
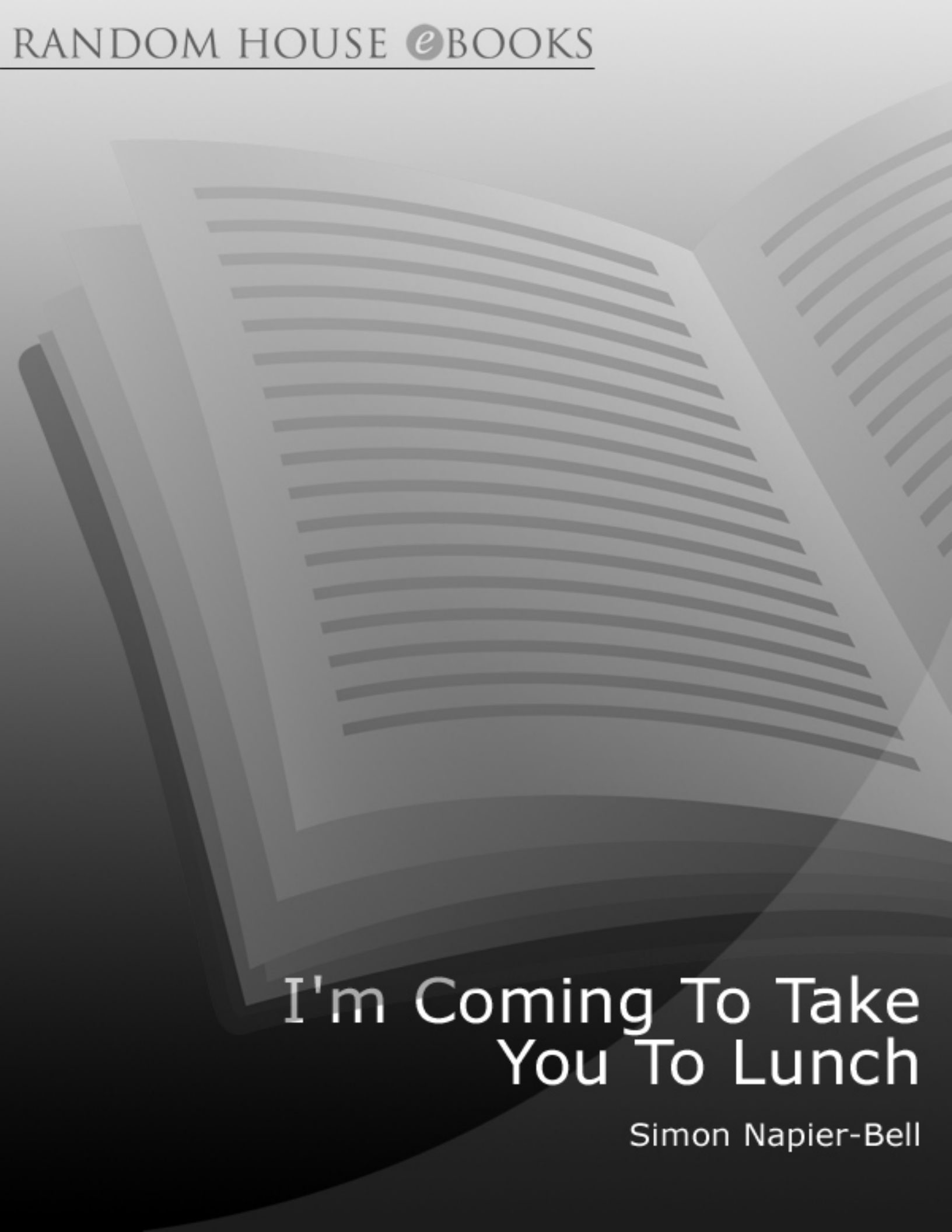


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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I'm Coming To Take  
You To Lunch

Simon Napier-Bell

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## About the Book

**Pop manager extraordinaire Simon Napier-Bell had had enough. He'd had enough of pop groups. He'd had enough of the constant grief at home with his two ex-boyfriends bickering; and most of all he'd had enough of the music biz.**

But then he simultaneously fell in love with a new passion – the Far East; and a dynamic new duo – George and Andrew – jointly called Wham! Soon, in an audacious attempt to have the best of both worlds he found himself offering to arrange for Wham! to be the first ever Western pop group to play in Communist China – a masterstroke of PR which, in one swift stroke, would help make them one of the biggest groups in the world.

What follows is an exciting and unpredictable romp around the more curious corners of the world as Napier-Bell dives into the unknown and attempts to achieve the unachievable. We soon find ourselves in the company of a wonderful cast of petulant pop stars, shady international 'businessmen', and a hilarious confusion of spies, students and institutionalised officials as he edges ever closer to inadvertently becoming one of the first Westerners to break down the walls of Communist China.

## About the Author

**Simon Napier-Bell** has had a long and eventful career in the music business. In the Sixties he managed the Yardbirds and co-wrote Dusty Springfield's huge hit 'You Don't Have to Say You Love Me'. Towards the end of the decade he discovered the young Marc Bolan and subsequently managed him too. Over the next decade he turned down Julio Iglesias in favour of another Spanish singer, and signed a punk group called London, who, like their songs, lasted no longer than two minutes. Simon's next group Japan were considerably more successful in the early Eighties, but nothing could match the world domination of his next charges, Wham! and the mega-star to be, George Michael.

*I'm Coming to Take You to Lunch* is Simon Napier-Bell's third book, *Black Vinyl, White Powder* was his second. His first, the infamous *You Don't Have to Say You Love Me*, was labelled 'a scurrilous memoir of the Sixties music business' (*Daily Mirror*), which is exactly what it was. It was also, as Jon Savage pointed out, 'the classic hidden history of Sixties pop'.

These days he writes, lectures and lives mostly in Thailand.

**Praise for *I'm Coming To Take You To Lunch*:**

'Reading this is like sitting across a table groaning with foie gras, listening to a raconteur extraordinaire ramble through an alcoholic mist ... tremendous fun' ***Gay Times***

'A riot of boys, booze and 80s excess ... a great raconteur and his snide asides are a joy. Bitchier than an Elton John put-down' ***Elle***

'Tells the story with a raconteur's relish and a cast of shady characters straight out of a Graham Greene novel' ***Q***

'Funny and totally absorbing' ***Pink Paper***

**I'M COMING  
TO TAKE YOU  
TO LUNCH**

**SIMON NAPIER-BELL**



**EBURY  
PRESS**

# FOREWORD

ALL THE PEOPLE in this book are named and described as they really were except for Professor Rolf Neuber, whose name and appearance has been adjusted slightly, together with the names of his four friends - Lek, Manolo, Shin and Johnny Milano.

Of the other people in the book, I hope no-one takes offence. It's true that on occasion people's bad points seem to surface rather glaringly but hopefully each bad point is later redressed by some sort of balancing good point. One person, though, seems to have been presented with very few redeeming features - the Chinese gentleman who was most instrumental in Wham! playing their concert in Beijing - Mr Zhou Renkai. Consequently I decided to look him up before the book came out and see if meeting him again would make me feel different about anything I'd written. So in July of this year I flew to Beijing for the first time in nineteen years.

It was extraordinary. The grim, never-ending drabness I knew so well had completely disappeared. Beijing looked like Tokyo or Singapore. Everything that was old and grubby and depressing had been torn down and replaced with things that were tall and shiny and gleaming.

At the time Wham! went to China, Beijing had just one modern hotel - the Great Wall Hotel. Colin Thubron, in his book *Behind the Wall*, described it as a space capsule, lying on the outskirts of the city as if it had been 'discharged from another planet', with a lobby in which 'neon-lit



elevators glided like glass beetles'. It was, he said, as if 'Beijing and the hotel were severed from each other'.

In 1984, Beijing and the Great Wall Hotel were indeed like two different worlds - but today it's the world of the hotel that has triumphed. The Great Wall Hotel is now simply one of thousands of glittering steel and glass buildings.

Even more surprising are the countless districts dedicated to night life - bars, discos, restaurants and clubs of all types from grunge rock to gay. The change in just twenty years is as great as the change that has taken place in most Western cities in sixty or seventy years. Wide avenues, once empty except for a single clattering lane of bicycles, are now jammed to a standstill across all five lanes with Audis, Volkswagens, Mercedes, BMWs and Nissans.

I stayed in the Peninsula, right downtown, brashly modern and extravagant - a marbled mezzanine, a French restaurant, plasma TVs all over the place, fashion shops by Gucci, Armani, Louis Vuitton, Ralph Lauren - just like five-star hotels anywhere else in the world. The road outside the hotel was a pedestrian street with outside eating places, beer bars and street entertainers. Teenagers dressed from Next or Giordano zoomed by on skateboards or mountain bikes, as hip and rowdy as kids in New York or London. In the mid-eighties it would have been unlit and deserted, with only a nervous late-night cyclist flitting home in the dark before the secret police set off for their round of midnight arrests. Now it's no longer surly men in uniform who accost passers-by; it's pretty girls.

'Do you want sex?'

The girl spoke in excellent English and was dressed like an air-stewardess, with wide-open innocent eyes.

'D'you mean with you?' I asked.

She giggled. 'Oh no. I'm still at university. This is my part-time job. I find customers for a bar where girls give

you sex. They're very well trained. You'd enjoy it. Can I take you?'

I shook my head. 'What are you studying?'

'Traditional Chinese music and dance. I'm at the University of Classic Arts and Sciences.'

'Do you play an instrument?' I asked.

'A *guzheng*,' she explained. 'It's a classical instrument that was once played for the emperors in court. I play with a traditional Chinese orchestra.'

'And do you like Western music too? Do you listen to pop?'

She pulled an iPod from her pocket and waved it at me, grinning. 'Linkin' Park, I'm mad about them. I listen to them non-stop, and Usher too. Everybody at school is cr-a-a-a-zy about Usher!'

\*

Despite these extraordinary changes, when I tried to contact Zhou Renkai I encountered something of the Beijing I'd known from the 1980s. At that time Mr Zhou had been the head of the All-China Youth Federation (a vast organisation that co-ordinated the activities of every youth organisation in China), so I now went along to their new offices, a forty-storey skyscraper.

When I asked if anyone knew where I might find him, I was guided to the personnel department. 'He was head of the All-China Youth Federation in 1985,' I explained. 'I believe he was the very top person, the number one man.'

The woman in charge looked at me with great mistrust. 'I've worked here for thirty years,' she told me coldly. 'I've never heard of anyone called this. Why do you want to contact him?'

I told her about Wham!'s concert in China in 1985. She said she knew nothing about it and went away to check.

When she came back she told me, 'We can concede there was a concert by your group but not that there was

anyone called Zhou Renkai.'

'I have his name card,' I assured her. 'It says he was head of the All-China Youth Federation. And I have press cuttings from Chinese newspapers at the time. They also confirm it.'

'Your information is false,' she said with great finality. 'I can assure you, we've checked out records. No-one of that name ever had anything to do with this organisation.'

Mr Zhou had been erased from their records - who knows for what reason.

'Never mind,' I said. 'Perhaps you can check with a few other people and tomorrow I'll phone you to see if you've had any luck. Can you give me your name card?'

She did so, grudgingly, but the next morning when I called her back she sounded even more severe than previously. 'I've told you already. No-one of that name ever worked here. I suggest you stop trying to find him.'

So underneath all the glitz and money and Westernisation, Beijing was really still the same old place - bureaucratic, communist, mysterious and dangerous - a breeding ground for falsehood and intrigue. To find again the Beijing I'd known previously was somehow comforting. It gave me a sense of continuity, of stability. In the end I decided I liked it better that way.

As for Mr Zhou, despite his obliteration from the organisation's official history, in my book at least he's been allowed to keep the position he held twenty years ago - head of the All-China Youth Federation.

It was April 1985 when it happened. After two years and seventeen visits to China, I was amazed to find that I'd somehow pulled off the impossible. Wham!, the hottest pop act in the world, were going to be the first ever Western group to play in communist China.

*Simon Napier-Bell  
Thailand*

*September 2004*

**PART**  
**APRIL 1983** **I**

# 1

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

ALLAN WAS CHINESE; Donavon was black. Most of the time they fought tooth and nail and refused to sit in the same room together. Other times they dressed up to the nines and went out on the town with each other, the best of friends.

Allan was my ex-boyfriend and Donavon the boyfriend who'd replaced him. Both of them ran their own businesses - Allan, a hairdressing salon in Knightsbridge, Donavon, a small independent record company - and the three of us lived together in a large house in Bryanston Square, just round the corner from Marble Arch, with tall plane trees and a private park in the centre of the square for residents.

There was also a Filipino cleaning lady who sat in the kitchen every afternoon, drinking tea and consuming food from the fridge.

Into this happy world, on the morning of my forty-fourth birthday, came Jazz Summers, not as another resident but as a knock on the door.

I'd been persuaded to meet him by a mutual friend, but when I opened the door and saw him I was taken aback. Jazz looked so completely different from anyone I might get on with. Thin and wiry with receding hair and a touch of acne, he was aggressively straight and spoke in a deliberately down-market manner. On the other hand, he had a sparkle in his eye and was completely unfazed by my strange household.

Over a Chinese lunch round the corner, he told me about himself. For the last few years he'd been managing both a pop group and a folk singer. Before that he'd been in the

army, stationed in South East Asia, drumming with a rock band that played gigs on off-days from Saigon to Jakarta.

Since the Far East was a passion of mine we found some common ground.

'Let's form a management company,' he suggested.

'But I want to give up being a manager.'

'With your history of success, why would you want to give it up? Surely you need money to keep your household going?'

'I'm not sure I want to keep it going. I want to make a change in my life. I'm thinking of moving to South East Asia and doing something new.'

Jazz didn't understand. To him, like most people, pop success looked alluring, but I was tired of it.

'Don't be silly,' Jazz persisted. 'I know an act who've had a couple of hits but don't have a manager. With your name we could sign them up. I'll do the work - you provide the credibility.'

I sighed, my decisiveness slipping away, my vision of living as a writer in the Far East receding. I told him, 'It wouldn't work. As soon as we'd signed them I'd feel responsible. I'd end up working just as hard as you.'

Jazz looked delighted. 'Well, that would be perfect.'

He took a piece of paper from his jacket pocket and handed it to me - a press cutting about two young guys, George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley, the hottest new act of the year and already on their third hit single. I'd seen them recently on *Top Of The Pops*. They'd sung and danced with an extraordinary macho exuberance yet there seemed to be a strange intimacy flowing between them.

They called themselves Wham!

Dick Leahy and Bryan Morrison were Wham!'s publishers. Jazz had already met with them and suggested himself as manager but they'd thought him too inexperienced. Now we went together to meet them again.

Dick and Bryan were as oddly matched as me and Jazz. They both wore sharp suits and smoked Havana cigars, but while Bryan talked loudly in a don't-give-a-toss cockney accent, Dick was smoothly ingratiating, speaking softly like an army chaplain and sometimes coming too close as he did so.

'If you want to manage these two lads,' he purred, 'you must understand they have a unique talent and need careful nurturing.'

'Bugger that,' Bryan butted in. 'Just get them into the charts.'

Either way, these two knew they had a hit act on their hands and could see that Jazz and I would make a good management team. So they helped us fix a meeting.

A few days later, George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley came to 29 Bryanston Square. On *Top Of The Pops*, they'd come across as lookalikes - two fun-loving teenagers - a matching pair. In person, they seemed complete opposites.

Andrew chose the longest settee in my sitting-room and draped himself along it lengthways. 'Nice pad,' he said, throwing his eyes around the room. 'Great for pulling.'

George chose an armchair and sat on the edge of it, eager to get down to business. 'Who've you managed before?' he asked brusquely.

Andrew remained stretched out. From the coffee-table he picked up a book - something I'd written about the music business in the sixties - and started browsing through it.

George remained suspicious. 'We won't want you looking after our money,' he said. 'We'll be appointing accountants.'

'Fantastic, man,' Andrew commented a couple of times from his reclined position with the book, then turned to George. 'Seems like Simon spent most of the sixties either drunk or having sex. He sounds just the right person for us.'



George ignored him. 'What guarantees can you give us? We won't want to give you a contract unless we have guarantees.'

Their different personalities complemented each other well; more important, though, was the quality of the three records they'd released - 'Wham Rap', 'Young Guns' and 'Bad Boys' - all with extraordinary vitality and super-sharp lyrics. If I was going to go back to managing a pop group, at least these two guys were talented and well-spoken. And they had a wonderful image - pure Hollywood - 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid', or 'Starsky & Hutch'.

As they left, the other members of my domestic entourage peered down at them from the top of the stairs.

'They're gorgeous,' the Filipino cleaning lady told me, which was the first time she'd shown appreciation for anything in the house other than the food in the fridge.

'It's a pity they're not blond,' drooled Donavon.

'I'll fix it,' Allan suggested. 'Send them to the salon.'

# 2

## CHERRY BLOSSOM

SOMETIMES MY LIFE seems to have been one long ramble of rootless hedonism. Not that I've made it a frantic search for illicit pleasure; it's been more aimless than that, which is why I call it a ramble.

I left school with no desire to do anything more than wander round the world and see what was going on. I hitchhiked round America, played the trumpet in strip-joints in Canada, sold magazines door-to-door in Mexico City and finally came back to London to work as a film editor. It was only then that I found something that suited my talents.

Having got enough money together to make a down payment on an American convertible, I drove it one night to the Ad Lib Club (a sixties joint that throbbed with music and alcohol and sexually provocative people). My arrival was seen by an aspiring pop group who so coveted my car that they approached me (well after midnight, when I was sitting in a corner of the club with my eyes half-closed nodding vacantly to 'Gloria' by Them), to ask if I would be their manager. Only vaguely aware of their presence and unable to hear a word they said, I continued to nod to the beat, which they took to mean 'yes'.

That first group was not too successful but by the time the second and third came along I'd got the hang of it and we were getting hits. Aspiring pop stars, it seemed, while knowing where they wanted to go, had little idea of how to get there. All that was needed was some common sense to point them in the right direction. It was like riding a horse in a race - the artist did the running, the manager did the

riding and together we ended up at the finishing post. Not only did I get an enjoyable ride round the course, I also collected twenty per cent of their winnings.

Surprisingly, social commentators of the day viewed the management of pop singers as a profession of some importance and having made myself vaguely competent at it I found myself being written about and even admired. Although I found this rather silly I saw no reason not to take advantage of it, so for the next eight years I lived in style, travelled around Europe and America, ate in the best restaurants, put money in the bank, managed a pop group here and there, and had lots of sex.

Well, who wouldn't?

Then I developed a dangerous passion - it was Kit Lambert's fault, The Who's manager, an old friend of mine.

One sharply cold April morning in 1972, in search of coffee and a chat, I dropped in to see him at his house in Egerton Crescent where the trees had just burst into flower.

'Isn't the cherry blossom marvellous,' I commented.

Kit, in a strangely one-uppish mood, was rather snooty. 'The only place worth looking at cherry blossom is Japan.'

It rankled. He'd made me realise - despite having enjoyed a decade of living it up in the music business, swinging my way round America and Europe, feasting and boozing and finding new partners to take to bed every night - there was still an enormous hole in my education: I'd never been to the Far East.

I heard myself saying, 'In that case, I'll go there at once,' and that very same evening I was on a plane to Tokyo.

I didn't really care about cherry blossom, it was just an excuse; I'd reached a moment in life when the excesses of the rock business were boring me. My mind was ready for something new and in Tokyo I found it. It wasn't just the

people or the signboards or the architecture, it was *everything*. You could feel it in the air.

Outwardly, most things looked much the same - the buildings, the clothes, the cars - but this familiar topping was resting on a perversely different cultural base. Like flicking through one of those children's books that put the face of one person on the body of another, the results were endlessly strange and seductive. A Harley Davidson whizzed past. On the pillion seat was a Buddhist monk dressed in saffron robes wearing a crash helmet.

'Why you come to Japan?' the taxi driver asked me.

'To see your wonderful cherry blossom,' I said, intending to flatter him, but I'd picked the wrong man. It was his obsession.

'Aah so. In Japan we have chelly blossom many type! Chelly blossom Someiyoshino, chelly blossom Oshima, chelly blossom Edohigan, chelly ...'

He insisted on making a special detour to drive me round the perimeter of the royal gardens, turning to talk to me in the back seat, pointing out every individual tree, naming its species and telling me on which day of the week it had blossomed. By the time we arrived at the hotel I felt my enthusiasm for Tokyo flagging, but when I walked into the lobby it was instantly revitalised. I was in the five-star equivalent of a tropical street market.

In Japan it was the custom not to invite foreign visitors to a company's offices but to go instead to their hotels. Here, among gleaming mirrors and pink marble floors, over coffee and patisserie served by doll-like waitresses and impeccable waiters in bow-tie and tails, Japanese businessmen sat listening impassively as visiting foreigners pitched their deals. Silk-shirted Filipinos, dark-suited Taiwanese, clove-smoking Indonesians, soft-smiling Thais - this lobby was not just Japan, it was the whole of South East Asia. I remembered all the books I'd read about it by

Maugham and Greene and Conrad and Clavell. Why on earth had it taken me so long to get here?

Seduced in an instant, I stayed for a year. For the next twelve months, with guidebooks and language cassettes, I travelled to every country represented in that lobby. But my new-found addiction gave me a dilemma.

The sixties had introduced me to pop management which gave me money and success, but it had come entirely from working in Europe and America. Now I would have to choose - was it to be the music industry or the Far East? It was like a happily married man falling for an unsuitable mistress and I did what most men do in that situation - cheated on both.

Throughout the rest of the seventies I flew from West to East and back again, trying to find business projects that could tie the two together. I wrote songs in Indonesia, produced records in London, opened a publishing company in Hong Kong and managed a singer in Spain who was also a Filipino film star. Towards the end of the decade, someone in London introduced me to Japan, a new group searching for success.

In the middle of the punk era, when everyone else was walking round London in black leather and safety pins, the lead singer came to see me wearing full make-up and pretty clothes. Presuming he'd received advance warning of a new fashion trend, I rushed to sign his group. But I was wrong. He had no insider knowledge of things to come and when I launched the group Japan in the UK they flopped miserably. However, when their records were released in the country whose name they'd adopted, Japan became huge. Japanese teenagers liked the idea of a group named after their country, and unlike their British counterparts they didn't like pop stars in grubby punk fashions; they wanted their young men clean and neatly dressed. And if a little make-up was added, well, why not? Like Kabuki theatre, it was a part of Japanese culture.

With success in South East Asia, my life should have been perfect but Japan had little interest in being big in the Far East, they wanted to be big in Britain. Ever dutiful, I spent more time in London working on the British market and by the time the eighties rolled round they'd started getting hits.

Their success in Britain trapped me in London. Not that it was particularly dreadful. This was 1983, the punk era was over and the capital had developed a swing not seen since the sixties. Making money was respectable again. Expensive new bars and restaurants were opening all over town; designer clothes were the new fashion and the car to be seen in was a Porsche.

Getting by with a Bentley, I was back in the thick of it all. Like everyone else in London's inner circle, I ate out every night, discoed till dawn and jumped on planes at a moment's notice to go to the sun, or America, or anywhere else that took my fancy. But when the bass-player's girlfriend moved in with the lead singer, Japan broke up.

It was then that I got a niggling feeling I should be doing more with my life than managing groups. I was tired of being tied to prima donna pop stars; I felt the time had come for me finally to give up the music business and move to South East Asia - Hong Kong, perhaps, or Singapore - to start a new business or write books.

But before I could do so, Jazz Summers turned up on my doorstep and persuaded me we should manage Wham!.

# 3

## SUCH A REMNANT

‘DAHLINK, YOU’RE LOOKING w-u-u-n-derful.’

Connie was an Australian-Italian with an accent to match – the publicist for Allan’s hairdressing salon, she was a genius at getting newspaper coverage. Glamorous, gregarious and flirtatious, she loved to flatter everyone outrageously. Whenever I went into her office she would scream with delight. ‘Dahlink, what have you done to yourself? You’re looking magn-i-i-i-ficent. Like a sex-god.’

To walk into Connie’s room with a bad hangover and be told I looked like a sex-god was most revitalising; she made it sound so believable. The first time it happened I even went to the bathroom to check in the mirror. Well, maybe she’s right, I thought, there is something rather handsome about the wasted look in my face. I should get hangovers more often.

Then from upstairs I heard it again. ‘You’re looking w-u-u-n-derful. What have you done with yourself?’

I went to see who was stealing my compliment – a famous footballer perhaps, or a visiting film star? No, it was our aging brown-toothed cleaning lady.

And then the hideous spotty boy from the sandwich shop arrived with lunch.

‘Dahlink ...’

Our offices were in a house in Gosfield Street, a quiet side road near Oxford Circus. Connie shared her office with Richard Chadwick, with whom I’d started a music publishing company some six years earlier. Before he started working with me, Richard had been a civil servant and something of that profession had stayed with him. He

was the sort of person who enjoyed making a good job of a VAT return. He did all the company accounts and already, in the early eighties, had mastered computers, which in those days meant working with an impossible system called DOS. For me, uninterested in the detail of day-to-day administration, he was a perfect partner, though I had to admit he could sometimes be a little prickly.

One day I stood behind him at the computer while he tried to show me how a spreadsheet worked. Try as I might I couldn't relate the movements of his hands on the keyboard to what was appearing on the screen.

'I'm sorry,' I told him. 'I simply don't understand.'

'Because you don't want to!' he snapped, exasperated.

He may have been right. But to be scolded by Richard now and again was a small price to pay for the benefits of having him around.

On the floor below Connie and Richard was an office meant for me, but I'd never used it. Since everyone else had offices, whenever I needed to talk to them I could use theirs. On a typical day I would go to the gym, visit Allan's salon, play squash and have a long lunch. That didn't leave much time for sitting in offices, so I gave mine to Jazz.

George and Andrew seemed to enjoy their visits to our offices. They enjoyed looking through their fan mail in the reception area and progressing upwards to the first floor where Donavon worked on a host of mysterious projects with his two secretaries. Dressed for work as other people dress for parties, he would flash a blinding white smile and jig infectiously as they passed.

One floor further and they would pass Jazz's office, usually without saying much, for Jazz would be busy on the phone berating people. Then to the top floor and Connie.

'Dahlinks, hullo - my two wonderful sex gods.'

Wham!'s self-made image of happy-go-lucky, good-looking best friends was the simple truth, but it soon became clear



that in George's case the image hid a complex character full of angst and self-doubt.

Andrew brimmed with natural self-confidence; as a child he must have been given nothing but love and encouragement. George, I decided, some time in his childhood, must have been let down badly by someone in whom he'd put faith. He could shoot mistrust from his eyes like fire from a flamethrower. One moment you would be discussing a routine piece of business, the next you were enveloped in burning suspicion.

Jazz and I went with them to meet their new lawyer, Tony Russell. He had a reputation as the toughest in the business but he was a most benign person - slightly portly with owl-like glasses, always good-natured and polite. His bills were said to be as big as his reputation, but there was no sign of any lavish spending in his offices. They were small and cramped.

'I think it's best to tell you straight off,' I said, 'there'll be no money to pay you with for quite some time.'

He smiled. 'No problem. Dick Leahy says these two boys are going to be huge. I trust him. I'll wait till they get some money in before I start charging.'

It was difficult not to warm to someone so charitable. The four of us accepted his offer of tea and crowded into his small office to get started.

George had a point of view on every subject that came up. Andrew was more relaxed, accepting George's opinion on most matters as their joint one. At one point I suggested, when they started to earn money, Wham! should put their accounts with Wilson Wright, a well-known city accounting firm.

'Why them?' George snapped back.

It had been an innocent enough suggestion but the fire in his eyes accused me of being in league with Wilson Wright up to my neck. We were obviously planning to plunder Wham! for every penny they earned.

I shrugged. 'They're supposed to be the best, but there are others.' I looked at Tony for more ideas. 'What d'you think?'

Tony's suggestion received a slightly lesser blast of fire and George was quiet for a moment. 'Anyway, I want two firms, not one.'

We seemed to be living in a world of double-acts. There was George and Andrew, Jazz and Simon, Dick and Bryan, and now two separate companies to do the accounts.

'Why two?' Tony asked.

George sighed heavily, as if we were all as thick as thatched roofs. 'So one lot can keep an eye on the others, that's why.'

All this talk about money and accountants was premature - George and Andrew were flat broke.

They were signed to Innervision - a small company financed and distributed by CBS - which consisted of just four people, Mark Dean, its young owner, and his three assistants. And Innervision had signed Wham! to an unusually awful recording contract.

Before they'd signed it, George and Andrew had consulted a lawyer who'd told them not to - the terms of the contract were dreadful. But desperate to get started on their career as superstars, they'd signed anyway.

Jazz and I fixed a meeting at Bryanston Square with this previous lawyer. When we met him we understood at once why George and Andrew had paid no attention to his advice; he put his feet on the glass coffee table, drank straight from the large bottle of Evian I'd put on a tray with glasses for five people, and burped.

Andrew took me aside and apologised. 'Such a remnant. I don't know how we ever got involved with him.'

However, with the lawyer's input, Jazz and I began to unravel the various problems we had to deal with.

Wham!'s royalties were half the industry norm, the advance had been just five hundred pounds, the group were tied up for eight albums, and like all record deals the cost of making their album plus a part of the cost of making their videos was to be deducted from any royalties which became due to them. With an album already recorded and videos having been made for the first three singles, it would be years before Wham! saw any money. It was depressing stuff and when we'd finished finding out about it we realised that we were going to have to get them out of the Innervision contract.

No-one with experience of the music business could possibly think it a good idea to disrupt the smoothly advancing career of a new group by launching a court case against their record company, yet it was inevitable. If Wham! were ever going to make money, they would have to take legal action. But who was going to pay for it?

Wham! didn't have a bean.

If Wham! were doing badly money-wise, their new managers were doing even worse. It seemed I'd not only blown my chance of giving up London for the Far East, I'd done it without any financial compensation. By persuading me to continue with management, Jazz had effectively ensured I would also continue with my extravagant domestic life. And there was more to pay for than just household expenses - both Allan and Donavon's businesses needed subsidising.

Most people thought Allan's salon was a roaring success, and in terms of publicity it was. Financially, though, it wasn't. The salon was so full of film stars and footballers having their hair done for nothing that there was scarcely room for paying customers. But since it was building Allan's name, with which we intended eventually to market hair products, I persuaded myself that each

week's loss was a sound investment. Allan, fully approving of this approach, drove a Rolls-Royce.

Seeing how well Allan was looked after, Donavon expected even better. He decided a new sports car might create the right image for success and a few days later he was whizzing round town in a red Mercedes. He was not only running his own record label but also trying to arrange a festival of black music at Wembley Arena which for some unknown reason required his secretary to tour London each day in the back of a chauffeur-driven car.

The bills for these things landed on my desk each month and although the break-up of Japan had given me the opportunity to escape them by moving to the Far East, I'd failed to take it.

It felt like I'd made a mistake. Our percentage from Wham! amounted to absolutely nothing, which was what we had to run our business on. And it was going to get worse. Some time in the near future we would have to make plans for getting them out of their terrible record contract.

I grumbled a little at Jazz for persuading me back into management, but not too much. Unlike me, he didn't have a house in Bryanston Square or money in the bank yet he was still managing to survive; it would have been uncharitable to complain too much. But there was another reason why I didn't grumble: I thought I'd found a way of freeing myself from the group's day-to-day management.

It had happened at our first management meeting - at the Bombay Brasserie, the best Indian in town, with a white cocktail piano and a glassed-in conservatory. Over lamb pasanda and spiced sea-bass, George and Andrew told us they wanted to be the biggest group in the world.

Jazz explained about his group Blue Zoo. 'Three years to crack the charts; then they broke up.'

'Same with Japan,' I added. 'Six years to get to the top and they broke up too. You wouldn't do that, would you?'

They laughed. 'Us? Break up? Impossible! Make us into the biggest group in the world and we'll go on forever. But we can't wait five years. You'll have to do it in two.'

That was scarcely possible.

'Especially in the States,' I emphasised. 'There's no national press, no quick way to spread the word through the *Sun* or the *Mirror*.'

'There's more than four thousand radio stations,' Jazz added. 'It means endless cosyng up to DJs, hanging out with them in the evenings, taking photos with their wives and girlfriends.'

George and Andrew looked less than impressed.

'We won't do that,' George insisted. 'You'll have to find another way.'

But what? Jazz and I finished our meal in silence; the plates were cleared, the wine drunk, the menus brought for dessert. Across the room the cocktail pianist tinkled annoyingly.

Then Jazz came up with an idea. 'Maybe you could be the first group ever to play in communist China.'

There was a moment of silence as the idea sank in.

'Like when Elton played in Russia,' Jazz added.

'Only bigger,' I said. 'Because China is even more of a closed society.'

George and Andrew looked doubtful.

'You'd get every headline,' Jazz insisted. 'You'd be on TV news around the world. It'd be sensational.'

I suddenly realised I was being given the perfect excuse for travelling to the Far East while still being a pop manager in London. 'I should go to China at once,' I suggested. 'And start working on it.'

And like hearing my lottery number come up a winner, George nodded. 'Sure - go ahead. Fix it!'

I AM THE total opposite of a control freak.

If other people want to put their fingers in the pie and keep them there night and day, I'm happy to let them do so. Management is the art of taking credit for other people's work and the biggest mistake is to do too much of the work yourself. I'm prepared to put complete trust in anyone who wants to do something I would otherwise have to do myself, and in Jazz I had someone who was capable of doing everything connected with Wham!'s day-to-day management as well or better than I could. Moreover, he actually *wanted* to do it. So while Jazz worked in London, I would head for the Far East and get permission for Wham! to play a concert in China. It was the perfect arrangement.

A phone call to the Chinese consulate provided me with my first obstacle: a recorded message. 'There are no visas for private tourists. You must travel in an official tour group. If it's business, we need a formal letter of invitation from the Chinese company you are visiting. It will take a minimum of three months to come through.'

I was disappointed. London was feeling claustrophobic and I was wound up and ready to travel. I didn't feel like putting it off so I simply told Jazz there was a change of destination. 'More urgent than China, I should go and talk to Sony in Tokyo. Japan were huge there. If I could do the same with Wham! we could sell a million albums in Japan alone.'

Jazz agreed at once. I was surprised. I'd thought he might not want me leaving London when there were so many things to do, but he seemed to like the idea of being left in charge.