



The following are exclusive excerpts
from

HARD LISTENING
The Greatest Rock Band Ever
(Of Authors) Tells All

to be released June 18, 2013

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exclusive excerpts from

HARD LISTENING

**THE GREATEST ROCK BAND EVER
(OF AUTHORS) TELLS ALL**

A collection of essays, stories, musings, candid conversations,
compromising photographs, and semi-musical clips
(we know, it sounds crazy, but trust us...it's awesome)

by

Mitch Albom • Dave Barry • Sam Barry
Roy Blount Jr. • Matt Groening • Ted Habte-Gabr
Greg Iles • Stephen King • James McBride • Roger McGuinn
Ridley Pearson • Amy Tan • Scott Turow

edited by

Sam Barry • Jennifer Lou



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First eBook Edition: June 2013

Hard Listening: The Greatest Rock Band Ever (of Authors) Tells All

Published by Coliloquy, LLC

Edited by Sam Barry and Jennifer Lou

Cover design by Erin Fitzsimmons

UI design by Joanna Chao, Beatrice Thomas

Videography by Kalen Egan

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ISBN: 978-1-937804-24-4

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SUBJECT: Update/Request about the Remainders' e-book

★ **James McBride** to Ridley Pearson

Monday, June 4, 2012 7:32 p.m.

Ridley,

I have no idea what I would write [for this book] other than to say this is a very lousy band, one of the worst I've ever played with, and that overall it has been one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had as a man and a musician. I always feel free in this band. I admire the humility of the deeply talented souls around me, and I feel a kinship to them. Even to those I rarely see. Writers don't live in a vacuum. We're lost in public. And I'm happy to be around so many lost souls like myself. Without Kathi, we are truly Remainders. We're all that's left. We better enjoy it and spread some love while there's still time. I'll do the best I can.

Peace,
James

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Q&A WITH THE REMAINDERS

Twilight Fan Fiction

Q: *If you were to write Twilight fan fiction in your genre, what would happen?*

A: “I would transform into Rudy Giuliani and dance around at Occupy Wall Street in a hula skirt and a Mike Tyson T-shirt, wearing African war paint.”

—JAMES McBRIDE

“At some point the vampires would go: ‘Wait a minute...We’re rich, intelligent, sophisticated and highly cultured. We can do whatever we want. Why the hell are we attending high school?’”

—DAVE BARRY

excerpt from

WHAT I LEARNED IN THE REMAINDERS

By Dave Barry

...LESSON TWO: Never kick a man when he is down, even if he is an attorney.

This is also something I learned in New York, although not on the same trip where I learned about the gimlets. (Maybe the lesson I should have learned is “Never go to New York.”) We were performing before a large and enthusiastic crowd, and we had launched into “Leader of the Pack,” one of our signature numbers (I am using “signature” in the sense of “stupid”). This is the 1964 hit by The Shangri-Las about a girl who, under pressure from her disapproving parents, tells her motorcycle-gang boyfriend, Jimmy, that they’re through. Heartbroken, he gets on his motorcycle to ride off on a rainy night, and she begs him to go slow, but tragically—as you have no doubt already guessed—Jimmy has a fatal crash. It’s tragic, as you can tell by the fact that the

song ends on an F-sharp minor, which is a very sad chord that took some of us Remainers more than seventeen years to learn.

In the Remainers’ version of “Leader of the Pack,” Amy sang lead, and the part of Jimmy was played by her husband, Lou. In real life, Lou is a tax attorney who does not ride a motorcycle, although he does own a Segway. Lou would dress in leathers and stand next to Amy as she sang, revving an imaginary motorcycle while making *vroom-vroom-vroooooom* noises with his mouth, looking every inch like a Segway-owning tax attorney who had ingested some kind of pharmaceutical.

At the point in the song where the motorcycle crashes, we in the band would make discordant sounds¹ with our instruments, which to be honest was pretty much what we did even when we were trying to make cordant² sounds. To add to the drama, Lou would fall to the floor and pretend to be dead. He had really been getting into it, making his falls appear to be more and more dramatic every night, and in this New York show he executed his

1. A good name for us would have been “The Sounds of Discordance.”

2. Or whatever the opposite of “discordant” is.

most spectacular fall ever, really crashing to the stage. As he lay there, it occurred to me, as a showman, that here was an opportunity to add a little “extra something” to the act, so I went over and, in what I considered to be a humorous all-in-good-fun manner, kicked him.

Lou responded by writhing around very dramatically. This amused the crowd, inasmuch as Lou was supposed to be dead. Stephen King, joining in the fun, strolled over and kicked Lou from the other side, and Lou writhed again, to the increased delight of the crowd. We each kicked Lou a few more times as the band finished the song, We got a big hand and then ended the show with another one of our signature songs, “Gloria,” which is even more signature than “Leader of the Pack,” if you get my drift. Then, with the crowd still cheering, we trotted triumphantly off the stage, feeling pretty darned pleased with our performance.

That’s when we found out that Lou was in the hospital.

It turns out that when he fell, he fractured his collarbone. From the instant he hit the stage, he had been in intense pain. So you can imagine how he felt

when Stephen and I started kicking him in our hilarious showmanlike manner. He went pretty much right from the stage to the hospital emergency room, where doctors x-rayed him and then put Lou's arm in a sling. And, trouper that he is, he remained with the band for the rest of the tour, and even continued to play the Leader of the Pack, although he no longer did the dramatic fall. Instead he sort of slunk off the stage, a wounded and vulnerable gang-leading Segway-riding sling-sporting tax attorney.

But the point is that I should never have kicked him, and I am deeply sorry that I did. Lou, if you're reading this: I apologize for my thoughtlessness; I would never knowingly do anything that could in any way cause harm to a bandmate. I also want you to know—and this comes from the bottom of my heart—that if you ever decide to file a lawsuit, Stephen has way deeper pockets than I do.



SUBJECT: Past Our Bedtime

★ **Amy Tan** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 9:17 a.m.

Sorry, Mitch, according to the Examiner, you will not be playing keyboard. I am. I can loan you my dominatrix costume, which this year is leopard Lycra.

If I were Kathi and planning her tribute, I would buy everyone leopard-print clothes. For the guys, this far it is only short-shorts. Lucky you. For the Remainderettes, it is a leopard catsuit. Scott, what size are you?

Amy

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★ **Amy Tan** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 9:23 a.m.

Good news!



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SUBJECT: Past Our Bedtime

★ **Amy Tan** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 12:29 p.m.

Scott, here is our outfit!



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★ **Ted Habte-Gabr** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 11:37 a.m.

Hel-lo

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★ **Scott Turow** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 10:50 a.m.

Amy, I would have hoped you remembered after our interlude at the Detroit JCC when you walked in on me dressing in the men's locker room.

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SUBJECT: Past Our Bedtime




★ **Ridley Pearson** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 11:14 a.m.

Amy:

I'm alone in a hotel room.




Thank you.

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★ **Dave Barry** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 11:15 a.m.

This is WAY too much information.

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★ **Amy Tan** to the Remainders

Tuesday, June 5, 2012 11:58 a.m.

Ah yes, I do remember Scott, of course. It is seared into my brain, something I think about when I am, like Ridley, alone in a hotel room.

Fortunately, the leopard catsuit is Lycra and thus stretches to accommodate those lower areas that are generously endowed.

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SUBJECT: Past Our Bedtime

★ **Sam Barry** to the Remainders

Wednesday, June 6, 2012 2:06 a.m.

Actually, I am here with Ridley, but he wouldn't own up to it.




Sam

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★ **Ridley Pearson** to the Remainders

Wednesday, June 6, 2012 5:20 a.m.

Tattletale

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excerpt from
**SINGING IN
THE KEY OF H**
By Scott Turow

...The thrills onstage, deep as they were, were a small pleasure compared to the friendships shared over the years. We all truly, deeply, passionately love one another. Yes, we learned one another's faults. But it is a dear group of brilliant and deeply decent people who relish one another's company. One of the secrets of the band, I always thought, was that most of us did not live in New York and thus did not have access to a large literary community. Being a successful writer in this country is a wonderful experience, but a rare one, and with the band, we were each, for a time, among peers. Mitch liked to point out that you could get on the bus and sit in any open seat and end up having the best conversation you'd enjoyed in weeks. There was no limit on the subject matter, although Dave tried to forbid any actual talk about being a writer—I guess because we

were pretending to be musicians—but occasionally Ridley and Greg and I would hide from him in the back of the vehicle and huddle for actual discussions of craft. On the other hand, in one of my first meals with the band, I listened to Tabby King, Steve's wife, and Dave speculating about the nigh-invisible nature of birds' dicks. The night before our last performance, Erasmo and I sat with James and listened to him speak serenely about the nature of forgiveness, a conversation Ras and I were still marveling about the next day. On the last bus trip back to the hotel following our final performance, we drew abreast of another bus on the highway. Steve, because he is Steve, looked up and said, "What if we looked over there and saw that everyone on the bus was one of us, except they were dead?"

...

Life is sometimes an absolute bitch, as we all know, and my time with the band embraced several somber moments...But I've always believed that the down stuff makes the light shine more brightly during the good times. And for me, my time with the band will always be haloed in memory by incredible radiance. It was simply a joy.

Q&A WITH THE REMAINDERS

Tuesdays with Mitch

Q: *What would Mary the intern learn if she spent Tuesdays with Mitch?*

A: “Mitch isn’t available.”

“Mitch does more on Tuesday than the rest of the band does in, for example, October.”

“He is already working on Thursday.”

“Mary would have a black eye Wednesday ’cause Janine don’t play that.”



SUBJECT: The McGuinn Karaoke Challenge...for Authors

★ **Sam Barry** to Dave, Ridley, Greg, and Stephen

Thursday, August 30, 2012

You've been hand-picked to participate in the first ever *McGuinn Karaoke Challenge...for Authors*.

Please write a page of text trying to mimic Steve's writing (Steve should just be himself). We'll send all of the entries to The Book Genome Project to see if their computers can tell us who wrote what, and we'll also let readers live-vote in the ebook.

Can you out-Steve Steve?

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★ **Stephen King** to Sam, Dave, Ridley, and Greg

Thursday, August 30, 2012 2:47 p.m.

> *Can you out-Steve Steve?*

I do it every day.

Steve

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THE MCGUINN KARAOKE CHALLENGE...FOR AUTHORS

Can Anyone Out-Stephen Stephen King?

The following are four short works of fiction written by Stephen King, Dave Barry, Ridley Pearson, and Greg Iles.

Can you tell who wrote which one? Read carefully and make your pick at the end to see how you stack up against the other Remainders, as well as the experts and computers behind the Book Genome Project.

excerpt from

BLACK MAMBO

by "Stephen King"

He resented the name Black Mambo. It wasn't a name he wanted to live with. For one thing, he was white as a preacher. Maybe he'd earned it because he was lethal to get in the way of. Maybe it was because he kept his head up, even when in the tall grass. Then again, maybe it was because he'd bitten a man in the neck, right there in front of Jimmy Devine's Baptist Church, an old faded circus tent on State Highway 50 that ran along the Penobscot River out Millinocket way. He'd had his Mike Tyson moment. So what? Who among us doesn't skid off the rails now and then? Who hasn't imagined crossing that line that separates the civilized from the uncouth? Maybe they should have called him Uncle Cooth, so they could have abbreviated it to something more accurate.

"When we gonna do it?" he asked.

The bar was a five-dollar-a-pitcher rathole that bikers would have frequented if any bikers had...

excerpt from

IN THE WOODS

by "Stephen King"

I could feel them on me, out in the woods, in the dark, burning the skin on the back of my neck like two pinpoints of fire. I could feel them, and I knew what they were.

You live in Maine as long as I have, you sense things. Things that are there, but at the same time they're not there. Like in that song from 1973, by that singer, where things are there and then not there.

What's the name of that fucking song?

Can't remember. Can't remember much of anything. Where are my car keys? What are the last four digits of my social security? Do I have on my pants? What about my underpants?

I have no idea. It's all gone now, gone from my brain like water down a drain. But my skull's not empty, not by a country mile. There's something new in there, something I can feel scuttling around...

excerpt from
**ROCK AND ROLL
DEAD ZONE**
by "Stephen King"

I get home from my latest book tour dog-tired and wanting nothing but a couple of Pop-Tarts in front of the TV and maybe twelve hours of sleep, but as I roll up my drive, I see it's not going to work that way. Sitting on my steps and waiting for me is Edward Gooch, aka Goochie, also aka the Gooch. I've known him since grade school, and I love him like a brother. At two hundred and eighty pounds, there's a lot of him to love, and what the Gooch loves most is rock and roll. God, does he love rock and roll. He loves big ideas, too. The biggest, he brings to me, every one a guaranteed moneymaker. All I have to do is invest a small sum (say, twelve million) or a slightly bigger one (say, seventeen or maybe twenty).

Today the Gooch is wearing red Keds held together with masking tape, huge gray sweatpants (only a bit pee stained at the crotch), and a Metallica shirt that shrank in the wash, allowing me a good...

excerpt from
**ROBERT JOHNSON'S
FLAT-TOP**
by "Stephen King"

Hip-deep in cotton bolls and sweating like a sharecropper, Branch Davis stared at the Mississippi Delta mansion with a moon as bright as a National resonator hanging over it and waited for the owner's guard dog to die. Branch had a pistol in his ankle holster, six melted tuning pegs in his pocket, and a Molotov cocktail in his left hand, but he still felt naked and vulnerable. Every few minutes he'd heard something slither or scuttle beneath the plants, and the mosquitoes were eating him alive. If this was what Southerners called "tall cotton," Branch wanted none of it. He'd flown his two-million-dollar King Air all the way from Bangor to this nameless Dixie hell to steal something most men wouldn't look twice at, but that proved only one thing beyond doubt: He was a true collector.

There were two kinds of collectors in the world, and Branch was the second kind. Both varieties had...

POP QUIZ

**Which essay was written by the real
Stephen King?**

TAP HERE TO VOTE