



TINY TIM & LIFE COLUMNIST PETER JONES during a radio interview sometime in the murky past.

life Music

Looking at those oldies but moldies

BY PETER JONES

Last year, I spent a whole column on my Capitol Hill music memories. By popular indifference, I thought I would move over a few blocks this month and flash back on my treasured recollections of downtown Denver and elsewhere in the central area.

At least I thought I would do that, but I wound up just throwing darts at random memories instead, like the time I daringly stuck a radio microphone in front of some street musician on the 16th Street Mall and brazenly asked him to sing something.

"Something in the way she moves..." was his musical retort, naturally.

There is always the Mercury Cafe (except when forced to move from 13th and Pearl), where I witnessed female impersonators lip-syncing "Respect" at the wedding of talk show host Alan Dumas and actress Pamela Clifton, and where I met my first ex-wife at a Rocky Mountain Music Association showcase!

Very romantic. The drag queens mouthing "Respect," that is.

Remember the old (second, in fact) Muddy's location down the street?

Dumas and I put together a chaotic live radio program there that saw Denver singer-songwriter Lance Bendiksen being forced, by happenstance, to follow a "performance" by the Not Ready for Prime Time Singers, a pre-karaoke life form that would meet regularly in homes to practice getting worse.

Dumas himself took the lead on "Born to Be Wild," noting that this was likely the first time some of these people had sung in public without being told to shut up.

"Will the audience take Lance seriously after this?," Bendiksen's wife posed, clearly concerned about her husband's artistic credibility.

"After an opening act like

this, they'll have to," I must have said.

Bendiksen would later perform in an adjunct theatre at Carnegie Hall.

Life would not have been as sweet had I not been present when Dale Hawkins, the author of "Suzy Q" (interviewed in this column in Oct. 2000) performed his 1950s swamp-rock classic in the Tivoli's now defunct Boiler Room, of all the forgotten hell holes.

Then there was the surreal night in the mid-80s at the old Fairmont Hotel, where I was one of about eight people to see ex-Byrd Roger McGuinn perform for 45 minutes in a tuxedo.

Under my breath, I suggested he play "Drug Store Truck Driving Man," and he did! Later that week, McGuinn appeared on my public-access TV show. It was not a great year for him.

Things picked up for McGuinn later, though. In fact, he was probably the only artist to ever have a hit record *after* having appeared on "Speakeasy."

Lannie Garrett's Ruby was the place to catch such artists as Tiny Tim and the Del Rubio Triplets. It was at Ruby where my date, her sister and I once

attended a show by guitarist Kenny Rankin, who "happily" strolled to our table and sat down, uninvited, as I recall.

He proceeded to chat-up and eventually leave with the sister. I never saw any of the three again.

Speaking of the late Tiny Tim, for reasons I cannot fathom, the 60s novelty once explained his sexual dysfunction problem to me... in detail that I did not deserve... at the lovely Regency Hotel, when he was in town for some sort of nostalgia fest.

My career in radio has allowed me a number of other bizarre celebrity encounters in downtown Denver.

My favorite happened around 1990 or so, when I was getting off the air at KBX-AM, a since-forgotten Denver talk station. KBX happened to share a floor in the Tabor Center with KBPI-FM, where a rotation of colorful disc-jockeys was known to come and go, some in spandex, others donning tattoos or other "rock star" flair.

While walking out of the studio, I noticed someone, apparently a new DJ, being escorted through the mass of cubicles.

"Oh my," I thought to myself, "and he has Peter Frampton hair!"

As I passed the "new hire," I heard somebody say, "Hey Peter, meet Peter Frampton!" And I did, just in time for this anecdote. A year or so later, Frampton cut most of his locks off.

What can I say? Music is my life. Denver is my home.

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