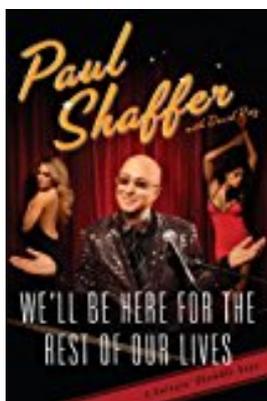


[PDF] We'll Be Here For The Rest Of Our Lives: A Swingin' Show-biz Saga

David Ritz, Paul Shaffer - pdf download free book



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Description:

Book Description From Paul Shaffer, lifelong music junkie, hipster, and longtime leader of David Letterman's band, comes a candid, endearing, hilarious, and star-studded memoir of a life in--and love of--show business.

How does a kid go from a remote Canadian town at the tip of Lake Superior to the bright lights of

Broadway and a gig leading the band on Letterman? This book is Paul Shaffer's answer to that question. From playing seedy strip joints in Toronto, to his first legitimate job out of college--which found him working with future stars (and friends) Gilda Radner, Martin Short, and Eugene Levy--to being first musical director of the nascent *Saturday Night Live* and helping to form the Blues Brothers, to being onstage every night with Dave and playing with the greatest musicians of our time, Shaffer has lived the ultimate showbiz life.

Now, in this hilarious, entertaining, and candid memoir--in which he dishes on everyone from John Belushi and Jerry Lewis to Mel Gibson and Britney Spears--Paul gives us the full behind-the-scenes story of his life, from banging out pop tunes on the piano at the age of twelve to leading the band every night at the Sullivan Theater.

A Q&A with Paul Shaffer

Question: Who and what inspired you early on toward music?

Paul Shaffer: I had the kind of Jewish parents who insisted that their kid be musical. My mother played Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and of course the Mary Martin and Ethel Merman at Carnegie Hall live album. On Sundays, my dad would put on the best jazz vocalists: his favorite Sarah Vaughn, Billy Eckstein, and Ray Charles, who, he taught me, was a genius. For folks who lived up on the north shore of Lake Superior, their taste in music was pretty damn hip. They started me on piano lessons at six; my mother said, "When he can read English, it's time for him to read music." After one lesson, I started to pick out tunes on the piano by ear, fascinated to discover that the notes of the scale could be used to play songs that I liked, not just those I had to play for my lesson. Then I heard rock 'n' roll on the radio, and it was all over, I became obsessed. When I figured out the three basic rock chords, I could play all the songs. I would come home from school and bang them out on the piano as loud as I could, so the sound just got all up in my ears. When I got a little older, I didn't buy 45s, I just learned them off the radio. I would recreate the whole sound, all the parts, with my hands.

Question: Doing a favor for a friend catapulted you from playing a seedy strip joint to a new career as musical director for the cutting-edge rock musical "Godspell" and then on to NBC's "Saturday Night Live." Tell us about that.

Paul Shaffer: Steven Schwartz, the Broadway composer of "Wicked" and "Pippin," changed my life. He hired me in Toronto for his show "Godspell" and said, "When this show's over, I'm bringing you to New York; you belong in New York." He got me my visa and I played for him in "The Magic Show" on Broadway. Then Howard Shore, the movie composer and later an Oscar winner for the *Lord of the Rings* score, called and said, "I'm coming into New York to do a new thing called 'Saturday Night Live.' I need a piano player, you're in town, and you already know a lot of the people on the show." In "Godspell" in Toronto, I had met these superbly talented, funny people who are still my best friends--Martin Short, Eugene Levy, Andrea Martin, the late Gilda Radner, Dan Aykroyd, and Victor Garber. I knew John Belushi; he was one of first guys I met when I came to New York and Billy Murray's older brother Brian Doyle Murray introduced me around to the National Lampoon crowd. I told Howard I didn't read music that well. He said, "You're a natural. I want you for what you can bring to it," and he talked me into taking the gig. The next thing I knew I was on TV.

Question: As a musical director, what's your worst nightmare? What is your favorite aspect of preparing for a special musical performance? For your nightly Letterman show appearance?

Paul Shaffer: I have experienced my worst nightmare several times. The great Anthony Newley had come on Letterman when we had a running bit with celebrities singing their version of a theme song, written by Mancini, for when we answered viewer mail. Newley was always singing about "the

clown, he's crying on the inside, laughing on the outside," so we started with him singing the mail song, and I'm playing by ear, and somehow I modulated into the "clown" section way above Newley's range. But he's such a pro and his ear is so good, he follows me into this new key, goes for this super-high ending note, and hits it. I think he hurt himself it was so high. I was just dying. Once, on "Saturday Night Live," John Sebastian came up to the mike to sing his "Welcome Back" with the house band. The mike squealed with feedback, and he backed off, and it seemed like an hour went by on live television with those lead-in chords playing before finally we started again. On the musical performances, I just love every second; I love all kinds of music and I've gotten to play with everyone from Snoop Dog to Bruce Springsteen to Placido Domingo. On Letterman, I love that it continues to be just as unrehearsed as that first show with Bill Murray. Dave likes it that way. He is the quickest mind in show business, and I get to talk to him on air, and anything could happen, any night. That anticipation, that possibility is what keeps it fun.

Question: What was the best piece of unexpected advice you ever received and who shared it with you?

Paul Shaffer: The advice came from John Belushi. In "A Year at the Top," my character was constantly walking into a scene being astonished by something, and the only way I knew how to act surprised was with my mouth agape. After the first show aired, Belushi said, "Stop acting with your mouth; use your eyes." It was especially ironic because John then went on to make the Blues Brothers movie in which his eyes were entirely obscured by sunglasses for the entire film.

Question: Of your many memorable experiences with music and showbiz legends, celebrities, and royalty, which person would you say had the greatest impact on who you are as a musician? As an individual?

Paul Shaffer: My favorite musician to play with certainly was James Brown. I was such a big fan of his as a kid, and I still am. He invented the sound that we're still dancing to today, whether you call it house or techno or electronica--it's all his rhythms. Nothing really has changed except we use computers today, but it's still James Brown. I never thought I would be in the middle of music that was so funky, when I got to play with him and he started to sing and shake his ass, you just couldn't help but get funky. Playing with him was my biggest thrill.

As far as an influence on me--Miles Davis comes to mind. His music has always fascinated me, especially when he went electric and combined the funk rhythms of James Brown and Sly Stone with his own jazz--the hippest jazz on the planet. Then I got to play with him in the studio, and see him arrange. He was so encouraging. I was way out of my league playing with him in the first place, but he was straight ahead. He said to me, "If it ain't funky, you can't use it, right, Paul?" That was one of the greatest compliments I ever got. I saw how he dealt with musicians to bring the best out of them. People used to complain about how Miles Davis would sometimes turn his back on his audience. I realized that he was presenting not just his own playing, but the music of his whole band. He was conducting, facing the band, bringing out the best in them, encouraging them. He had such confidence, he didn't have to grandstand to steal the show; it was always about the sound for a jazz player like him. But then, he always looked great. He was quoted as saying, "When you come on stage, the audience has got to know you can play before you put the horn up to your mouth." So appearance was very important to him, too.

Question: What in the book will most surprise people to learn about you?

Paul Shaffer: I think the Letterman show is very transparent, in that, you can tell how we're feeling, what we're thinking; it's all right there. We are true reality television. I have a feeling that the Real Housewives are not so real after all; I think all these shows obviously have a story arc, with

scene outlines, just like we had in "Spinal Tap." Our show is absolutely real, so I don't think anyone will be so surprised by any one thing. I'm living this incredible life, meeting and performing with the most gifted and talented people on the planet. I have been very honest, and I think a person might close the book and say, "Well, that explains everything."

(Photo © John Paul Filo, CBS)

From Publishers Weekly Shaffer tells the story of growing up a nice Jewish boy from Thunder Bay, Ontario, who rose to become late-night television's quirkiest sidekick. Before signing on with David Letterman in 1982, Shaffer had a career as the modern-day equivalent of a wandering minstrel. He opened for the Troggs and the Guess Who in Thunder Bay, played free jazz in Toronto, and was an original Blues Brother on *Saturday Night Live*. Vegas and Hollywood were also on the itinerary. Over the years, Shaffer has had friendships and run-ins with celebrities from Sammy Davis Jr. and John Belushi to Bob Dylan and Cher. While Shaffer shares that most predictable quality of celebrity memoirists—compulsive name-dropping—he tells the story, with co-writer Ritz, with insight and humor. Shaffer is fascinated by the art of popular entertainment and traces his influences back to his hip parents who introduced him to late-night Vegas and sophisticated jazz. He also mounts defenses of often-mocked performers such as Jerry Lewis and Don Ho and includes a chapter on his friendship with Phil Spector. Wisely, Shaffer gives little space to Letterman, which helps to establish him as a figure in his own right. One final note: the co-composer of *It's Raining Men* is decidedly heterosexual. (Oct.)

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