

Blag, Steal & Borrow

BY

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1st Published June 2016
1st Edition
1st Print

ISBN: 978-0-9932916-6-1

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Photo Copyright © 2016 Jill Taylor
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Print: Svet Print, d.o.o., Ljubljana

Dedication

To Louise, you mean the whole wide world to me.

To my lovely daughters Hayley, Kerry, Amy and Holly.

To Mum and Dad for all their support and inspiration.

To my little sisters, Susan, Mandy &
Jill for putting up with me.

To all the family that are no longer with us – you will
never be forgotten.

“Why join the navy if you can be a pirate?”

Steve Jobs

Gary Raymond

Gary Raymond is a writer, tweeter and maverick music manager. His artists have had numerous top 40 singles and albums. He now lives in a quiet village in Essex leaving well behind him those days in the music industry of alcohol excess, drugs and massive egos.

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Foreword

It is my distinct honour to have been asked to write this foreword. However, I had no clue how to do it, I'm a songwriter not an author, but I wanted to do it, so here is what I have to say about our ex-manager and good friend Gary Raymond.

We first met Gary outside a venue in Birmingham. His band 'Twenty Twenty' were performing that night and we were outside busy handing out flyers to the crowd promoting our own band 'Room 94'.

As he approached I thought he was going to have a go about us poaching his crowd, but instead he politely said hello, and we had a short chat and then we found ourselves on his personal guest-list for his show.

A few minutes later guys from another band walked up to him and asked if they could also get on his guest list. He stared at them and then said "You can get lost – I saw your comments slagging 'Twenty Twenty' off on Facebook," and there and then I knew he was the person I wanted to manage 'Room 94'.

Working with Gaz (we always call him Gaz – even though he hates being called it by anyone else) was always a great time with never a dull moment. We would always come up with cheeky ideas and schemes to try get us to where we wanted to be - some of them worked, some of them didn't and some of them were just plain fucking crazy – like shooting a music video underwater!

"Don't worry, what's the worst that can happen?" he said, "One of you drowns and album sales go up!"

We had a great working relationship and developed an even better friendship which made for some very interesting moments on tour.

We once flew out to Poland to play a sold-out DVD launch show and as a tradition on those very early in the morning flights we started with a pint, then another...then another.

We had some radio and TV spots to do throughout the day before the big launch the following day so we drove about slightly pissed (and by that we mean that we had a driver who drove the van around while we drank) and got what we needed to do done and then as soon as we had finished we left the venue, where the final TV spot was being filmed and made our way to the nearest pub.

We ended up visiting a lot of pubs that day where eventually we were spotted by a group of fans who joined us for a few drinks, and later on we found ourselves in the VIP lounge of a fancy club in Warsaw drinking free booze by the bucket load.

It was here that a very busty blonde barmaid took a shine to Gaz, well that was until we got kicked out when Gaz and Sean our lead guitarist decided to jump up and play the bongos that were on the club's stage.

The night ended with a group of us walking through a McDonald's drive through and Gaz ordering about twenty cheeseburgers for everyone – that's twenty cheeseburgers shared between us all, not each!

The next day we played to a packed venue and had a great DVD release show and like the true professional he is, Gaz made sure that everything was sorted for

us and all we had to do was concentrate on the performance.

Gaz has always been great at sorting things out and making things appear from nowhere, we were a small band with no name for ourselves but he managed to sort us a mammoth UK HMV signings tour, 2 a day for a week where we visited fourteen different cities in 7 days. He also managed to blag us a wad of Nando's gift vouchers and a few crates of 'Innocent' smoothies for the week to help keep us sustained.

5 grown men in a car travelling up and down the country, farting and burping was an experience that was full of banter and inappropriate jokes, we had a real laugh, no in fact we pissed ourselves laughing most of the time as he told us of his tales of growing up in the seventies and those fucking amazing exploits with the 'Koopas' boys and at the same time we all worked our bloody asses off.

I think the only bone of contention we ever had was the music choices, as he would prefer glam rock to our choice of Justin Bieber.

One of the funniest things that happened that week was when we went into a pub to watch The Champions League match between PSG and Chelsea and decided to have some food. Gaz wanted to order some nachos but the barman said "I can do them but we don't have any sour cream, salsa or guacamole."

"That's just fucking crisps," Gaz replied in amazement and we all fell about the floor laughing.

That's something else about him, he's sharp as a razor unless his pissed then he just falls asleep.

At the end of the week we managed to secure a top

30 album as an unsigned act with no press team, no money, just the music, our amazing fans and of course a great manager.

With the album in the charts Gaz noticed we had received a lot of tweets from fans in Glasgow who had not managed to meet the band on the signings tour - as we could not fit the final one in. He spoke to them via Twitter and having realised how upset some of them were, he set up a signing in Glasgow and in his little Renault Clio he picked us up and drove us all the way to Glasgow from Hertfordshire. The journey was horrendous and due to traffic problems it ended up taking about 10 hours- but get there we did and the Glaswegians turned out in force and made it a special night for the all.

After the signing we decided to go to the casino and get very drunk and while there we noticed Charlie from 'Busted' - and while we all sat there staring at him debating whether or not to go and say hello as he looked like he was chilling Gaz walked past him and he turned around and said "Hell Gary, how you doing?"

That's the other great thing about Gaz, people know who he is and he has their respect.

He is the type of bloke you want in your corner and on your team and with him it was always about doing what you can at that moment in time and making the most out of every situation and opportunity that arose and, unlike almost everyone else in the music industry there was never any bullshit from him.

As a manager he understood our needs and even if we wanted to stand out in the cold after a show having

photos taken with fans then no matter how long it took he was there, standing like he does with his arms folded – just keeping an eye out – what a legend.

I was allowed to read this book prior to it being published and all I can say enjoy it, it's a fucking riot!

Kieran Lemon,
Lead singer, Room 94
www.room94.co.uk
Twitter @Room94

Now Let's Get to It

They Told Me I Needed an Intro. So Here's Mine.

'I wish I knew then what I know now.'

Have you ever said that? I have on many occasions.

The contents of this book is a story of what I know now and definitely not what I knew back then. If I had known back then, this book would tell a very different story.

There would've been no all-night van rides slogging up and down the country, far fewer pints of lager, most definitely no drugs, possibly no fighting, and, it has to be said, a lot less fuck-ups and who knows maybe never would've ended up managing a little-known pop punk trio from rural Essex called 'Koopa'.

Not heard of them? Well, they were the first unsigned band in history to land a top 40 single and became a part of a landmark moment in the internet revolution that was sweeping the music industry in 2007.

A most notable feat in anyone's book, except 'Koopa' went on to do it a further two times.

Still not ringing any bells? Well there's a pretty good reason for that!

Before I started writing my story and delve in to the who's, why's, where's and what's, I had a big question that only I could answer - and that question was why?

Why would anyone in the world want to read a book about someone they have never bloody heard of?

Who would be interested in my story of EastEnders,

the seaside, dolphins, wild animals, sex toys, sticky tape and almost bringing the music industry to its knees?

Well we are all aware that for every worthwhile person making a contribution to society there are thousands filling their time doing jack-shit – I just thought it was my time to stop doing jack-shit and try to do something worthwhile.

I had grown tired of spending most of my days on Twitter reading peoples tweets who rant on about why ‘Batman’ is better than ‘Superman’ or looking at the latest Facebook post from someone informing the world of their highest score on that mind-numbing game Candy Crush.

So, I would just like to make things very clear from the start. I’m not some footballing superstar who wants to spill the beans on his former teammates and manager. Nor I am some former football hooligan who wants to share all those terrace tear-ups against rival gangs held on cold Saturday afternoons to repent all his sins – although I do have quite a few sins from which I need redemption.

Finally, I am definitely not some movie star who needs to regale you with tales of attending plush Hollywood parties with beautiful woman on tap and how I bedded some Oscar winning movie stars, male and female!

This is just a simple story about a normal guy who, after an unusual and colourful upbringing, went to sleep for 25 years, metaphorically speaking, before deciding to break free from the stranglehold of a potentially mundane life and manage a pop punk band. It is

as simple as that - Well actually nothing in life is that simple.

So where and, more importantly, how did this all begin? How did I end up managing a band?

I had no experience whatsoever in the music industry and in fact I didn't even really listen to music that much.

When I was younger I lived and breathed music. I loved collecting vinyl and going to gigs but by the time I met 'Koop', music was just a passing hobby.

I was living a normal existence. I was married to my second wife and we had two beautiful daughters. I mowed the lawn at weekends, I painted the garage doors and I saved vouchers out of the newspaper for a bargain caravan weekend away with my family - I was just normal. Normal! Don't make me laugh.

I lived how people expected me to live. I was just like everyone else. I had nothing to say. I had no identity. I was simply going through the motions - I was a pretend husband and father.

Then out of the blue, three strange looking individuals who had created a pop-punk band and who were in dire need of a manager and a Svengali came into my life.

Maybe if I had known what I was doing, things would have turned out differently for all four of us. Perhaps if we had played by the music industry rules and not our own, things would have taken a very different path - who knows!

Suddenly I found myself in the dark, shark infested, waters of the music industry and slam dunk on the firing line is a risky place to be. I was an armchair man-

ager running the project from the comfort of my living room with limited knowledge of how the industry conducted its business.

I was blagging my way through every day blissfully unaware that, if you exposed any of the music industries flaws or took advantage of any of its loopholes that it would simply close its ranks on you, slam its doors shut in your face and kick you right in the bollocks as hard as it could as you fell flat on your face.

Right from the start the great thing about us all was that we were a totally unknown entity to the music industry and we would not let any fucker pull the wool over our eyes. I know I'm not the first to point out that these days the music industry is dead but having experienced the greed and arrogance of almost everyone in it, from the labels, agents, PR and even the bloody tea-boy I can understand why – they have forgotten the one thing that made us all fall in love with music in the first place – the fucking music!

These days it's all about the bottom line profit and how many fake sodding followers you have on social media.!

“We got this far with no money and this is what real music sounds like,” was the boast as the bands satirical lyrics sent a shiver through the industry for a brief moment in time and what I do know for sure is that ‘Koopas’ should have gone on to become anti-establishment rock and roll legends and that I could have been there very own Malcom McLaren.

This book is written as I experienced those times. Through my own eyes, which occasionally might have been obstructed by my ill-chosen addictions.

There may also be occasions where events have been seen through very rose tinted glasses, but this is the story of my life and the way I choose to remember it. I needed to get things off my chest and it's written straight from the horse's mouth - so please forgive me for all the foul fucking language!

Writing my story has been a cathartic experience, releasing feelings I'd locked away deep at the back of my mind as well as provoking memories of the pain and distress I caused family and friends. But it was

not all doom and gloom, there were also lots of fun times sometimes far too many fun times, and I must confess that on many occasion I have had to stop

writing because I've been pissing myself laughing - I hope you will laugh along, but we'll wait and see - won't we.

That said, I'm not proud of everything I've done and neither should I be; but I felt everything needed to be included. And, I don't blame anyone other than myself as I leapt at the opportunity to manage the band and, dived head first into the lifestyle with no safety harness or thought for anyone else..

The whole experience was like being in a mash up of television shows like 'The Prisoner', 'Lost' and 'Twin Peaks - you just never knew what the fucking hell was going to happen next.

So sit back and enjoy 'Blag, Steal & Borrow' the story of how I ended up just like my old man and how I orchestrated the cunning plan that saw an unknown three-piece band from Essex become the most famous band in the world - for just one day and how the bands very mischievous manager, yes, yours truly, carried off

what was the rock and roll blag of the century that put them in the 'Guinness Book of World Records'.

We know what steal and borrow mean but what's a blag?

Definition of blag - to 'manage to obtain (something) by using guile or, con or scam.

See where this is going?

"So can I start reading the fucking book now?" you ask....

Yes of course you fucking can!