

## Let God Take Center Stage

Many years ago a certain country music entertainer came to perform in our area, and he brought with him quite a list of 'druthers'. One of them was he'd 'druther' no one be in the building during his pre-show sound check.

Because of this, my friends and I were rudely paraded out the back. It wouldn't have been so bad if we weren't the opening act! There it was fifteen minutes until we take the stage and we're wandering around some back alley with our guitars. It was quite embarrassing. All we could do was sit around and sheepishly wave at the fans. Of course, we were taking it harder than need be. Nobody recognized us. We weren't famous or anything; OBVIOUSLY!

When the snotty little stage manager finally opened the back door his very first direction was for us to take the stage.

"We haven't even set up our amps yet," I protested.

Snotty shrugged, the small detail evidently not warranting him much concern. "Don't worry hotshot," he snipped, "We'll find you somewhere to plug-in."

The curtains were already open as we were herded out onto the stage. The crowd looked restless. You could almost feel the resentment they held towards us because of the delay.

Mr. Snots jabbed a cord at me in a manner letting me know I had already been way too troublesome. I gritted my teeth and plugged in. My first strum left no doubt he had hooked me up to a bass players rig.

Just as the announcer was mispronouncing our name, I felt a tap on my shoulder. Our drummer Jay stood there twiddling his sticks.

"Dude," he said, "There ain't no kit."

The Snotmeister snorted and rushed over to contemptuously wave an open palm toward stage left. Just behind the curtain sat a dusty set of house drums.

"Why didn't I think to look there," Jay muttered, and sauntered off.

I forced down that big lump pulsing in my throat, and lit out on the first song. Right off I realized the elaborate twenty second sound check we'd been afforded had went for naught. The mix on stage was worse than horrible. We couldn't hear each other, or ourselves. Thankfully, this wasn't our first rodeo. We were used to this warm-up act treatment, and had long since grown accustomed to such minor annoyances. We commenced riding that bull on out, and pert-near stomped a mud hole in that old stage before we got down. Yep, we left them Yee-hawing and hollering for 'Freebird'!

Later, when Mr. Head-Liner finally walked out to grace the stage, the crowd went wild. He came out with quite a swagger, or maybe it was just a stagger. I don't know. Either way, his gate certainly affirmed he was intent on living up to his 'Bad-boy' image. He plugged his little rhythm guitar into a monster wall of Rock-n-Roll guitar amplifiers and I suddenly realized why the drummer had been squeezed off stage. There just wasn't room for another ego!

Bad-Boy yelled "Crank it up!" and the sound man juiced those faders to kick in the extra watts he'd been holding out on us. Unfortunately, this also caused quite a bit of technical difficulties. His first three songs turned out to be a real squeal-fest. Ole' Bad-Boy gave his crew quite a tongue lashing. Of course the crowd loved it.

Recalling this whole episode initially brought to mind **1 Peter 5:5b**: (*for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* KJV.) However, after a careful re-evaluation, I can't legitimately classify us as the humble party in this story. Goodness knows we'd have been walking with the same swagger if it would've brought us more applause. I guess there's a big difference between being humble and being humbled.

But anyway- After all these years I'm still toting around my same old gear. I'm no longer seeking the fleeting applause of some fickle crowd on the world's stage though. That's just so anticlimactic now that I've met the Lord.

These days when they holler 'Freebird' I've got a real answer. I tell them about the One who can truly set them free; the One who can give them eternal wings. There's only one person who really deserves that place on center stage. His name is JESUS.

-Guy Sheffield 11-27-06