



The MVEer Monthly

June 2020

Interesting Tid-Bits 'Bout Our Songs - by Niel Johnson

A few years ago, when I was living in North Carolina, I went to see two of my favorite 80's Pop bands, **Pat Benetar** and **REO Speedwagon**. They were playing at a rustic outdoor venue by the lake as part of the local town of Cary, NC's, summer concert series. When news broke of this bill, I immediately readied myself to get a pair of tickets, and I did-- 3rd row, center (perfect!).

The weather was perfect. Warm, a little humid, and light July breezy. **Pat Benetar** opened and did her set and it was fabulous. All the great hits I remember. The only glitch was when a squirrel ran across the stage in between songs, which scared her and made her jump. But it's an outside stage, to be expected, right?

REO Speedwagon then took the stage and delivered the big show they've been nailing for years. A big production for a small venue, but still with the lights, lasers, and smoke that bring a heavier-than-you'd expect set list. Wow!

So about half-way through the show, **Kevin Cronin** (*pictured here*) takes to the front of the stage and says he's gonna slow it down a bit. He introduces the next song as his favorite ballad, one that he wrote initially to be on the "Hi Infidelity" album in 1980. But it was so sweet, he felt it would be overshadowed by the other killer ballads on that iconic album that put REO on the pop map. Their next album, "Good Trouble," was already set for release in 1982, so they waited for their following album, "Wheels are Turnin'" in 1984 to feature it. Yes, we're talking about, "**"Can't Fight This Feeling."**



This song was always special to me. If I had a soundtrack for all my heartbreaks in the 80's, this one would be on side A, for sure. When I played piano at a bar in college, I played this one every night, and always felt it was

one of my better pieces. The lyrics and melodies just move with each other, like two people in love dancing close, without a care in the world.

There I was, so many years later, I was right there watching Kevin croon this one, not 6 feet away, and I was completely immersed in his performance. What a moment!

So, after the solos and riffs were played, and Kevin was moving into the tag, everything was about as perfect as it could be.

Until the last line.

As he sang, for the last time, "I can't fight..." a flying bug of some kind flew into his mouth and got caught in his throat! Maybe it was a cicada, or maybe just a fly, I don't know. But he started coughing and hacking and coughing and hacking until he coughed whatever it was up. Unfortunately, the music went on and he missed his chance to finish the tag. Always the performer, he apologized and laughed it off. The fans applauded his bravery and sense of humor, perhaps having witnessed his formal initiation to be an honorary North Carolinian.

Then he made the band replay the tag so he could sing it again. Maybe it still wasn't perfect, he had to clear his throat a few times, and there was no light show, but he made it.

Yes, it was perfect. Welcome to North Carolina in the summer, Kev. Don'tcha' just love live music?

Can't Fight This Feeling: YouTube Version
from Glee recommended by Mike Lietke
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9UBv0pdeLc>

And the Survey Says... by Bryan Ziegler

On May 30, I sent out an email to everyone with the subject line: **Rehearsal Survey**.

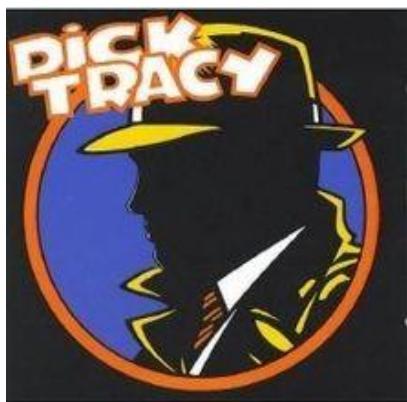
As we navigate further into uncharted territory, it's important that your feelings are counted and known as it goes to returning to in-person rehearsals.



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdO8IFzs_E7eYh9BS5sn-nwTD2f9TKSrGqzbGVDHzfV7ChCTQ/viewform
This survey is completely anonymous, so please feel free to express yourselves freely here. We will take into consideration both the feedback from this survey and current guidance from BHS, ACDA, and other musical organizations. Below is a link to a survey to gain perspective on your feelings on a return to in-person rehearsals. The survey doesn't take much time at all, so please let us know what your feelings are. We ask that you complete the survey by **Tuesday, June 2**.

News Flash:

No Zoom practice tonight, Monday, June 1, as the Pteam and others plan our future and await your survey results.

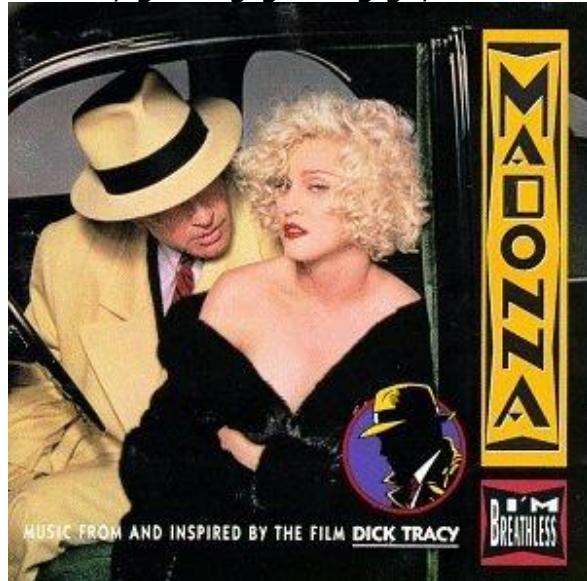


Back in Business

Bryan Ziegler and **Brian Plehn** have a plan for us to do a recording of our voices of the song, *Back in Business*. Keep practicing “*Back in Business*,” and we’ll see how well this project works out. You will be finding out how this can be done virtually or maybe some other way. Recordings are perfect for marketing our shows, getting great gigs, and refining our craft.

The song is from the June 14, 1990 **Stephen Sondheim** film, “**Dick Tracy**,” and was sung by a female chorus over a rapid montage in which gangster **Big Boy Caprice** (*Al Pacino*) resumes his criminal activities with **Dick Tracy** (*Warren Beatty*) languishing in jail.

Madonna is in the film as **Breathless Mahoney**, an entertainer at Club Ritz who wants to steal Tracy from his girlfriend (*Tess Trueheart*). She is also the sole witness to several of Caprice's crimes. Naturally, Madonna sang “**Back in Business**,” on her album I'm Breathless, taken from her character name in the film.



With our chorus just completing our 30th year, we are singing a song on its 30th anniversary this month in June 2020. Watch out for info on how we will do this recording.



The Green Army Set in Montreal by Bob Fichtner

Some of us have the DVD with our 2003 set recorded on it, but as sales of DVDs has languished, the Barbershop Harmony Society released last month both of our songs as we won 5th place and a bronze medal. Here are a few of the memories about that day.

It was the hot summer day of July 5, 2003 in Montreal Canada when the bus taking us to the contest venue, where we were scheduled to sing first in the International Barbershop Chorus Competition, was unexpectedly delayed by a parade. Arriving at the venue much later than expected, MVE hurried to get set up on stage while the son of one of our members sat in front of the curtain, in his pajamas, playing with a diorama of toy plastic soldiers. [EDITOR'S NOTE: *That was Jeremy Ganswindt, son of Scott Ganswindt.*]]

When we were finally ready, the curtain rose to reveal us as a life-sized version of that diorama. As the curtain rose, so did the audience, giving us a 90+ second standing ovation before we ever sang a note. We get goose bumps just thinking about that experience - standing on stage with our eyes closed (plastic soldiers don't have white eyes), the sound of cheers and clapping washing over us. We can at long last share that performance with you. Please enjoy the first song of the set - Green Army Men Medley #1.

<https://youtu.be/kdERjAD19rw>

At the conclusion of the first song that day in Montreal, the audience thankfully gave us another long-standing O - thankfully, because it gave us an opportunity to catch our collective breaths!

In between the two songs, a lone private (Private "Green" - LOL) [EDITOR'S NOTE: *Jim LaBelle* who is being instructed by *Jim Franklin.*] takes center stage,

practicing twirling and then checking out his rifle. We troops were a bit miffed when he was startled, twisting around while pointing his rifle right at us!

In our second song, the **Midwest Vocal Express** sang of all the horrors we endure as plastic soldiers - chewed on by cats, buried in the sand box, launched into the air via bottle rockets, and melted under magnifying glasses. But as hard as our life is - it's not easy being green - we wouldn't trade it for anything in the world. Humbled by our third standing O of the day, we were honored to place 5th that year, earning our second consecutive bronze medal. Here for your viewing pleasure is Green Army Men Medley #2.

<https://youtu.be/Um5aVEkvNS4>

Some Additional Memories from the Green Army Men Set –

Dick Marcus

This was my first International Barbershop Contest, so everything was new to me. For the several days we were in Montreal practicing and getting ready, we were given small green plastic army men surreptitiously to leave on benches, windowsills, and anywhere we could. We were building an audience to see us. So, the huge ovation that **Bob Fichtner** mentioned was in part due to the cool marketing stunt we had done.

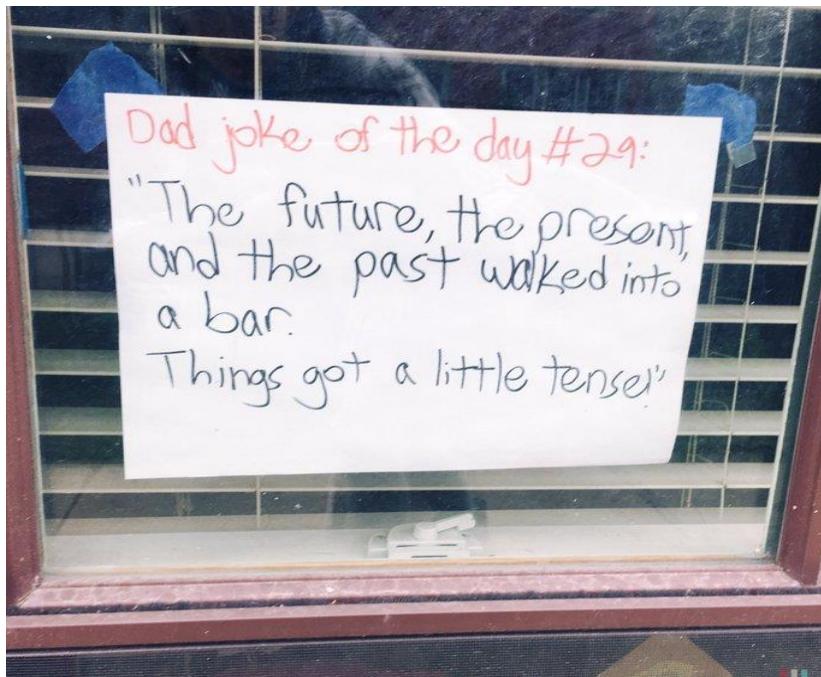
When **Jeremy Ganswindt** was out in front of the curtains stalling for time, he had bunches of these green army men, tossing some of them to the audience and judges, and some setting up for pretend battles right on the stage.



Besides the bus problem getting to the stage, we also had a problem on stage testing the "smoking machine" that was to melt **Bob Fichtner** (who stands high up on the "E" cube). *It wasn't working* and we weren't sure it would in the second song when Bob begins to melt. But, thank goodness, it worked just fine.

And although the reputation for Canada is snow and ice, July in Montreal was in the upper 90's. There was a huge Jazz Festival going on in Montreal as well as our BHS Contest. As we came back from the contest, many of us walked back to our hotel in green plastic army attire dripping in sweat with Jazz Festival onlookers wondering what was up with us? But we knew we had "put it all on the stage," and the heat and sweat were welcome.

Dad Joke Humor Signs Especially for Derek Balke



Source:

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-ent-daily-dad-joke-guy-covid-19-0526-20200525-ob2rztoosner7oxrex645hjdm4-story.html>

Dad Joke Day 26:
"How do you organize a
space party? You planet."

Dad Joke Day 22:
"Two satellites decided to
get married. The wedding
wasn't much, but the
reception was incredible."

