

Helen Marketti's Music Corner

Rock & Roll Scavenger Hunt



While some people may collect stamps, postcards or salt and peppershakers, John Markulin of Cleveland collects autographs of famous rock stars. He refers to it as his rock and roll scavenger hunt. It all began quite innocently in 2002. John attended a launch party at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame for the book release of "Rock & Roll and the Cleveland Connection" (Kent State University Press) written by author, Deanna Adams.

"My wife and I attended the book launch party. There were some area bands playing for the event. I purchased a copy of the book and asked Michael Stanley for his autograph. His was the first autograph I secured. After that, I asked a few other musicians who were there to autograph the book," explains John. "Later that evening, my wife and I went out to dinner. I remember flipping through the pages and looking at the autographs. While it wasn't my intention to start collecting autographs I started thinking it might be fun to use this book and start getting more signatures."

He continues, "My original goal was to start getting autographs of people who were mentioned in the book. It first started that I would get autographs from Cleveland area musicians such as The Raspberries. Seventy percent of the autographs are Cleveland related. I would try and get the autograph of anyone that Dee mentioned in the book." The autograph collecting was born in 2002 and still going strong. As of this moment, John has accumulated 1,101 signatures! This was over a time of 15 years and he is still planning to add to his collection.



John & Pat Benetar

One of his goals has branched out to start collecting 100 autographs of Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductees. He now has 83 out of 100 so far with his most recent prized signature being that of Smokey Robinson who performed at the Hard Rock Rocksino. "My wife wrote to one of the managers at the Rocksino and explained the book, autographs and so forth. He made sure Smokey signed the book," said John. "I have witnessed about 96% worth of the artist actually autographing the book in front of me but I do get a little nervous when the book leaves my hands. If it's an artist I won't be able to meet in person and someone else will get the autograph for me, I always worry if I will get the book back. Thankfully, I always do." (laughs)

John keeps a constant eye on concert venues and show schedules. He checks to see if there will be a meet and greet with the artist or some other media event. If that does not work then he has learned to befriend security guards, technicians and management. There is usually someone available to bring the book backstage or to the tour bus. John admits he is not successful on every autograph request. He will sometimes notice an artist and their entourage leaving the back door of a venue to get on the tour bus or the person is not available. It hap-

pens and John takes it in stride and tells himself better luck next time.

"Sometimes it's easier to get autographs if the artist is traveling solo or is coming to the area for a specific event. I will travel if it's a venue within reasonable driving distance," he said. "I have been to 99 cities and going for 100. I have traveled mostly throughout Ohio but have also been to Michigan and Pennsylvania too for a show and an autograph."

John has quite an organized system for keeping track of these prized signatures. "I have 5 spiral notebooks that I have kept since I started. I have written the date, venue and whose autograph I got on that particular day. I also have them numbered to keep track of where they are on the list," explains John. "I have 6 scrapbooks. In the scrapbooks, I have written the date, name of the artist along with any ticket stubs, articles, ads or programs. I write a brief synopsis of the show. I have definitely kept track of these autographs and shows since day one. I have no plans of selling my book of autographs on e-bay or anything similar.



John with Don Felder

It's not for sale. I do this for my own enjoyment."

"Some artists are surprised they are mentioned in the book and consider it an honor," said John. "I love meeting the artists. It's a great opportunity to thank them for their contribution to music. There are two key things to remember when requesting an autograph. I call them the two "P's". One is patience and the other is politeness. So far, it has worked well for the most part. It's a hobby that I enjoy."

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