

**Road Work: A Memoir of a Life in Music**  
**The Boy on the Bandstand**  
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### **The Making of a Road Warrior**

I started in my first real band, The Journeymen, when I was at the early side of 15. But it was not until I was 16 that I began my journey out of the basement of the Gorman Coop in Brooklyn NY to play in a band called The Five Eighths. That was not our original name, of course. We were dubbed that by an agent who thought that was a catchy name for a five-member band - clearly a man whose understanding of music ended in the 1950s.

This was in 1966. I was studying Drama at Performing Arts High School by day and playing bar discos at night. Yes, I was working under age. My union card was under my real name, though the age was off by two years.

At the time, though, in order to work in New York City, one had to obtain a Cabaret Card. Musicians, like actors or any other performers of the time, were considered only one step above prostitutes and three-card Monty dealers. One had to be registered with the authorities as a result, the proof of registration being the Cabaret Card. Without one, you couldn't perform in NYC (that's how they finally broke Lenny Bruce; they pulled his Cabaret Card).

We had to search among our friends who were "of age" for someone whose draft card (the only universally accepted ID at that time) description was close enough to my appearance to get past the authorities. So, with a borrowed draft card and a name which I will refrain from mentioning, I successfully obtained a Cabaret Card. Of course, if anyone asked for both my union AND my Cabaret Card, I was screwed!

One might have suspected that, working in a bar from 9PM to 3AM might be a temptation to indulge in underage drinking. I had no such interest. For, though we had to pack afterwards and get home to Brownsville Brooklyn (sometime after 4AM), I had to be in midtown Manhattan for School at 8AM! Yes, there were gigs on Fridays and Saturdays, but many of them were mid-week in the city that never sleeps - and neither did I, come to think of it.

I would sit at the bar on breaks, doing my homework for the next day's classes; no time for alcoholic indulgence. I also mastered the art of sleeping while standing up on the subway, grasping a pole or a hanging strap, waking up almost always, just as the train pulled into 42nd street.

My first class in the morning was chemistry. Now chemistry in Performing Arts was not the same as chemistry in any other high school; we had no lab space. So, instead of actually handling burettes, pipettes and Bunsen Burners, we would observe as the

teacher actually conducted the experiments at the one lab table in the classroom. I was seated in the back, RIGHT NEXT TO THE RADIATOR! Small wonder that I invariably nodded off during the class. The fact that I managed to get a 95 sleeping through the better part of the class led me to think I was meant to be a chemistry major; a notion I was quickly disavowed of when I took my first chemistry class in college.