

Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois

Thom Swain Oral History Interview

Brendon Floyd, Interviewer

Edwardsville, Illinois

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Brendon Floyd (BF): Hi, this is Brendon Floyd, I am interviewing Thom Swain about, uh, his musical experience here in Madison County. Um, so to start off, ah, as a teenager, growing up in the area, I know you did not grow up in Madison County, but growing up in the area you got involved with music at a very early age; fourteen.

Thom Swain (TS): Right, yeah I was about fourteen years old.

BF: Can you expand on what got you into that, did you have an older brother who was influencing you? Did you start going to shows at a young age? What?

TS: Well, I loved music, I went nuts on music when, when the Beatles came around I was like seven years old and was a fanatic at seven years old. I was outside of Busch Stadium. We were poor people so I couldn't go to the show. But I stood out in the rain outside of Busch Stadium and listened to everybody scream and, uh, you know, later on, I just loved music and had zero talent. [laughing]

BF: Ok

TS: I tried to sing before and, at my best, I would have been below average, and I loved music too much to do that to it so.

BF: So yeah, so you mentioned that, so you got into the behind the scenes?

TS: Yeah

BF: Now how did that work out? You became a bouncer working at clubs, and you just got interested?

TS: Oh yeah, later on, when I was, you know, in my late teens, early twenties, I worked as a, well I started working at concerts in St. Louis for Contemporary and Panther Productions. I worked security down there and started just watching out, the goings ons of the music business and it really just interested me a lot and, um...

BF: Ok

TS: I just really enjoyed it and started in clubs, you know, just clubs I hung out at listening to music and I was always in Illinois, over here in Madison County, Alton, um, you know, just all over the whole area over here. There was a lot, a lot of clubs, Edwardsville, later on, owned a club there and it was just

interesting, you know, it was, it's always a, uh, it was kind of wild back then but the whole workings of I just loved. The effect music has on people and

BF: So there was a very vibrant music scene here in Madison County,

TS: Oh yeah

BF: In the sixties and seventies?

TS: Yeah, up through the nineties. Uh the live music scene in St. Louis was a lot better than in other cities, like Minneapolis use to be real strong. I had more Minneapolis bands playing down here, it was they had a, uh, a big hair factory up there or something and spandex and they would send them all down here, and uh, cause we had such, so many venues to work with that were open during the week and not just Saturday night places. So...

BF: And so did that start teetering off...towards the nineties?

TS: Yeah, yeah, the drunk driving laws I think had the biggest effect on the large clubs because the large, the larger clubs, like Stages, and Fat Cats, and, ah, Grannies, places like that, depended on people coming, you know, they depended a lot on the St. Louis crowd also, along with Madison County.

BF: So that's interesting, the drinking laws, you think...

TS: Yeah, it was...

BF: Correlated?

TS: It got real politically correct to bust drunk drivers coming out of night clubs because, you know, they knew those people couldn't, couldn't argue much. When they come out of there, they know they have had too much fun and the police would, ah, would sit on the side of the road and especially look for Missouri plates and pull them over.

BF: Oh, wow...

TS: Because even though we loved coming over here, I don't think the, the law enforcement loved the St Louis people coming over here.

BF: Now there was a lower drinking age here?

TS: Yeah there was nineteen when I was nineteen, at which, of course, didn't really mean anything cause, [laughing], Illinois was also famous for, um, door people with bad eyes that couldn't read driver license real well.

BF: So it was almost a free for all?

TS: Yeah, if you had three dollars in your hand you were usually old enough.

BF: So that, um, so let's go right into the Fat Cats thing, at twenty-five, you opened a club, here in Edwardsville, called Fats Cats. Um, why did you see a need for a local club here in Edwardsville?

TS: Well, actually I got involved with it just, um, a few months after it opened. Well, I got involved when it opened, I ran into some old friends of mine that know me from back in seventy-eight when I worked in a place called Rico's in Granite City. Which was a, it was a, very popular club, big club, real, kind of rough, rock and roll club...

BF: Ok

TS: and, um, I was a bouncer...

BF: Like a little punk in there?

TS: No, no, they were just, it was, back in those days they would have, like on Wednesdays and Sundays, we had beer blast, was they called it. And it would be three dollars and fifty cents to get into the door for the beer you could, all the draft beer you could drink.

BF: Wow

TS: So, you know, obviously a lot of bozos showed up, and it was, they had need for people like me to help get them out there, and...

BF: And how old were you when you were doing this?

TS: I was, let's see when I actually started working in there I was probably twenty-one.

BF: Ok

TS: About twenty-one, I guess. And, uh, worked there for a couple of years and got married and thought "oh, I need to get out of this," and quit doing it and then these guys tracked me down and, uh, I was working for Madison County at the time as a supervisor for tax assessors in Madison County.

BF: That is quite a change in, uh, [laughing] in careers

TS: Yeah, it was a, yeah, you know I was in charge of the guys that went around and did the assessments, and it was a, during the time I was there, there was a lot of investigations going on and news channels chasing us and all that stuff. It was kind of exciting and when I ran into these guys we were at the courthouse filing papers for their liquor licenses and stuff. They, they talked me into coming to work for them and, uh, I was working at a little bar in Granite City, and I was working a second job to help pay for my kid cause my wife was pregnant and we didn't have health insurance. So, back in those days you, you know, it was a good idea to pay the kid off before they were born. And, so I was working in a place, I somehow convinced my wife, at the time, that it would be just the same thing if I went to Edwardsville and helped them work the door and was a bouncer there. And after two or three months the two partners, um, split ways and I took over the one guy's, that I use, that was a friend of mine, that got me in there. I took over his part of it.

BF: Ok

TS: and, um, that was kind of a hard sell to my wife when I came home at about four o'clock in the morning half-drunk once and said uh: "hey guess what we bought?" [laughing]

BF: So, that must have been kind of exciting, though

TS: (7:02) Oh, yeah, for, and it was, um, it was, exciting, crazy, dangerous, for a twenty-five-year-old guy to own a rock, a part of a rock and roll club and to be running it. It was, um, yeah, my poor first wife, she, um, [chuckles] she would have probably have liked to burn the place down and should have, with me in it. But, um, yeah, it was, it was, really cool and we worked at that club, we worked with the bands a lot and we, we encouraged bands to do original music which, you know, nobody ever wants, wanted to do in the St. Louis area at the time. Most of the clubs wanted nothing but copied material. And we had the majority of ours was, but we also encouraged, we had a group, um, used to be out of St. Louis and they relocated New Orleans called The Sheiks which were real popular group back then and they would come in town and play at our club for three nights in a row and did nothing but originals and we packed the place every time they were there. And we had another, like a new wave band called Fool's Face. And, um, quite a few, um, original groups that came in and actually did well. And we kind had a different way of working; we worked with the bands and we were strict with them, but we also treated them great.

BF: Like what do you, what do mean, like what are some of the challenges you found working with bands of Fat Cats, like what do mean, strict?

TS: Well, they, you know, they were real easy for them to have too much fun.[laughs] When you become a local rock star it's, ah, you know, they party a lot, the drugs, alcohol, all that kind of stuff. And, um, you know, they would, they would try to you know, get away as much as they could, take breaks for forty-five minutes instead of a half-hour, um, you know, sometimes just do stupid stuff that bands do when, ah, and I was real strict, like I use to have a sign in the dressing room that said if you play, I forget what the songs were, *Cocaine*, *My Sharona*, and something else I would fine you fifty dollars. [laughs] It so a lot, it kind of became a joke. Somewhere out there I think there is a picture of that sign in the dressing room that had all my rules on it and all my fines on it. They didn't, so, but most of them knew, you know, they knew how we treated them. We treated like stars when they came, and we really took care of them, and in turn, I think we had, you know, a band would play there would do one of their better shows there. Just because of the vibe and the place and the way they were treated and, you know, they were treated well, paid well, and so, you know, they did a really good job.

BF: Can you describe Fat Cats for me? In uh ... in the sense of, like what, what did the building look like? How many people could be there? Um, you guys took over for the Grannie?

TS: (10:01) The Granary

BF: The Granary, Ok

TS: (10:03) Yes, yes, it was the Granary, and it was actually a granary at one time.

BF: Ok, ok

TS: (10:06) It was an old granary that they had converted. It had a lot of different levels. You entered in the basement, and in the basement, we had a deli, down there, and then we had, like, video games. And then you went upstairs, was the room which had, let's see, one, two, three, four; four different levels up there and about five separate bars scattered around the place.

BF: So this is large...

TS: (10:31) Yep

BF: This is very large...

TS: (10:33) Yeah, it was a good size club, and our fire code was, I think, like five-fifty but several times we had like fifteen hundred in there one night when we got shut down.

BF: Wow

TS: (10:44) We had Leslie West playing there, from Mountain...

BF: Yeah, yeah, absolutely

TS: (10:48) and, uh, we had cops, ah cars lined up and down one-fifty-nine. It used to be a little two-lane road, at the time, and we had cars lined up all the way down there and the, what was his name, Dickman, was the chief of police. Him and the fire-chef showed up and came in and started busting my chops about, "We know there are way too many people in here" and "what are you doing" and, you know, I said, "God, I just found it hard to turn people away", you know, I wanted to make money tonight. And just about had him calmed down and then my partner came down, who was a short guy with that Napoleon complex. And, uh, he, uh, they were just about ready to leave and then he walked out and "what the hell do you guys want" and he was a real smart ass guy. And, uh, he told them, he said, "well, if you notice, I got my shark coat on tonight" and as soon as he said that I just cringed cause I knew what was coming. He looked at him, and he said: "that so you can kiss my ass." And so, right then they said, "shut it down." We had to go up and stop Leslie West set about half way through his set and tell everybody they had to leave. So, we, fortunately, got everybody out without a riot. So it was, um, but we had put a lot of people in there.

BF: Well, that leads me, leads me, what was the relationship with Fat Clubs with the overall community? Was the community excited to have you guys here?

TS: (12:22) No, no, I don't think so, the neighbors were differently not excited, I felt sorry for them. We tried to patrol the parking lot as much as possible. But, like I said, it was the early eighties, people were just nuts, [laughs] and you know, after they come out of rock and roll club that neighbors complained like people sex in their yards, and urinating in their bushes, and...

BF: Oh god.

TS: (12:42) and you know, a little party going on out there. So, I don't think a lot of the locals were real thrilled about us, the establishment. But we did contribute a lot of tax money cause, you know, a lot of money went through there. And, um, but the, you know, they also seen it. We had a large St. Louis crowd and they, you know, they were never crazy about all the St. Louis people coming over here to get stupid and, uh, you know...

BF: I could, I could understand that...

TS: (13:13) I don't blame them, I, uh, I completely understand and it was, uh, but we had a good relation, relationship with the police department most of the time. There was, um, Scott Evers, um, was a patrolman back then, he later became, I don't know how far he went in the department but pretty far. He just recently retired. And, there was him and gosh, I can't remember the other names but they had a real good relationship with us, and they knew we were, we would try and talk people out the door rather than beat them up and throw them out the door. Cause that's, at the Grainery they had a bunch of think neck wrestler, jocks in there and they liked to fight and beat people up.

BF: What happened to the Granary?

TS: (13:57) Uh, they just, they just ran their course and, you know, just started slowing down for em' and I think he had probably made enough money to last him a long time.

BF: Were they also a music venue?

TS: (14:09) Yeah, yes they were, and they were real popular. I, as a matter of fact, it was funny, when I worked, during the time of the Granary was there was when I worked at Rico's. And on Thursday nights we were dead and the Granary was packed so we would, the bouncers, we'd go out there and party and get in fights with the bouncers from Granary for entertainment. [laughs] So it was, um, pretty crazy. But they, um, yeah, I don't know what was the final straw with them, but I think Chuck Morris, the guy that owned it, I think he just had enough and, you know, he had it for quite a while, and it was a, it was a legend. The Granary was really a, it was of them biggest main night clubs in the whole St. Louis area.

BF: Really?

TS: (14:58) Yeah, it was really a real popular place. And, uh, you know, we, we wanted to get in on their, you know, their reputation and stuff. Well not on their reputation but their popularity.

BF: Were they bringin' in the same type of music as you?

TS: (15:12) Yeah, yeah, a lot of the same, you know, in the music, music, business at that time, there would always be like five really hot bands, and you had have them. You know, to keep your, because back then people would travel long distances to follow a certain band which they just don't do that much anymore because of the drunk driving laws and all that. Which, which eventually put the end to Fat Cats.

BF: Ok, and was it a smooth transition from the Granary into Fat Cats?

TS: (15:45) Oh, yeah

BF: just one, kind of one week it was the Granary...

TS: (15:49) No, they were closed for a little while, I don't how many months they closed before we took over but...

BF: Why, and you guys picked Fat Cats as the name because?

TS: (15:57) Yeah, they were, well um, my partner was sitting around, him and his wife and a couple of friends, probably enjoying some alcoholic beverages and things at the time and they had a cat called Fats. And, it was a giant cat, it was just an enormous cat, and they said something, the, um, Shari, Lou's wife said something about "You fat cat" and everybody went "Fat Cats" wow... [laughs]

BF: That's it... [laughs]

TS: (16:26) and they were, they were all over that, and, um, you know, it just stuck, and we came up with a very cool looking logo there that everybody liked and so that helps sell t-shirts and jackets and that kind of thing.

BF: Absolutely, so, um, describe to me, um, what was one of your best memories of Fat Cats? What was something, when you think about it just pops into your brain?

TS: (16:48) We use to have, um, these all day, we would have an anniversary party every year. Which the grand opening, we did on the same day as the grand opening, the first week of August. Every year we would do an anniversary thing, and we had Mama's Pride, which was a big act in the St. Louis area...

BF: Mr. Liston, right?

TS: (17:08) Yeah, Pat Liston and Danny Liston and I had been friends with them for a long time. They played there, a group, a country group, that was big back in the day when there was not really much country music going on, and there was a group called Aero-Memphis(?) and, um, they played. A group called Foustous(?) which was probably, probably the best cover band that has been in the St. Louis area.

BF: And were they just randomly cover or they were decided to a certain band?

TS: (17:41) No, they did everything, they did a lot of, a lot of stuff other people couldn't cover. They did *Bohemian Rhapsody*...

BF: Wow

TS: (17:49) which Queen does not even do live without taped vocals and stuff and they used to pull that song off...

BF: Wow, that is some talent

TS: (17:57) that's a tough song to pull off and, um, you know, these guys, like I said, they were, it was Danny and Larry Hagley were the two brothers that started the band and they were just they did like David Bowe, Genesis, that type of music, A little more complicated than three cord, bang your head rock. And, um they were always giant draw. Giant Draw.

BF: Ok, so they sell out every night, kind of...

TS: (18:27) Uep, and then, same was with Mama's Pride and the other ones but when you put them all together, for an all day party, it was, it was, epic.

BF: You guys did this once a year?

TS: (18:36) Yeah, we did that once a year, and we just had, there were so many good times there, you know. We did a lot of, ah, we worked real close with the radio stations. We use to go over and make our own commercials, and they did a lot of KCD and KWK at the same time did a lot of big promotions with us and concerts. We had a group called the Zebra which was a big rock band in the early eighties and, um, the first venue in this place they every played was Fat Cats and they promoting their album and came in and about blew the doors off the place.

BF: Um, what was one of um, your hardest memories at Fat Cats? What was one that kind of sticks out?

TS: (19:24) God, just the, um, well the closing of it was probably the worst, the worst memory of it because it was you know it all kind of politically motivated. You know they just kept putting the thumb on us harder and harder with the drunk driving laws. Which I understand because it is a horrible thing and later on I had a taste of it personally, my ex-wife and two kids were hit by a drunk driver...

BF: Oh, that's terrible, I am sorry...

TS: (19:55) and we received really serious injuries and, um, son ended up dying over his mental issues from the accident. And so it's, you know, I understand the importance but they, they just kind of cherry picked certain places and picked on them, and you know...

BF: Were you guys one of the larger...

TS: (20:15) Yeah, we were one of the larger clubs in the area, and so we were a good target, you know, and I get it, but it was sad because we also, you know, we also did stuff for the community, did benefits and stuff like that, and when, you know, we wanted to show them that, you know, we may be crazy rock and rollers, but we still care you know.

BF: You wanted to give back a little bit...

TS: (20:38) Yeah

BF: Uh, so did that happen really fast, like they kind of started coming down on the law and within a month it was like...

TS: (20:44) Yeah, it was about, it was about, probably about, a year. I guess it just started to get worse and worse and it was, people were just afraid to come there, you know. And so it just fizzled out and then we had a guy that was going to put some money into the club and become a partner and do some big promotions, and he was one of those that was dreaming, and you know, it never happened so when ended up having to shut down.

BF: Oh, and today it is where the Plant Fitness is, right? No

TS: (21:14) No, it is where quick trip is

BF: Oh, where the Quick Trip is...

TS: (21:17) Yeah, Yeah

BF: Ok

TS: (21:17) Yep, there use to be railroad tracks right there, by where, um, Lowes, or um, Home Depot is, there use to be railroad tracks that went through where, right about in the middle of that place I guess, and we were on the other side of the tracks.

BF: Now I have to imagine that you guys were a big draw for the college, right? The college had been around at the point for about twenty or thirty years right?

TS: (21:41) Yep, yes, we have a lot, we'd have, you know, special nights where they got in free with student I.D. and stuff like that

BF: Did you pull a lot of musical talent from the campus?

TS: (21:50) Um, not a whole lot really and I don't know why it was, you know, we were using, like everybody else, like I said, all the top groups and the in the St. Louis area and there just wasn't much coming out there...

BF: Ok

TS: (22:07) You know, as far as rock bands in the area...

BF: So, once Fat Cats closed because of the all the issues, uh, what, did you think about opening another club? Were you wanting to, where did you go from there?

TS: (22:23) Well, we had talked about it, and we're going to do it, and then I think that we were both just really burnt out, probably on each other and the business. And I did nothing for about a year [laughs] cause the hours you work when got a night club is, it's just, just, you're there, it's all twenty-four seven,

you are always there, you are always working and, and I took off about a year and then a guy that I use to book bands through Ike Haislar, out of Collinsville, um, talked me into coming to work for him.

BF: Ok

TS: (22:57) And I started out, I was managing a group called USA, who were, there were guys out of some of the top bands around here, they had gotten together and, um, they were really talented but not real smart. And so, I got involved with them and said: "Hey, give me three or four months and see I can get your money up and if I do pay me." And, um, within about a month they started paying me and, um, they grew into it a really popular band.

BF: Was that still under the umbrella of Haislar?

TS: (23:31) Yes, yes they were working for Haislar and that how I kind of got, well actually, the first time I meet Ike, um, the booking agencies used to be really dishonest. And they would book like I was talking about earlier, Faustus was a great, great band, a great draw, they would book Faustus into three different clubs and then the week before they would call and say "oh, my god we just seen we messed this up we are going to have to move your date", and then that they way they could put one their crappy bands in there.

BF: Oh, oh, so they snuck bands in that way, oh, that's sneaky, that, uh...

TS: (24:08) and I went up there, I was ready to go punch them in the nose, and I went up there really pissed off and went in and within about twenty minutes we were friends and I left patting each other on the back and, I don't know how he did it, but he was a great bullshit artist and, um, he got me turned around, and we became really good friends and are still friends to this day. And, uh, so, it was interesting.

BF: How long were you there for?

TS: (24:35) I was with Ike for, I am thinking about two years. And, um, like I said, the thing, the dishonesty stuff that went on, I told them that has soon as I started, I said: "you can do this without lying to people, it can be done." And, it was funny cause there was three major agencies in St. Louis at the time. There was Buckman Productions, there was Haislar Productions, and then there was Contemporary which their local strand of their business was called Continental. And it was funny because everybody thought they were in competition, but every day all three of them were on conference calls all day talking about how they were going to screw somebody. And, um, I told them, I said, "I'm not doing this and it ain't going," and they laughed at me and they said, "Oh, you will get over that honest shit, don't worry you'll get over it." Well, I never did, and I left Ike's and started Swain Productions and pretty much ran all of them out of business.

BF: Really?

TS: (25:38) Yeah

BF: So it was just the dishonesty of the business as far has taken advantage of venues...

TS: (25:43) Yeah, they took advantage of the venues and the bands. They decided who could play and who couldn't play and it was all, you know, too, a lot of the wrong motivations. And I just, being a club owner, I knew what that felt like from that side and then working with a band and managing a band I know what felt from their side too. And so, you know, it took a while to, cause these clubs were, it was just like my job now, I sell cars, and people look at you, and the first thing they think is, is this guy a crook. You know, right off the bat you are a crook. And that was the same way with the, with the booking agent. You know, they automatically classified you as dishonest and, but I would spend a lot of time with the club owners, going in there and hanging with them and just letting them know that I was on their side and, you know, that we could do this together and be successful, everybody could be more successful. It, you know, over a couple of years' time I had the exclusive booking agreements with quite a few, you know, of the clubs all around the St. Louis area. And so it kind of got to be, you know, where if you wanted to, you wanted to play in St. Louis you had to, you know in the St. Louis area, Madison County area, you had to go through me cause I had most of the good clubs I was booking and, um, it was rough at first. You know, other agents got their feathers ruffled and didn't want to...

BF: So they were not very happy that you went out and started this and that you were fomenting these relationships that, were they feeling like you were on their territory, you needed to get off? Or....

TS: (27:24) Yeah, I was a new comer that, you know, they didn't, they didn't care for what I was doing cause it was eliminating their bullshit and, uh, and, but it worked great, you know, it was, I enjoyed that so much because we, you know, everybody made money, everybody was happy, had some good times, and it was, we did a whole lot of benefits and stuff like that and gave back and just tried to prove to people that, you know, we are idiots, but we're nice idiots.

BF: So, what was, if you could say your mission statement for Swain Productions? What would that be?

TS: (28:03) Well, just, just, honesty and have fun. It was always my, like right now, what I do with Swain Productions, I tell everybody, every band that I work with, I said: "If these isn't fun, I am not doing it." It just becomes a thing where I have to have a little pissing contest with you, see yeah. Cause I do this now cause I want to not because I have to.

BF: Absolutely

TS: (28:28) And so it's, ah, it's kind of one of those things where, you know, and for the most part it works great, you know, if you just keep that in mind of this has to be fun and no need to deceive people or pull any crap, you know, just go out and put on the best shows possible. I like to work close with the bands and, you know, make sure they are doing everything they can on their end to make it better for the crowd.

BF: Absolutely

TS: (28:56) and, because the people, I use to get on bands that would, if there was only fifty people in the club, they wanted to screw off and clown around and I said, "Hey, look these fifty people paid to see a show, so I don't care if there is one of them there, give them the show." You know, you want to act goofy,

do it afterwards and, um, it was – and it was funny because a lot of, one of my bands, um, was called Broken Toys, they later went on to get a record deal has King of the Hill and when they were off touring with Extreme and bands like that they all said, "Man, you guys, are so polished and everything, how did you" and they said, "well, the guy that we fok for would work us like twenty-eight days in a row without a day off, and he would show up most of the time making sure we were doing what we were supposed to be doing and it, uh, you know, it paid off for them." And they had an edge on a lot of bands they played with because they were, you know, they had went out and did the work and, uh, took it seriously. And it was, uh, it was good to see it happen, they had a couple of videos on MTV and so, it was, it was, back when they use to have videos on MTV. They use to actually play music on music television.

BF: Um, when you started Swain Productions, you said the first couple of years were difficult?

TS: (30:18) Well, they weren't real difficult, but it took a while to get everything built up because I had two other agencies coming after me, you know, trying to trip me up everywhere.

BF: What would that look like?

TS: (30:30) Well, they would try to, they would try to block me in clubs, and they would try and, you know, they were trying to do what I was doing, but it was not working for them, so they weren't happy. And so they, they had some bands and then one by one they just started dropping off and coming with me and, um, Buckman, he voluntarily got out. He was, he wanted to go to California, so he took off. Continental not so much, I use to have them, um, a letter from their lawyers and I had framed, hanging up in my office of them threatening to sue me.

BF: Really? For...

TS: (31:11) For tortuous interference of contract and...

BF: Really?

TS: (31:15) Yeah, stuff like that, they were, you know, they thought I was a gangster or something like that, and they thought I had heavies out there getting all of this and, you know, I don't know what they thought, but they, you know, said I was saying bad things about them and I just, I just, a lot of my clubs that were, it c would cause problems when, if they would have been honest about everything we could have worked together. And, you know, I worked cause, I have worked with a ton agencies, like of town agencies and stuff would book through me, and I would book them into clubs and it worked great. They made a little less money but they got into places and it was, you know, it was fair. But they didn't, they didn't particularly like that and, um, but I had a lot of clubs that I just made an agreement with, of, I will give you all the best bands that I got and, you know, take care of you but I want to book your club exclusively. And I will get you, anybody, you want, but you just book it through me.

BF: Now was that something the clubs were interested in because it just mainstreamed things, like make it a little easier for them?

TS: (32:26) Yep, it was, they just had me to deal with and they, most of them knew I was not going to lie to them, and then I had great bands and that I actually followed up all the time. I have out six nights a

week, you know, five different clubs a night, checking on things and making sure everybody was doing what they were supposed to be doing.

BF: Working has hard as the bands were...

TS: (32:48) and the other agents, they would, a lot of them, never even seen them in person before. Like Ike Haislar, he was, was one of the biggest ever and most bands had didn't even know what he looked like cause he would never go see them. You know...

BF: So one of the charms for Swain Productions was that you were right there, very accessible, very...

TS: (33:06) I was very hands on with everything, with the clubs and the bands...

BF: Now you created a band too, I read, um, within Swain Productions, I think it was a Ted Nugent cover band...

TS: (33:17) Silver Bullet...

BF: Silver Bullet, yes...

TS: (33:18) The Bob Seger one, that's, I kind of got out of everything for a while and, um, well, I guess it was about twenty years ago I got married for about the third time. And I thought, maybe I ought to get out of that business so that I will stay married for more than five or six years.

BF: Do you think your business had a lot to do with...

TS: (33:36) Oh yeah, yeah, I was a wild manic and, um, the women, sex, drugs and rock and roll, you know, I specialized in all of them. And, um, so it was, so I kind of got out and was just doing a few things part-time. And, um, but I, you can't get it out of you once you have that in you. It just tugged at me all the time and so a real good friend of mine, one of my best friends, he could sing exactly like Bob Seger. I mean he sounds just like him. He was only in one band for most of his life and he just a bass player, he was never a lead singer. I kept trying to talk him into doing this, and he was scared to death. He had only played with those certain, I said, "Just let me put a band together for you and we'll get together and play about six songs and see if it gels." You know, and, um, so there was a band I was booking occasionally called Arbagast. They had some great players, and, I mean, these guys...

BF: And were they from Madison County too?

TS: (34:39) No, they were, where were all those guys from, there was, well the drummer actually from Madison County; Greg Bishop. Who is a guy that would be a great person, I don't know if you have seen his website, STL yesterday, stlmusicyesterdays.com

BF: Ah, he would be another good interview, too

TS: (34:59) Oh, yeah, yeah, a great one. He has got, he has compiled such a collection of all the bands, the clubs....

BF: He is he the one the runs website that has different club in St. Louis, and you can get the pictures...oh, ok

TS: (35:13) Yep, yep, that's Greg, he is the drummer in that band, and I and him have been friends for thirty years or whatever, and, um, he was kind of my friend in that band. You know, we, we got started in the, and it was kind of funny because none of them wanted to do it. You know, they said, oh that's not going to work, and we don't really care that much for Bob Seger. And I said, well I think this will work, he has got a lot of hits songs and, um, so they got together and rehearsed a few songs and then I took Steve out, the singer, to one of their jobs and had him sit in with the band and do it and the response was just insane.

BF: It was just magic they just ...

TS: (35:51) Um, yeah, they just go crazy over him and, and they've been together now for about five years, I guess. And, uh, just, it's funny, up north, up around Chicago, there is a city up there, Ottawa, that I mean they drag in seven thousand people for a show up there...

BF: Really?

TS: (36:09) They, I mean, there are just, I guess, I don't know if it's because it is close to Michigan or what it is but they just love them up there. And, um,...

BF: So that, that was the band you started managing after you took, like, a hiatus...

TS: (36:21) Right

BF: Right, so I want to jump, really, back before the hiatus, so what drove you, was it just the overworking that got you into the hiatus from Swain Productions?

TS: (36:29) Um, no, just wanting to stay married, and get myself... [laughs]

BF: Your family, who could blame you...

TS: (36:34) I, I thought let's try this way this time and I quit drinking, and drugging, and all that crap that I was doing because it was just, you know, you get to the point where it is no fun anymore. And I was a serious drug addict for about seven years. Freebasing cocaine like maniac and thought I was a rockstar...

BF: Is that a big problem here in Madison?

TS: (36:57) Yeah, it was at the time, know it is all heroin, is the problem now which is even worse, I think. But it was one of those things where cocaine opened a lot of doors for you in the music business. You know, if you had all that you could go talk to the guys in Fleetwood Mac or whoever happened to be in town that day...

BF: Come on in... [laughs]

TS: (37:20) Come on, come on, you know, and so it was stupid, but it was just part of the times and you know I finally figured out I wasn't going to live if kept doing that. [laughs] So I, I cleaned my act up, and I just wanted to stay away from the environment for a while. I had actually quit drinking and still out working in the clubs and drinking seltzer water for quite a while...

BF: That must of been difficult...

TS: (37:45) Well, you know what it was actually, it was, it was kind of weird because I had been addicted to just about everything you can be addicted to, but for some reason, if I get pissed off [snaps] you know, I just like to, I was freebasing two ounces of cocaine a week...

BF: Jesus

TS: (38:01) and quit...

BF: Just like that

TS: (38:03) by myself.

BF: Wow, no rehab.... nothing, hats off

TS: (38:07) And I had been to rehab before and did, I went straight from rehab to my buddie's house to get some weed. [laughs] It was like, it didn't work well with me, but I was able to do it, and it's, it's kind of funny because I always think God must have had a hand over me because all of the things I did that were so ridiculously stupid and dangerous and I had been shot, I had been stabbed, I been run over by a car, you know...

BF: Holy cow...

TS: (38:33) a lot, a lot of crazy stuff and, um, you know, I always made it through and never went to prison, which I should have cause I was doing a lot of things I shouldn't have a been doing. Should have been dead several times, I would OD on the stuff and have seizures and it was insane and, uh, I finally, that's how I ended up dealing with music in church was, uh, after I quit doing it all and then I started thinking, man this is still screwed up, you know, I am straight now, but there is still something missing. And I accidently ended up in church [laughs] ...and of course, I wanted to change them too... [laughs]

BF: So was that kind of a spiritual conversion that happened?

TS: (39:18) It was, it was kind of a funny thing because the music was such a, it was funny how music can just, is involved in everything that I do parctaully because I had a friend and, you may want to cut this out, but it was, I went one Wednesday night, a friend of mine called me, said what are you doing, I said, oh, sitting on my ass watching TV and enjoying the quiet. He goes, where are your wife and kids? I said, they are at church, and he said why are you not there? I said, did you hear what I said, I am at home, sitting on my ass enjoying the quiet and I said, why would I want to go there? And this guy goes, "that's

bullshit." And then he started making these Bible quotes, and he said "You are the leader of the family, what kind of example are you setting and he was a friend that usually goes along with "everything you said, and I was like what the hell and he kept saying it over and over; "Bullshit". All, that whole week, this is the weirdest thing ever, was I don't keep hearing the Bible quotes over and over, I kept hearing bullshit over and over...

BF: Like a broken record?

TS: (40:27) Like a broken record in my head and the following Wednesday, it was funny because, I was, we were sitting at the table here eating, and I said: "I am going to church with you guys tonight." And they all freaked out; they were like, "what are you going to do? Make some kind of seen or something? [laughs] We don't want you going." I said, "No, I want to go check it out." I walked into that place, and it was during their praise and worship, and people had their hands in the air and they playing this music, and I thought, oh my God what a mistake I made, I can't handle these people, they're freaks. [laughs] And, um, the music is horrible, [laughs] you know, I was thinking, god I can't stand this music. And, um, I was about ready to turn around and walk out, and I stayed and then the pastor there, Derek Carson, come out and started talking and we just had an immediate connection. And, gosh, like two weeks later I was there running sound for them, and he asked me about, you know, "What do you think of the band.." and just kind smiled, and he said: "No, really, what do think of the band?" I said, "Well they kind of suck." And he said, "Well do you think you can fix them?" Cause, actually Daren had been a customer at Fat Cats.

BF: ok

TS: (41:37) He knew my name from Fat Cats and knew that I was in business and stuff and so, you know, I started working with the bands. And then we, we, um, just became real close and I ended up being their director of corporate worship. They were trying to open another campus in O'Fallon, IL at the time and so we went around, and it was like a one-night stand. We took, I put a band together, and we would go set up and play church on Sunday at some banquet hall or something.

BF: Now did you pull from the bands that you knew? Or did you pull from the congregation?

TS: (42:10) Uh, no, well there was one guy in the congregation, and the rest of them just had auditions and found these guys. Put ads on social media and stuff and, uh, and we found these guys and, um, you know, it was, these guys were good because every week I would make them learn like five songs every week. They come in and...

BF: That is a hefty, uh, for, for, a band. I have played in one or two, and that's...

TS: (42:36) Yeah, I had five songs a week, and we come in about two hours before the service and run through the songs and get them done. And these guys said, there was a guy, in particular, the keyboard player, he said, "You stretched me further than anybody ever has," he said, "Hell no I can learn five songs and get em together..." But they did, and they were...

BF: How did you pick the songs?

TS: (43:00) Um, I would try and find out what his message was and I would try to find songs that went kinda along with that and something interesting that I did was, during the time that I was doing this was, every week I picked out a secular song, that would go along with the, with the message, and I thought it was a good idea because I remembered that feeling I had when I walked in heard that shitty music [laughs] and wanted to leave. And I thought, you know cause when you walk in church, like me, you know because I hadn't been there in my life, you know, and I was like fifty years old when I walked in there and, you know, I had always thought if they heard a song that they could actually relate to and would relax them a little bit and say, "Oh hey these guys are so bad." You know...

BF: Ok

TS: (43:46) You know, and so, you know, we would have songs like "Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow" or, you know, songs like that, that just had a good message.

BF: Uplifting and positive...

TS: (43:56) And, uh, I think it really helped a lot of people, a lot of people use to come to comment on it; "That really was great."

BF: Have you seen the congregation grow since then?

TS: (44:03) Oh yeah

BF: Quite a bit?

TS: (44:05) It's grown quite a bit

BF: How long ago was this? That you started this?

TS: (44:05) Um, God, when did we start doing it, six, probably six or seven years' age, I am guessing. I am really bad with time [laughs] but when, they, it got, when I started in the, uh, you know, I worked there, every, you know, running sound for the bands and doing the thing in the O'Fallon campus and then I got into the cars business five years ago and that kind of put the breaks on everything.

BF: Ok

TS: (44:32) Cause you work so many hours, I am like sixty hours a week there and twenty hours a week with Swain Productions. So there is not much...time

BF: So, are you the only one working in Swain Productions?

TS: (44:44) Yes

BF: Like, it's, it's, all you?

TS: (44:44) It's all me right now. [laughs] So it is a little bit, you know, it is so much easier now with, um, you know, with the technology. Cause it used to be, I had to be in the clubs, all the time, talking to them, being their friend, bring them pictures and posters and all that. And now no one wants to talk to you...it's all

BF: Just email...

TS: (45:06) It's all text message and emails and send them electronic press kits and, you know, so, I can do a lot more...

BF: Not so much leg work?

TS: (45:15) Right, yeah. If I had to go out and, I don't do a whole a lot night clubs now, I mostly do places like the Widely Theatre and, um, the amphitheaters around the area and stuff like that, and, you know, outdoor summertime gigs and stuff like that, where... Cause I like this tribute band thing, is, it's so nice because the shows you put on, like in a bar the mean reason people are there is pick up women or pick up guys or whatever they are into and, and, it's all about that, and they got screens all room with football games going on and people are not really paying that much attention to the band. The band will be up there playing, and everybody is cheering and think they did something and you look over, and somebody got a touchdown, you know. And I just hate that, I hate that whole thing, that's, it's gotten so bad over the years....

BF: So that is a big change you have seen?

TS: (46:08) Oh, yeah, it use to be, your stage was up here, and the lights were on the stage, and there was no tvs around playing stuff. You know, and then, they, it slowly came in a little bit at a time. Somebody having a TV over here and over there and then, God, now you walk in a lot of clubs and TV's everywhere you look, and to me it's so much more enjoyable for the bands and most of my bands that do this they -- are doing because they want to, and it's, they don't play all the time because a tribute show, you can't play six nights a week. You know, cause who want to hear the same guy over and over again. And so, but the shows are shows, like at the Wildey is probably one of the best venues around...

BF: This is perfect because I wanted you to tell me about the Wildey...

TS: (46:59) The Wildey...

BF: Cause there is history there, this is...

TS: (47:00) It is so cool, it's a great, I just had a concert there last Saturday...

BF: An Elton John cover band...

TS: (47:06) An Elton John Tribute and it is such an awesome place because it is a beautiful theater, everybody is there sitting in a seat, faced at the stage and they are there for the music. They are not there to watch the football game or try to pick somebody up or, well, most of them aren't anyway. And it's kind

of funny too because I was used to being the oldest guy in the room, not no more with these tribute bands, you have people from eighteen to eighty. I mean it is incredible when I see people coming in walkers and, I am like, "holy cow."

BF: Absolutely

TS: (47:38) and then you see these young kids, and they are singing along with every song and they were not even born when these artists came out.

BF: Yeah, again, I am a Grateful Dead fan, within the past ten years the proliferation of tribute bands to the Grateful Dead; Dark Start Orchestra, obviously being the most famous, yeah, you get multiple generational...

TS: (47:58) Yeah, right

BF: By managing these cover bands, you, do you feel like you are introducing music to a new generation?

TS: (48:07) Well, yeah, well, I don't know, because like I said, these kids are singing the words to the songs already and its like, what the hell, [laughs] you know, and, uh, it's, it just goes to show that classic rock has such a longevity and such a, you hear in movies and stuff. You know, their playing Guitar Hero, taught a lot of kids' old songs and, there is a lot of young kids that listen to classic rock. And it very non-offensive and you can do family orientated shows with...

BF: Absolutely

TS: (48:37) You know, unless you are doing the /// Ozzy Osborn tribute, you know, they got to...

BF: Do you, you, you know an Ozzy Osborn tribute band?

TS: (48:46) Oh, yeah

BF: Really?

TS: (48:46) Real good friends of mine

BF: That must be interesting...

TS: (48:49) Yeah, they are old friends of mine that I have worked with for years and they, you know, have to do the Ozzy routine and say fuck every other word, so it is kind of hard to put them in a lot of places. And, uh, but it's just, uh, and these tribute bands, like the Bob Segar group, he sounds better than Bob Seger does, cause Bob can't hit the notes anymore. You know, he has had, you know, hell he is like

seventy or something, and you know, he can't sing that high anymore, and it's, it's funny because we had a guy came out and seen Silver Bullet, the first show they ever did...

BF: Was that at the Wildey?

TS: (49:26) No, it was at Pops, actually, over in Sauget and it this guy was an old friend of mine that played in a bunch of my bands back in the old days and, um, he's a college professor at Lewis and Clark College, music professor out there, and he said, "Man, if you ever need a keyboard player", he said, "these guys are great," he said, "I just seen Bob Seger two weeks ago, you guys sound a whole lot better than him." [laughs]

BF: Oh, that has to be one of the best compliments you can get, right?

TS: (49:55) It was great, and he ended up in the band. So, now he is in the band, and he is also in the Elton John tribute.

BF: ok

TS: (50:02) and, um, and there a lot of guys, from my guitar player in that Silver Bullet Band, is in, probably in seven other tribute bands.

BF: Is it, is it, is there a culture of that here in Madison County, kind of like, it seems, you got a lot going on with that, so is there a lot of musicians here in Madison County?

TS: (50:20) Oh, yeah, yeah there is one, um, Red, there are all from Madison County, it is Sammy Hagar tribute, um, there is just a lot of them out there now, and it is kind of cool cause it is a lot of, you know, once I started doing this Silver Bullet thing I started getting calls from all my old musician friends when they heard I was doing that. "Well we got a tribute band too and, you know, you got to come see us" and I was like.....

BF: Kind of like Pandora's Box? Kind of thing and it was just...

TS: (50:47) I was like, man I was just doing this for like a little hobby and something to do on the side and then suddenly I got like twelve bands on the book...

BF: So was Silver Bullet the first tribute band, is that what...

TS: (50:57) Yup, that was...

BF: Were you thinking, "Is this going work, is this not going to work."

TS: (51:00) I thought, I always believed, it would work...

BF: ok

TS: (51:02) You know, I always believed because we did it right. We put two backup girl singers, a sax player, eight people in the band and it really sounds exactly like Bob Seger. And, you know, he's - he's an artist that has over two hours' worth of hit songs that everybody recognizes and that is the hard thing to find, is an artist that has a couple of hours of music that can keep people interested the whole time. Cause some of these tributes; they have to get into the album cuts and B-sides and stuff like that...

BF: To come up with enough material... You got one that is Tom Petty and Johnny Cash, right?

TS: (51:36) yeah, yeah,

BF: Which is...

TS: (51:40) Petty Cash Junction

BF: Yeah, that is a pretty interesting, I would not have thought about it before but now that I have thought about it, I can see how those would meld very...

TS: (51:49) Yeah, and they did some kind of concert together before

BF: ok

TS: (51:48) and, um, they are awesome, great band, um, the guitar player, guitar player from el monstero is the guitar player in that band and, um, is probably the most successful tribute band in St. Louis area is el monstero

BF: Ok, I will have to check them out

TS: (52:07) They sell out five nights in a row every year at the Pageant...

BF: Really?

TS: (52:12) There in December, yep, I think it is the week, the day after Christmas, I think it starts usually and um, they play for like a week and sell it out every night. They play at Verizon, er, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, now, the place I use to call "Riverport." [laughs]

BF: So, what, um, with these bands, a few years ago, you started to revive the benefit, the Help concert, right?

TS: (52:38) Yep...I

BF: Is that what it is called? And you pick a new...um... a cause

TS: (52:42) What happened, so years ago, it was in '85, I had this idea for a help concert, and I went to some friends, there was a guy from a group called Uriah Heep, Ken Hensley, he was a big rock star back in the seventies, that had moved to the area and me him and Ike Heisler, Kevin McCarty, um, a DJ from the St. Louis area, we were the main ones that got it started and we said it would be neat to do a benefit

and so I approached a guy that owns Stages, Bill Benjamin and I told him my idea, I said ... I want to but on ten bands in one night and do a big benefit and...

BF: Wow

TS: (53:22) and at the time I did not even know what the benefit was going to be for...

BF: You just wanted to, to do a benefit...

TS: (53:26) I just wanted to do one, just to, you know, just to do, too, try something like this and, you know, kind of help the musician's image out

BF: and what year, what year was this, that, that,

TS: what's that?

BF: What years was this?

TS: (53:38) '85

BF: '85, ok

TS: (53:38) and so I talked to Bill Benjamin who owned Stages which was the biggest club around, and he said, "Well, God, that sounds like a great idea," he said, "but there is no way you going to pull it off," he said, "you can't put ten bands on in one night." And I said, "Well, I think I can." And he said...

BF: That's ambitious...

TS: (53:55) And he say, "Well, go ahead," he says, "It's not going to work but go ahead." And so we went around and got every radio station involved, um, KZK, 103, KC, who else was in there at the time, was KWK still around? I don't know, but we got every major radio station involved in this and so, before, right before that I had to come up with a charity and it was really funny, at first I had thought about doing something for abused kids. Well, I started researching, and every charity out there for abused kids was incorporated, which means, they can use like 80% of the money for administrative fees and I was like, "no"...

BF: Ok, kind of like the Red Cross got in trouble for...

TS: (54:42) Yeah...

BF: couple of years back, ok

TS: (54:43) Yeah, and I said, "No, I'm not doing that." So I kept looking, and I thought, well homeless people. So I called Larry Rice, he calls me back, and I told him the idea and what I was doing and he said, "I'd rather not be connected to people like you" and I said, [laughs] "really" and I said, "what kind of people is that," and he said, "you are doing this in a bar with bunch of rock and roll people and it will

probably be lewd" and said, "yes, some people will probably say fuck" I said, "but what does that have to do with anything, you know, they are trying to do some good and help you out." and he was wasn't interested, so I don;t remember what I told him...

BF: That's, that's really interesting, so he did not want to be associated with you guys because you guys were rock n' rollers

TS: (55:25) Rock and rollers and, uh, I forgot what kind of colorful thing I said to him before I hung up, [laughs] but I hung and I then, um, got a hold of, um, St. Louis area food bank, and they take every dollar and put it towards meals for people. And well, we did, we pulled this thing off, and I had, got about all the biggest cover bands in the St. Louis area, all ten of them. Had the best roadies in town, had equipment off and on, where our switch over time was like ten minutes...

BF: Was this hard to organize?

TS: (56:01) Oh, yeah

BF: Like um, is it harder to organize a benefit show or a regular show, I mean like...

TS: (56:06) Well, um, a benefit show because everybody is working for free...

BF: ok

TS: (56:09) But it is amazing how these guys, in St. Louis, get really involved in it and really work hard when it is a benefit. They seem to work harder than they do when they are getting paid, and, so, me too, I work a hell of a lot harder when I am working for free then I do when I am getting paid. [laughs] And, um, but we put this thing together, it was a huge success. I think we, God I can't remember how much money, it was thousands and thousands of meals and a truckload of food. It was a great big thing, we down to, downtown St. Louis and marched down the road with Help Concert banner and a but of long hairs and we went into the studios and, I think it was, it was still KSLQ at the time were Kevin McCarthy was working, and we went and, a few of us went in there and got on the radio and made the donation to the St. Louis area food bank and so it was really cool and then, um, another thing that kind of got me back into the business before the tribute bands was, there was someone, a guy named David Lewis started a Facebook page called "I use to Party out at Stages", which sounded like a really dumb thing but.....

BF: Actually, I think I came across this website.... yeah

TS: (57:28) And, I, uh, yeah I am an administrator on that now and, um, me and him have become real good friends but I got there, and there were people chanting on there and couple of guys I knew, Darrin Boyd and, um, Adrain Vesper, were on there talking about and I chimed in and I said, "We ought to do a reunion show with some of the old bands." And they both just started blasting me with, "Come on, come on, you can do it, you are the man, you are the man..." and I had done anything in ten years at the time. And I was like, I was driving a bus for Madison County ACT, the ones pick up disabled people.

BF: Ok

TS: (58:05) So I am working full time there, and these guys get me all jacked up and it, I think it was on vacation or something, and I said, "I can do it, I can do it" and after I took it on, I thought, "Well, what the hell was I thinking," cause the one in '85, I had all these guys helping me, well, this time I had to do it all myself....

BF: And this time you were bringing it to Edwardsville, right?

TS: (58:28) No, this one we did at the Pageant

BF: The Pageant, ok, so this was the first one you did...in '85

TS: (58:32) The first one was at Stages, it was the first one in '85, and then after the Haiti earthquake we did the one in 2000, God I can't even remember what year it was now

BF: That was, what, 2004? The Haiti earthquake, 2005?

TS: (58:50) I think so, I think it was around there, and I can't even remember, I'd have to look it up.

BF: And that was at the Pageant?

TS: (58:56) Yeah that one we did at the Pageant, and it was kind of funny because you know the first one Larry Rice told me to take a hike. Well, this one, um, the church that I belong to, Enjoy Church, which was called NTF at the time, they sponsored it.

BF: Ok

TS: (59:13) and so it was kind of funny that, you know, I got told I was a devil before and then this time I had a church sponsoring the thing, and it was a big success. We had, we put bands together that hadn't played together in twenty years, you know, and so...

BF: So it was a joyful occasion for everybody, everybody was just...

TS: (59:33) It was, it was some much fun, people, you couldn't wipe the smiles off people's faces. I had more fun that night; all the old Stages employees showed up cause we called it a Stages reunion. And, um, all the old employees with their silk jackets showed up, and it was, um, just a blast. And, like I said, it was hard getting some of the groups together cause they hadn't played together in fifteen, twenty years and some of them didn't like each other anymore and, but I just called in a lot of favors.

BF: Oh, nice...

TS: (60:04) and I said, just do this, you know, and uh pulled it off and did the whole thing in like twenty-eight days I think...

BF: That's it? Pulled that off that quickly?

TS: (60:14) [laughs] yeah, yeah

BF: That's, that's, hats off...

TS: (60:16) And most of it was all social media, you know, we, we pretty much advertised that a lot but I did get some radio involved again and they, you know, talked it up on the radio and everything, so it was, um, and that was kind of what started me and then the tribute, that was right before the tribute thing....

BF: And, this wasn't your your, even the '85 show wasn't your first dive into benefit shows...cause at Fat's, because at Fat Cat's you, I read a story where guys had surprised a nun?

TS: (60:47) Oh, no, that was at Grannies...

BF: Oh, that was at Grannies...ok were you involved with that one?

TS: (60:53) It was great, we did, um, I use to have, well, as a matter of fact, tomorrow is my birthday, and it is also Pat Liston's birthday, the guy from Mama's Pride, we're real good friends

BF: ok

TS: (61:04) Well, like three of the other guys at Mama's Pride had birthday's that week. So back in the Fat Cats days, my partner was crazy, and he used to get, put radio ads about Thom Swain's birthday batch and, um, he would make goofy comments about me and everything, well it became a really big, crazy party every year. Well, after Fat Cat's closed several years later somebody was, "Man you should do your birthday party again." And I was like, "Ok" and back then when we did it, it was just a regular night. And I thought, "Well, I don't want, you know, it was my birthday, and I feel weird about making money so I will turn it into a benefit." So, we, uh, the first one I did, I think it was at Grannies in Alton, and we put on, I don't know, six bands, or something like that, that night. And raised money, and um, we gave it, we went down to the Alton food crisis center, and there was a lady, Francis Jackson, who's passed away since, but she the one who kind of ran the thing and we went down there and gave her a check and, I don't remember the exact, it seems like seven thousand or something like, it was, it was quite a bit of money and a lot of food, and she was just crying. [laughs] When it was really cool, and I got so mad at the newspapers around here because I wrote a pretty shitty letter to them when they were, when they are working on shutting Grannies Rocker down.

BF: Uh, the papers were?

TS: (62:38) Well, they, they went along, it was MAD, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving

BF: Ok, yeah...

TS: (62:43) Um, one of the ladies in there had a nephew, I believe it was, who was at Grannies Rocker earlier in the night, they had a thing, a barber chair there, a dentist chair, or something and they had this scam where they would put you in the chair, lay you back and they put a funnel in your mouth and poured some liquor in your mouth and spun you around in circles and if you survived you could get a tee-shirt. And was really, actually, it was kind of a scam because there was not that much alcohol, you know, they would just get dizzy from spinning around. Well, this guy was there and did it, got a tee-shirt, well he went to like five other clubs and some time after midnight, he went to the police impound, got somebody

else's motorcycle, I don't know how he ever did it and was driving down Broadway in Alton, on the wrong side of the road and got killed...

BF: Oh...

TS: (63:35) and his sister placed the blame on Grannies Rocker cause he had that tee-shirt with him. And she just was incredible, she apparently had some kind of political power around here because she was on, every time, anytime anything happened at Grannies; if the police were called to get rid of a minor or something, it was in the papers. And, she was had her nose in there griping, and I wrote them a big letter, and I said, you know, it was really ignorant that, you know, you, you want to report on anything that happens there but when we go and do benefits, and we did quite a few benefits there, they never wanted to report on those....

BF: So it was just very unfair reporting...just

TS: (64:18) Yeah, it was really bad and they finally, it was funny because they finally published one of my letters to the editor later on after they were already closed down. They published it, and I thought, "Well that was really nice." And, um, it was just ignorant, and it was just totally ignorant the way they did that and, um, you know, they, I just thought it was unfair.

BF: Yeah...so, um, the benefit shows, um, you had some experience in the eighties with them and then you brought it back at the Pageant and, in the mid-2000's, 2004 or 2005 and then that went off wonderfully...it sounds

TS: (64:59) yep, yep

BF: Um, did you, that, that, the point did you, let's do this every year or did somebody have to come along, "Hey, why don't you do that again?"...

TS: (65:08) Well, we have done a few others since, um, we do one at the Train Wreck every, um, every August with um the Seger group and Elton John group and this year it was Journey tribute also for the, um, Rock for Relay for the cancer association. We do that every year, um, 103.3 sponsors it, and we do a big thing. And, we are going to be doing something around, around, here soon too cause everybody's...uh

BF: So, have you done one every year, has been an annual thing?

TS: (65:48) No, no, it has not been annual, it used to be with the birthday party, it became, became kind of a joke cause it was my annual 30th birthday party...

BF: Oh, ok, maybe that was where I was getting confused on, ok...

TS: (65:51) And it then it was the third annual birthday party, and I think we got up to like seven or eight something like that [laughs] that we did every year, and we did em' a lot because the club owners loved it, because they knew that they were going to sell a lot drinks that night it has always been pretty

successful and, um, we did it up in Edwardsville too, so...

BF: Have you seen, um, a revival in music here or is it, from what was in the eighties because it sounds like you guys had a real nice, Vibert, hopping scene and, in the seventies and eighties and it kind of fell off, the drunk driving, the clubs closing down. Um, you kind of seem like you have your finger on a finger on the pulse, right? Are you seeing a revival in it? Are you trying to work with Wildey to get more going on....

TS: (66:43) Yeah, I do a series at the Wildey every year, a tribute series and, um, it's usually eight or ten shows a year there. And, um, we're working, I'm working on some ideas for benefit right now that I can't really say cause it is not all together yet, but we, that's probably going to be there. I can say that much. [laughs] And, um, you know, we want, we want to start doing some stuff in the summer it really hard because of everybody so busy in the tribute world, that's when you work the most, with all these outdoor events and stuff. And so winter time it slows down, and that's when we have more time to do stuff like that....

BF: ok

TS: (67:21) So, oh, we're going to do some of that and um it's really weird because the, I don't, I don't think the music scene will ever get back to what it use to be. You know, because there use to be, gosh, I would have, in the heyday, I would have twelve or fifteen bands playing every Friday or Saturday night and, like Wednesday and Thursday probably five or ten and then you know, a couple on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. You know, so there was a lot of venues and...lotta

BF: A lot going on...

TS: (67:55) You know, you could make a living playing music then and now not that many people make a living at it anymore. There are some; there are some out there that do but not a whole lot...

BF: Now, do think that has to do with the change of the culture in, in, Edwardsville or Madison County?

TS: (68:14) No, it is everywhere...

BF: It's everywhere...

TS: (68:16) It's everywhere It's just not, well like, you need a big club to support big bands, you know, that are, and it's all kind of changed now to a lot of duos and acoustic acts and, and small bands that just in over here and Wigglers and Laurie's Place and small room like that they play. And it's just not the, you know, they only do bands on the weekend, and nobody, not hardly anybody does it during the week anymore. There's a few but not much but it is just the lack of work and being able to, you know, it seems like, from what a lot of people have told me, after I got out of the, out of the booking business, that there is couple of guys came in and tried to take over and do stuff. There is one guy out there that's fairly successful, Dave Calles, he's a friend, he plays in the Petty Cash Junction, he also has an agency. And, um, they, uh, they just got to where there were so many independent bands out there and they were,

they drove their money down because you know, they said, "Well, we'll play for six hundred" you know, "and we'll play for five hundred" and they worked themselves right out of work. But, lowering all the prices and not getting the money they use to get, so it was, it was tough on the, you know musicians had to go get jobs and be happy with playing on the weekends. [laughs] So, they all had to eat, and they were all growing up, and it's kind of funny because the era of musicians that I came up with are still playing, they are out there still playing, and there is a few of them, I guess, has the Wild Hungarians, Dr. Travagus, some of those groups are making a living playing. You know, so there are some out there, but all the rest that are playing part-time and stuff are the same guys that were playing thirty years ago. They're still out there playing, and which is great, you know. I think it is awesome and I wish there were more places for them to play but it's, you know, it's just one of them things you got to go with the times and....

BF: Absolutely, um, before we wrap up is there anything you want to add to the interview that I did not touch on? Is there anything you want to, ah, um, elaborate on? Anything like that?

TS: (70:38) No, just support live music has much as you can, you know, that's, um, that's the most important thing, um, yeah, that is probably the most important part, is when you, when you see a band somewhere sit down and watch them. [laughs] You know, pay attention to the band a little bit and, um, we've got extremely talented musicians in this area, Madison County there's tons of great musicians and, um, like I said, it always, Madison County has always been viberent nightlife for years, years and, like I said, now there's not so much of it but what's out there if everybody supports it....maybe it'll...maybe it'll will turn around some day, I don't know....

BF: Awesome, well thank you very much, um...