

Q & A with a Songwriter / Musician

Answers by **Mark Perrin**, a.k.a. **Doc Hayden & Blue Medicine**

Songwriter, Composer, Lyricist, Guitarist, Singer, Bluesman, Repair Technician, Piano Tuner.

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Q: What was one of your funnier gigs?

I'll never forget a time in Tennessee. It was the first gig with a new band and we only had one rehearsal. I had just met these guys 2 days before the show so we were a little apprehensive. I was hired to do the guitar work. At the start of the first song, the singer looked at me and said, "Now think men, think." We busted out laughing and it took 5 minutes to recover while the crowd looked on and wondered what was so funny. It turned out that the singer and I had been in productions of "The Music Man" when we were kids and knew that famous line where Harold Hill, who was in trouble with the town of River City, because they thought he was a shyster, got a bunch of kids to play their instruments terribly, and the townsfolk loved it. It was a great musical.

Q: What was your favorite gig, so far?

I have played all over this country but, I guess my best moment was playing for my family reunion. We have always been a musical family. My father wanted me to be a doctor, like him, but I went the way of the guitar. I played my heart out and he came up to me and told me I was a professional musician. That's when I knew that I took the right path. God bless his soul.

Q: Are there other musicians in your family?

Everyone in my family has tried a musical instrument under the guidance of my parents. I am the only one of 6 children that went on to make money at it. I thank my mother and father for seeing it in me and giving me the best opportunities to learn to entertain. Heck, I grew up thinking that was what I was supposed to do. Now I say to my ma, Hey ma, they're giving me money to do this. I do have 2 brothers that are in the industry as lighting technicians. One of them has worked for Cheap Trick, Grand Funk Railroad, Lily Tomlin, Richard Dawson, and more. I wish one of them became an agent because I'd be a very busy man.

Q: What experience do you have?

I have performed at most venues throughout my career. I have yet to do a Bar Mitzvah and play for the president. LOL*. I write songs in my head daily. I have maybe 200 on tape.

*LOL = Laugh Out Loud

Q: Do you know anything about WYOU-TV, a local cable TV station (Madison, WI)?

I know WYOU-TV very well. I have done shows with them before. I was the M.C. for a *Save the Station Marathon* that I put together for them when they were about to lose funds to keep running. Needless to say, we did the job right. They are still on the air. They are my friends. They know me as Doc Hayden and Blue Medicine.

Q: If a musician finds gigs or work through agents, then where do you find agents?

Agents in the industry can be found through entertainment sections of the yellow pages. A lot of guys are running their own web sites now because it is less costly. The music business has changed a lot due to factors such as bar rules, {smoking}, dui laws*, and yes, karaoke. Club owners in this town can get a karaoke host cheaper than a live band. It's gotten out of control. We musicians have to find different venues. I myself have begun to work on a television project.

*Dui laws concern driving under the influence which law enforcement has put their foot down upon {good thing}, but it has also put a damper on club business, meaning locally, people don't go out to clubs as much anymore for fear of being pulled over. Now add the smoking ban and everyone is losing money. It trickles down to the owners, entertainment, suppliers, employees that are laid off, and general business.

Q: Have you ever written jingles?

I did a couple of radio slots in Panama City. Jingles are easy to write. You come up with a hook that the customer likes, take it from there, edit it down, and paste to commercial. Jingles usually only take a few minutes to do if the groove is right. Otherwise, you have to go into a mindset that this person or company needs some music right now. So you have to go into a writing mode even if it is not flowing and give them something from you that is planned and not spontaneous.

Q: Would you ever consider teaching?

Yes, I'll teach guitar to anyone who has the gift of music in them. I know if they have it in them at the first lesson. Music is something to be shared.

Q: What types of repairs do you do?

I can repair electronics, especially tube powered amplifiers, guitar modifications, setups, harmonics, and fretwork. I have years of experience in musically oriented repair and perfect pitch, {gift}, thus being able to tune pianos. I have all tools necessary to perform work.

Q: What are you looking for now?

When I pick a town to try music in, I hit club owners with demos, book shows, put the show together, go play, get paid, and get called back. After years of performing, I am more interested in someone {an agent or an agency}, that can do that legwork for me, and I go do the show and the agent takes a cut for the legwork.

Q: Are you also interested in writing theme songs?

I will go anywhere in the world to spread the happiness of music. I would love the opportunity to do TV, radio and movies. Put me in a room with a theme and I will walk out leaving a part of me for the world to listen to. That is my forte.

Q: What inspires you to write songs?

As far as being a songwriter, inspiration comes from daily life or happenings. One cannot aspire to be a songwriter. It is something that you are born with that you hone over the years. For me, I do not sit down to write a song. It just happens, be it the middle of the day or waking up in the middle of the night. I write my best stuff right on stage. It's kinda freaky but that's the way it happens. Spur of the moment.

Q: What are the stories behind your two songs called “Ol’ Rosie” and “I Pissed Off My Landlord”?

Ol’ Rosie is a song about a big, mean black girl back in high school who dressed to the nines and everybody wanted her. She weighed about 400 pounds and still wore a miniskirt. She had an old Ford and I swear that car would lean when she got in it. I wrote the song because she was a friend of mine.

I Pissed off my Landlord really happened too. I told the landlady after a year lease was up that I wanted to go month to month. She went ballistic and said get out. Go figure. My ex-wife came home later that night and went ballistic too. So I went downtown and got drunk and slept in my car. Wouldn't you know it, the cops woke me up and gave me a hard time and told me to leave. I said I refuse to drive because I had a few beers. The last verse of the song is made up cause I will never piss off a bartender.

Q: What is your dream goal?

To have a hit tune and quit my day job. There are a lot of songwriters out there. For every 10,000 songs written, one makes it. It depends upon a promoter picking you up. That's the way the business goes. I don't mean to sound brash, but music is a very tough business. Someday I may get my turn.

And the beat goes on.....
Mark

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