

Livin' the Dream!

by Helen Marketti

...Hungry for those good things, baby...
 ...Hungry through and through...
 ...I'm hungry for that sweet life, baby...

Those lyrics were sung by Paul Revere and The Raiders but it can also serve as a possible mantra for those who sign up to be part of a unique "camping" experience. Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp is an experience unlike any other.

Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp was created ten years ago by entertainment producer David Fishof who has a rich history of working with Ringo Starr, Roger Daltrey, Levon Helm, Todd Rundgren and Alice Cooper among many others. He is also an author and speaker. He had the vision to pair rock stompin' pros with interested novices.

"Counselors" for the camp are seasoned veterans of the rock and roll cosmos. They each have their own style, genre and creative motivators. Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp for 2008 has some very cool, heavy hittin' counselors: Gilby Clarke (Guns N' Roses), Elliot Easton (The Cars), David Ellefson (F5, former bassist for Megadeth), Mark Hudson (Grammy award winning song writer), Glenn Hughes (Deep Purple), Chris Slade (AC/DC), Mark Slaughter (Slaughter, Scrap Metal), Earl Slick (John Lennon/David Bowie) and Kip Winger (Winger).

"Campers" are the participants who sign up to learn some pointers from some of the best that the music industry has to offer. It's a way to hang out and jam with your favorite rock stars. Previous music experience of the campers range from the guy who works in a factory during the week and plays guitar in a band on the weekend to someone who only sings in the shower on Saturdays. Whatever your experience or lack thereof it doesn't matter at Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp because the main objective is for everyone to have fun.

There is a contagious electricity in the air as some of the counselors spend a few moments sharing their thoughts about Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp, working with the campers and how to keep the spark lit.

"I am very excited about doing this. Dave Fishof asked me to participate. I bring my role as having been in a punk rock band. It is an A-list of counselors. We get to be exposed to all kinds of music genres not just our own," says David Ellefson. "Everyone of the campers has something to give. There is always something to contribute. They decide what they want to play. Campers dictate what they want to do."

Elliot Easton, "I think this is great! I would have loved it if something like this were around when I was first learning. Everyone here is having fun. If a camper needs some help we work with them, find the common ground because they are here for enjoyment."

"We've had fun. They (the campers) had fun. That's what it's all about. I tell them to keep going. We're not redoing Sgt. Pepper so enjoy," said Earl Slick. "Some of us never really get a chance to see each other that much so this is also a way for us to get together, too."

Glenn Hughes, "There is a camaraderie among us. All of us get along super well. We've been blessed with long careers. Everyone has a gift to share with others. It's our job to make the campers feel worthy and capable."

"This is my first year doing this," says Gilby Clarke. "The counselors are all good quality musicians. The campers are all about what they're doing. I need to be careful with how things are communicated with campers. I've got to put myself in their place. Among ourselves as professional musicians we have our own language with each other. The way we talk to each other isn't the way to communicate to campers...they may take it the wrong way and feel insulted. The important thing is for everyone to have fun and a good experience."

Mark Hudson, "Doing Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp is a chance to give back. It gives you a feeling of when you were younger and playing songs in the garage with your band. You can see the desire to do this on their faces. I try to find everyone's comfort zone and then I take them out of their comfort zone."

Tucked away in downtown Cleveland is a building with magnificent detail in its architecture. It's also where the magic connection between

counselors and campers is unfolding on a Wednesday morning in August.

Three separate rooms have the doors closed but there is no mistake in hearing the sounds of rock and roll streaming into the hallway. Spending time in each room is truly remarkable as it's like having your own private concert. The first group that we visited had five campers with the guidance of counselors, Gilby Clarke and Glenn Hughes. They are in the middle of "Bad Moon Rising" (Creedence Clearwater Revival) and then pause momentarily. Glenn Hughes is offering suggestions to campers and asks, "Would anyone like to do a solo?" More ideas are exchanged and they begin the song once more.

Later in the day Gilby Clarke is singing "It's Only Rock & Roll" (Rolling Stones) and the band is sounding great with his vocals. During a break one of the campers took a few moments to share his thoughts about his experience. Ralph is from Bethesda, Maryland. He is a real estate agent by day and a drummer in a band on the side. "I have a friend who has done this camp before and suggested it to me. It seemed like a neat thing to do. I've played drums as a teenager and then went back to it again later on when I got older. I play in a classic rock band back home. I had wanted to work with Gilby and Glenn. This is great. There is nothing else like it," Ralph smiles.

The next room is filled with high energy and activity as well. Five campers are guided by Mark Hudson, Mark Slaughter and Chris Slade. Mark Slaughter is helping one of the guitarists to position his fingers on the strings and also assisting with vocals.



Mark Slaughter at mic w/campers

He later walks around the room to check on everyone and offer assistance when needed. Mark Hudson is giving guided instruction to each camper. Playing through various songs to decide which ones to rehearse he exclaims, "That's the first time we sounded like a band! We need to keep up with the intensity." This group has the only female camper on vocals. They are rehearsing

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"Don't Settle for Second Best"

“You Really Got Me” (The Kinks). Mark Hudson is breaking down the song to each person in the group so they know what their part is for it to all come together. He reminds them to stay focused and they are looking to him for the next set of instruc-

do. Its all been an awesome experience. I am so glad to be here. You learn a lot from these guys and they’re willing to share their advice. Its a great experience.”

The third group to check out has three campers that are guided by counselors David Ellefson, Elliot Easton and Earl Slick. They are jamming to “Get Back” (The Beatles). The song is being sung by Wayne (camper). The song begins again then everyone pauses once more to discuss the lyrics. Elliot turns to the drummer (Rick) and suggests to him to click his drum sticks to get them started. Earl and Elliot stop for a brief moment to exchange ideas of how things could sound even better.

They are trying different songs for the evening’s gig. They all listened to The Who’s version of “Summertime Blues” and then played it themselves. It sounded fantastic. Elliot and David were discussing how they would exchange chords and then David turned to the guitarist (camper) and said, “Tonight you will move to the front of the stage. Its going to be all about you.” After awhile they took a break and

Elliot smiled and said, “We’re still just like kids.”

Wayne (vocalist) shared some thoughts during a break about his experiences. “I first heard about Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp when I was watching VH1. My girlfriend and I talked it over and we decided that I was going to do this. I work two jobs. I work in a factory in Parma, Ohio on a production line and also as a part time grill cook. I am so excited to be here today. I can’t say it enough. I wanted to be in Elliot’s band and I am! Being around these guys is amazing!”

Campers have spent the day learning three songs with their group. The songs have been rehearsed with suggestions made and ideas exchanged. They’ve all been together since 8:00 am. At 4:00 pm things wrap up at the hotel and it is time to depart and head over to The House Of Blues. Each group will perform their selected songs in front of a live audience beginning around 6:30 pm. Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp participants are usually the opening act for the

main headliner of the evening who happens to be the band, Extreme for this night in Cleveland.

After sound check and a short breather it is show time as friends, family and fans pour into the House Of Blues for a rockin’ good time. Everyone delivers the goods as the crowd is dancing and cheering each band on. There is much applause and high fives for the campers and counselors as they come off the stage. The dream has been realized, the “rock star wanted” ad has been filled and the experience is something to remember for a life time.

www.rockcamp.com



Glenn Hughes and Chris Slade

tion and wisdom when he says, “You guys look like an oil painting.” His humor and wit break up the seriousness and they continue on.

Part of this group is camper Darrell from Mentor, Ohio. “At first it was a little intimidating to be around these guys but you get past that and come to realize they do the same kind of daily routines that you



On stage at The House of Blues (Cleveland)

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