - we did, technically, if you want to be nit-picky about it, see him again, in a way, but . . . I don't want to get into all that stuff about the space shuttle and everything right now, dude.) Anyway, we believe he was abducted by the FBI on charges of racketeering and association with known Nyquil-dealers.

A number of, like, subtle and sublime clues led us to this conclusion, including a phone call we got from the FBI, where they said, "This is the FBI. We have abducted your drummer, Joey Enbom, alias The Filler, on charges of racketeering and association with known Nyquil dealers."

So, it was just Annette and I. We were two lone wolves, forced to be together, like two wolves, that are alone . . . but together.

We had booked the studio time, so we started recording. I played bass and guitar and keyboards, and programmed the drum machine, and Annette sang - some of the songs.

The following was not too uncommon a scene during these sessions:

"Come on, Annette! It's no big deal!"

"I don't understand!"

"Look, it's easy! We've gone over it a dozen times already! Okay . . . you ready?"

"NO!"

"WHAT'S THE MATTER, DUDE? YOU STUPID, OR WHAT?"

"WHAT?"

"I disagree! Stupid is much more fitting!"

"Look, He's, I just wasn't born a musician - this is too complex!"

"ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS PUSH THAT RED FLASHING BUTTON WHEN I POINT AT YOU!"

A long period of uneasy silence, then:

"WHAT?"

Not surprisingly, the multi-selling hit song on this album was "At Least I Saw The Jacksons," which I wrote and I sang and I played bass on. And I played keyboards, and I programmed the drums, and I mixed, engineered and produced.

James Brown and Prince and Morris Day were all recording in the same studio complex. When they heard my killer bass playing, they got so hyped, they barged right into our studio, and started being funky dudes. They started messing around with our drum machine, and screaming into the microphone various funky scats. We were pretty mad at the time, so we kicked them all out, and listened to the tape they had just ruined.

It sounded . . . well, pretty good, so we left it in.

These are the lyrics to the song:

AT LEAST YOU SAW THE JACKSONS

I hear your Dad got cancer
Your dog got hit by a car
I hear you broke your arm
While playing the guitar

I hear your parents got divorced
Your car got trashed by a train
I guess you flunked your algebra test
I think it's gonna rain

CHORUS:
But at least you saw the Jacksons
On their Victory tour
At least you saved your whole life
From going down the sewer

Did your family go bankrupt?
Are you in a financial bind?
Did your toaster go up in flames?
And did your cat go blind?

I heard you got electrocuted
You're in a "State of Shock"
I guess your boyfriend dumped you
Then drove off with your truck

The Avon lady mugged you
Ran off with your money
Except for her Doberman mauling you
It woulda been kinda funny

CHORUS

(BE FUNKY AND FADE)

PAUL AFTER SEEING ZIG ZIGLAR

And here's the lyrics to the album's title cut:

I'M MORE HUMBLE THAN YOU ARE

CHORUS:
You may have a nicer house
You may have a bigger car
Yeah, well, that don't matter, dude
'Cause I'm more humble than you are

I've always been more humble
More modest, and more meek
Your own Mom agrees with me
She said so just last week

My meekness knows no bounds
My humility has no end
That's why more people love me
That's why I've got more friends

My widely-renowned lowliness
You could never hope to touch
You wouldn't have the stamina
The effort would be too much.

CHORUS

People come from miles around
Just to watch me grovel and cower
You think you know how to whimper?
Try and keep it up for an hour!

I'm proud of my humility
And I have a right to be
'Cause there ain't many people
As humble as me

So go easy on yourself
And give up right away
You as humble as me?
Ha! That'll be the day!

CHORUS

TESTIFY, HE'S, TESTIFY!

40. HAVE SOME BREAD

Yeah, well, after the unparallelled success of "I'm More Humble Than You Are," we were approached by a high-ranking record company executive, and were offered our first glimpse at big-time graft, dude.

We sat speechless as he spoke.

"Listen, guys, all the companies have gotten together on a major project, and we want you to be a part of it! Oh, by the way, which one's Pink?"

We looked at each other, puzzled. I looked at the man straight in the eye, and said, "Yeah, well, neither one of us is pink. Our mascot, the Death-Poodle, is, though. Anyway, just what is this 'major project,' Mr. Exec?"

"Frankly, record sales are down to an all-time low. After much research, we've all decided the best tactic is to completely rip off the general public, just basically lie to them, confuse them overall, shove our products down their throats, like it or not, and take those idiots for every penny they've got!"

We both nodded gravely.

"Sounds reasonable," I said.

"Good plan!" Annette agreed.

"So we've devised a cynical, cruel, vicious plan -"

"I'm liking this better and better!" exclaimed Annette.

"- to forever destroy the minds of the record-buying public and make them our mental slaves - to force them into buying whatever records we put out, no matter how pitiful and rancid they may sound."

"I can see where you're coming from," I said, "It's a sort of a . . . 'money-making' plan . . . right?"

"Not only that. It's a literal takeover of all generations to come!"

"Aaaaaah. I see. That seems like a sound investment to me. How is it . . . that this plan would work?" I queried.

"I'm glad you asked. Every artist on every label has signed an agreement to go along with our plan. One month from today, every recording artist alive, and some that aren't, will release the exact same album - with the exact same songs, album cover and liner notes. All albums recorded prior to this date will be either discontinued or re-released with the new, common title. As a result, everybody will have to just buy more and more albums, hoping to somehow get the albums by the groups they want. We think our sales figures will rise dramatically. We want you to participate in this apocalyptic operation."

"NO WAY," I spat, "NEVER. WHAT KIND OF DEMONS DO YOU THINK WE ARE? YOU COMMUNIST DOGS! YOU . . . YOU CAT BARF! HAVEN'T YOU EVER HEARD OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH? FREEDOM OF CHOICE? AND THE FREEDOM OF EVERY COLORED MAN TO VOTE AS A FULL PERSON, AND NOT FIVE-EIGHTHS OF A MAN, NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE WEIGHS? NO WAY! AND THAT'S OUR FINAL ANSWER - PIGS!"

"Well, I respect your artistic integrity, Mr. He's and . . . Funyjello, but remember this: If you don't cooperate, we may have to audit your income tax statements of last year, on which you both claimed exemption due to priesthood . . ."

There was a long, uneasy silence, much like the one a few pages back.

Finally, Annette got up the courage to speak.

"Uhm . . . what's the title of our album gonna be?"

"ANNETTE!"

"The title of the album," the man beamed, " is going to be . . . 'HAVE SOME BREAD.' "

"Good title."

"Annette, shut up! Look, no way on God's Green Acres will I stand for this vile corruption of the Constitution, the Magna Carta, and the Rosetta Stone! I mean, even in the Book Of Toews (pronounced TAYVZ), right after Jason forbids us to have any of the fruit salad from the Salad Bar Of The Knowledge Of Good And Bad, He commands us, and I quote, 'Hey, my children, don't ever, ever release a record album with the title, "Have Some Bread." It's just not cool. Don't ask why. It just isn't! Okay?' Annette, Mr. Record Exec, there is no way that we can, with a clear conscience, calmly condone this craven corruption of the canonic Constitution, clearly."

"Well, Mr. He's, I truly admire a man with your . . . unwavering commitment to . . . spiritual values. I guess we'll just have to . . . publish those . . . photographs . . . of . . . "

"Would you stop pausing so much? Man, I can hardly keep track of what's going on!"

"I said, Mr. He's, that I guess we'll just have to publish those photographs of your ex-wife, Who's."

I knew I had better come up with a plan, real quick.

"Who else is gonna be doing this - besides us?" I queried.

"Oh, everyone - Anne Murray, Megadeth, Arthur Fiedler, The Cult, Kitaro, Venom, Barbra Streisand (she wanted to change the title to 'Color Me Bread,' but we didn't go for it), Boxcar Willie, Penguin Cafe Orchestra, 101 Strings, The New and Improved Christy Minstrels, Debbie Gibson, Bachman-Turner Overdrive - everyone who's anyone! And, of course, they'll all be released on 'Bread' Records, or our German subsidiary, 'Pumpernickel' Records."

We left this meeting dissected. Er . . . "dejected." We recorded the album, with a twenty-piece orchestra and guest musicians, including Buddy Rich, Les Paul, Al DiMeola, James Galway, Richard Clayderman, Andreas Vollenweider, Zamfir, and, of course, Bob Dylan on harmonica.

The music was all written, engineered, and produced by a computer.

After we were done, we sat around pretty depressed. Finally, we decided we weren't going to be pushed around. No way would we let those bigwigs take away our artistic control. I mean, when they told us that spitting blood and fire onstage was no longer acceptable, that was the last straw. We had a right to make our own personal, unique, statement, no matter how radical or bizarre some may consider it. We would rather be castrated and scalped than sacrifice our integrity as musicians.

When we finally came out with our album, "Have Some Muffins," it was immediately pulled from the shelves. However, rumors of our album survived, and the public rebelled, refusing to buy any albums until FIFI was allowed to release their album as they saw fit.

As usual, FIFI paved the world.

I mean . . . "saved." Saved the world.

41. PARADISE FOUND

Yeah, well, our fans were clamoring for a new album. We issued a statement to the press that read as follows:

DUDES, WE'RE GONNA DO A NEW, ORIGINAL ALBUM. WAIT FOR IT. SIGNED, FIFI.

We went into hibernation to prepare our next album. I mean real hibernation, dude. In a cave. I remember clearly our discussion on the title of the album.

"Is that a snake over there?!" Annette cried like a baby.

"I hope so," I replied, " I haven't had dinner yet, dude. You know, Annette, I really feel that the American male has an almost erotic subconscious obsession with cars, to the point -"

"What was that noise, He's?"

"Shut up, Annette. As I was -"

"I think there's a family of bears living back here, He's!"

"That may be, but quit changing the subject, would you? Now then, I've got it all figured out. I think it would be interesting if we would juxtapose the -"

"WAAAAAUUGH!"

"What in the world - For Jason's sake, would you cut it out?"

"HEEEEEE'S! THERE ARE RATS CRAWLING ALL OVER ME!!"

"Don't be such a chicken weenie, you wimp!" I reprimanded. "Anyway, if we could juxtapose this obsession with a symbol of childlike innocence, like, say, Mr. Rogers or Big Bird of Sesame Street, you know, we -"

"Aaaaaaaoh! MOMMY! I'm getting out of here! My Lord - Owww!"

"What is wrong now?"

"COCKROACHES!! They're all over me! Crawling into my mouth! Aaaaaack! That's it! I'm getting out of - mpppph! P-too! P-too! I'm getting out of here!"

"Annette, get back here! BABY! MAMA'S BOY! Who needs ya? Anyway, we'll call it, 'Captain Kangaroo Stole My Car,' okay?"

From outside the cave, I heard, "Aaaaaugh! Get OFF me! OFF! P-too! Out of my mouth! Aaaaack! I'm going home!"

Before we started work on the album, we went on a jungle safari, to commune with nature and purge our souls. Our guide was the best hunter. Everytime we went down the river, this hippo would come out of the water, and our guide would shoot it - with one shot - every time. She was . . . beautiful.

As our safari ended, our guide stood at the front of the boat, and said, "Thank you for visiting Disney World's Jungle Safari. Please exit the boat on the right side, and, if you wish to take the ride again, please go to the end of the line."

We went on that safari two dozen times, just so that I could watch her. She never missed that hippo - not once. Needless to say, I was quite impressed, dude.

After the sun set, and the safari ended for the day, we walked up to her to introduce ourselves. Before we could say anything, her face lit up, and she pointed at me.

"He's! You're He's of FIFI! I have all of your albums! Both of them! You're great, He's! I have your poster in my bedroom!"

Then she looked at Annette.

"And you're . . . uhm . . . uh, that other guy - the guy who sings the songs that He's writes, plays, engineers and produces! You're . . . uhm . . . "

"Annette," he offered irritably.

"RIGHT! Right, He's and . . . uhm . . . I'm sorry . . . "

"Annette."

"Annette, yeah. Wow! I love you guys! When are you coming out with your new, original album?"

"Well, we're working on it right now, babe," I explained, "but we'd like you to sing on it. What do you say, you fine specimen of womanhood? Heh, heh, heh!"

"Sure," she said, "but you gotta understand, I'm a pretty mellow singer. I don't - you know - 'get into it' too much. I just kinda . . . do it how I do it. I think that's a much more honest method of interpretation, and allows the listener to impose their own ideas on the material. Besides," she added, "I just never really liked singing too much."

"Okay, it's a deal, babe! By the way, what's your name?"

She pointed to the name badge on her chest. "V. Taylor" was what it read.

"Alright, V., let's get goin'!"

We went to the studio and started recording.

While recording the song, "Skippy's Outta Jail," which V. sang, a strange and wondrous thing happened.

Annette offered to play drums.

"You fool!" I roared. "You have never picked up drumsticks, or probably seen drumsticks, in your life! No way!"

"You don't understand," Annette defended, "see, I know this sounds weird, but . . . the spirit of Jason has entered me, and He will magically enable me to play drums!"

"You're right," I agreed, "that sounds really weird! That would work great, except Jason never played drums, either!"

"I guess He's been taking lessons or something in the World Where Things Are Much Better, Where Chestnuts Are Always Roasting On An Open Fire, And Jack Frost Is Always Nipping At Your Nose."

I thought for a moment, and then spoke. "That's right! In the Book Of Toews, right after He led his people to the 'Promised Taco John's,' Jason says, 'I say unto all the young dudes, you can play drums like a professional in only ten easy lessons, if you only have faith the size of a sesame seed.' Alright, Annette, go ahead. And Jason, if You can hear me, just be cool, okay? Don't go berserk or anything. And stop drumming when I say to, alright?"

There was no answer for a moment, then . . . Annette's stomach rumbled.

"Let's do it!"

The song went great, except Jason kept throwing in a weird shuffle that screwed everything up. At the end of the song, He just kept drumming. Finally, I said, "Jason, would you stop it? C'mon, stop playing! It's just - the song's done!" and He quit.

It sounded good (at the time), so we left it in.