

THE HOOTERS ON STARDOM AND STAYING POWER

Rock 'n' Roll & a Comfy House

Eric Bazilian, C'75, is hiking through a national park somewhere in northern Sweden. Engulfed by the wilderness, Bazilian and his two youngest children – ages 4 and 6 – are on the lookout for wolverines, bears and all manner of forest creatures. “The countryside here is just amazing,” he says of his wife’s homeland, which the family visits each summer. “I used to have to force myself to come over here, and the carrot was that I could setup in the barn and write music every day.”

Two decades ago, Bazilian and Rob Hyman, C'72, were in the midst of an experience that was equally wild – but nowhere near as serene. With their band, the Hooters, they kicked off Live Aid in Philadelphia on July 13, 1985, before a capacity crowd at JFK Stadium and billions of people watching on TV worldwide. “We were sort of like deer in the headlights,” Bazilian says. “We were all concentrating so hard that it took a while to realize what we were experiencing.”

It was a high-water mark for the two friends, who met in an electronic music class at Penn and later achieved all the trappings of rock stardom – iconic singles like “And We Danced,” music awards and concerts with the likes of U2 and Bruce Springsteen. “If we weren’t writing, we were recording; if we weren’t recording, we were on tour,” Hyman says. “It was a time in music when worlds were colliding. MTV was new and amazing, and everyone was tuning into that nonstop.”

Unlike most of their contemporaries, however, the Hooters survived the '80s with their music intact. Apart from playing with the band, Hyman and Bazilian are known around the industry as first-rate songwriters and performers, having worked with such artists as Mick Jagger, Willie Nelson and Ricky Martin. Most notably, Hyman earned a Grammy nomination for co-authoring Cyndi Lauper’s 1984 hit “Time After Time,” while Bazilian received the same recognition after he penned Joan Osborne’s 1995 breakout single “One of Us.”

Bazilian recalls seeing Osborne play his composition to a packed house in Philadelphia shortly after its release. “I started feeling some pangs of jealousy,” he admits.



Eric Bazilian and Rob Hyman

“Then I realized that after the show, she would get back on the bus and drive for six hours and I would go back to my comfy bed and house with a studio in the back.”

After lying fallow for the last half of the 1990s, the Hooters were invited to perform at a 2001 concert in Philadelphia. The show led to a well-attended European tour in 2003 that has continued over the past three summers. When the multinational Live 8 concerts woke the echoes of Live Aid, the Hooters watched parts of the broadcast from a hotel in Germany while prepping for the tour’s closing night.

“We’re all very different people, but when we play live, something happens. It’s that simple,” Hyman says. “We’ve accumulated a lot of riffs over the years, and they’re exploding on stage.” He adds that their recent performances feature eight to 10 new compositions, some of which are planned for an upcoming album. “It’s a privilege to live a semi-normal life and for one or two months out of the year, get on a plane and be a rock star,” Bazilian says. “It’s still an incredible thrill to write a song and the next day go play it with the band.” ■

—JOSEPH MCLAUGHLIN

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