

An Interview with George Thorogood

Okee dokee folks... Most folks know George Thorogood because of his song, "Bad To The Bone", but after a conversation I had with him the other day I realized that he should really be singing "Bad On The Phone"! The interview was interesting and entertaining; punctuated by laughs, coughs, and sarcasm. I am not really sure what is accurate and what is true but here is the the conversation that I had with Thorogood. I didn't note the laughter as I usually do, there was just way too much of it. Read on...

George Thorogood: John?

John Fuzek: Hello?

GT: John?

JF: Yes, this is John

GT: John...?

JF: George?

GT: This is George...where's Ringo and Paul? It's a joke, John, Don't you have a sense of humor in New England?

JF: I was having a hard time hearing you! Sorry.

GT: Oh, man, I've been singing at the top of my lungs for forty years and you can't hear me, John, what's the matter with you?

JF: I'm a musician, too, so

GT: ughhhhhhh...

JF: So, where are you?

GT: I swore an oath to the government not to give the whereabouts of my location, John

JF: OK... so are you on tour right now?

GT: I am a fugitive from injustice

JF: OK so how is that working out for you?

GT: You know, I'm keeping moving

JF: So, I want to talk to you about your show coming up at the Zeiterion in New Bedford on June 6th

GT: New Bedford, Connecticut?

JF: Ha, no, Massachusetts!

GT: So you follow the Red Sox over there, right?

JF: Well, I don't, my father does

GT: I met Bill Lee, Ferguson Jenkins and Bernie Carbo (not sure about spellings)

JF: Actually I went to Red Sox Fantasy Camp with my father

GT: Ahhhh, that's nice, man

JF: My father is the big baseball fan, he is kind of disappointed that I am a musician instead of a baseball player

GT: Well, it's better to play baseball and not make the major leagues than never to play baseball at all

JF: Well, I am not a baseball fan, that is the big disappointment!

GT: Well, you're doing something!

JF: Yeah, so, do you still play?

GT: Nah, man, I'm in the booth now

JF: You don't play baseball at all anymore, not even for fun?

GT: I'm in the booth, get it? I always played for fun, no one ever paid me!

JF: I thought that you played semi-pro

GT: Yeah, VERY semi, EXTREMELY Semi!

JF: So semi that they didn't pay you?

GT: Yeah, they paid me not to play

JF: What position did you play?

GT: I embarrassed myself in the infield

JF: My father was a catcher and played until he was 75 and then had a hip replacement and he is 82 now and disappointed that he can't play

GT: Well, if you're a catcher you will never sit on the bench, nobody wants to catch!

Sooooo, what can I do for you, John?

JF: Well, I wanted to talk to you about your upcoming show, what you'r going to be doing at the show and your new album

GT: Why?

JF: Why???

GT: Why not?

GT: I don't know either. Why do you want to talk to me period? That's a mystery to me.

JF: So people can get excited about your show!

GT: Well, after forty years if they're not excited by not I can't help them!

JF: Aren't you interested in connecting with new people and making new fans?

GT: Worried? No. I worry about high blood pressure, high cholesterol, my daughter's health, those are things to worry about

JF : So, how are those things?

GT: They're all great, I worry about the real stuff, John, You know what I'm saying? These people in North Korea, that's something to worry about

JF: True, there is a lot to worry about. We keep our mind off of worrying about the big things by worrying about the little things

GT: Well, if you do that the big things will catch up with you!

JF: True, but somehow you have to get through the day...

GT: and that's where i come in! If a person wakes up in the morning and they don't like their job or the person that they work for or maybe they don't like their husband of wife, if they hear "Jumping Jack Flash" on the radio then their day is made! Got that? Am I wrong? Huh?

JF: So, every time that someone hears the opening chords to "Bad To The Bone"

GT: That's what music does for people, it gets you through the shit!

JF: True! So, how do you feel about those opening chords to "Bad To The Bone" being used in just about every movie ever made?

GT: Has it been?

JF: It seems that way! Do you get a chunk of change every time that happens?

GT: WRONG!!! it's not in every movie you see...was it in the movie Jaws? was it in the Godfather?

JF: OK, i am exaggerating but it is in a lot of movies!

GT: Let me correct you on that, it is used in a few movies and it is played a lot, that is what you are trying to say

JF: OK, that works

GT: I tried to get it into Rocky but that didn't work, I tried to get it into Raider of the Lost Ark, didn't happen, and I tried to get it in Star Wars, didn't happen! So, you better recheck your resources there.

JF: I was going off the top of my head! I just always seem to hear it in movies i see!

GT: The top of your head? Try not to bang it on the ceiling!

JF: I am tall

GT: So, what can I do for you, John, I got a lot of things to do, I got (inaudible) on the phone, Streisand calls every hour, Nicholson, you know how it is, they call and ask for advice, I try to tell Mick Jagger, "Hey, Mick, you're on your own, why keep bugging me?"

JF: So, I saw that you have a new album coming out, solo, I honestly do not know anything about it as I just found out about it.

GT: Why don't you go listen to it then we'll talk!

JF: They didn't give me a link to it!

GT: Rounder now has major distribution and they are based in Massachusetts and you still can't find it? What the hell's the matter with you?

JF: Usually when i set up an interview they send me a copy of the CD

GT: What people? What people?

JF: The PR people

GT: Well, why don't you talk to Rounder they are right there in Massachusetts they will send you one. You just don't want to hear it bad enough, do you?

JF: I JUST found out about it, like this morning!

GT: I understand, you gotta have your coffee, you gotta check out the Red Sox standings, you have to talk to your Dad, I understand! You're a busy man!

JF: Is this an acoustic, solo album?

GT: Every song on the album is acoustic, I think, except for one, I use an electric guitar

JF: Is it just you and a guitar?

GT: Just me and the guitar!

JF: I saw that you started out doing Robert Johnson covers, correct?

GT: Who didn't?

JF: me

GT: Oh, well, can't help you there.

JF: Did you add any harmonica on the CD?

GT: Oh, yeah, harmonica, man, Magic Dick and Charlie Musselwhite better look out!

Yeah! Oh, yeah!

JF: So, will you be playing some of the solo stuff at the Zeiterion?

GT: Absolutely not!

JF: How come?

GT: It's a solo statement and that's it. I rock with the band. I'm a rock star now, John, you know? You know that don't you?

JF: I do know that. I have for forty years. So, it will be strictly with the band at the Zeiterion?

GT: Hey, man, I paid my dues playing on the street corner all by myself, and opening for Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I started out, opening up for Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and Robert Lockwood and Hound Dog Taylor and all those people. I'm with the band now, man!

JF: You come from Delaware but you were in Boston, how did you wind up in Boston?

GT: Pretty long story, John. I was playing in California on the street corner, someone recorded me and sent it to a guy in NYC, they got a hold of me and said if you come to NYC you can do a guest set with Bonnie Raitt and Little Feat, so I made my way to max's Kansas City all the way from San Francisco and ran into Dick Waterman, Bonnie Raitt's manager and he told me that if I can get to Cambridge that i could do a guest set with Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. I did two songs and they hired me on the spot to open for Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. I was a success, John, right off the streets of America!

JF: That doesn't happen much anymore

GT: It doesn't happen at all

JF: Everybody goes on American Idol and thinks they're a rock star

GT: that's because the PARENTS think that they'e rock stars, that's how it happens these days

JF: Is your daughter a musician?

GT: yes

JF: what does she play?

GT: GUITAR! what's the matter with you???

JF: Some kids don't follow in their father's footsteps!

GT: I certainly hope that she doesn't follow in mine! I want that gal to be the next Meryl Streep! I don't want her to go through what i went through!

JF: Does she act?

GT: Does she act? Oh, man, she's the best, man!

JF: Has she been in anything that I might have seen?

GT: Hey, slow down, slow down, we're working on it! We're working on it, brother.

JF: How old is she?

GT: Hey, man, I'm not allowed to give out that info, I'm dodging the law, man!

JF: That is probably tough to do with a tour bus though

GT: it's tough to do period!

JF: (cough, cough)

GT: Are you alright there?

JF: yes, I have bronchitis

GT: Oh, man, you should be in bed taking medication! What are you doing talking to me?

JF: I tried that. Didn't work

GT: Don't die on me, man!

JF: Don't worry, I won't, thanks. So, how has your tour been going so far? Have you been getting good audiences?

GT: We get nothing but good audiences, John, who do you think you are talking to?

JF: That's good! So, you've been doing this for forty years, are you getting tired of it or are you still enjoying it?

GT: I get up every day and people ask me for my autograph, I wake up in an air conditioned hotel and I get paid to go out and play "Bad To The Bone" and "Who Do You Love?", am I enjoying it? What's the matter with you?

JF: Well, I talk to a lot of performers and sometimes they are tired of playing the same songs over and over

GT: well, why did they play them to begin with? Seriously, why, I'm asking you?

JF: I don't know know. honestly I don't mind playing songs over and over again and I am grateful that someone appreciates what I am doing! But not everyone feels this way.

GT: Go ask Mick Jagger if he's tired of playing Brown Sugar, right?

JF: He might be, you never know

GT: Then he'd stop doing it, wouldn't he?

JF: Not necessarily, that's the niche they carved out in their life and it's what they do

GT: You're wrong! You're wrong! You're wrong! I'm right! Alright? Go ask Paul McCartney if he's tired of playing "Hey, Jude" to 50,000 people and getting millions of dollars to do it

JF: So, you still enjoy it and that's a good thing

GT: That's what I'm trying to tell you

JF: well, some people just go through the motions and collect a check

GT: Well, that's too bad, isn't it, Go ask Carl Yastrzemski if he ever got tired of hitting home runs

JF: I am sure everyone has a day that they don't feel like doing something

GT: If you don't feel like being a rock star then you got problems, it's the one job that everyone in the world wants. the one job everyone wants, you're getting paid to do that and you get tired of it there is something very wrong with you

JF: So, you're in your late 60's now...

GT: Who told you that? Where the hell did you get that from? I was just getting to like you!
JF: I was wondering if it is tougher on you playing music now being older
GT: There are only three things that get me out of bed every morning: my wife, my daughter and my guitar, it's worth it
JF: That's good! That way people know that you are excited about playing and they can be excited! People want to be excited about something, they need a positive experience these days!
GT: There's a lot of gloom in the world these days, John, a lot of anxiety, a lot of trouble, a lot of suffering, rock and roll, baby, that's what does it for all of us!
JF: You give them a couple hours of respite from all that stuff, won't you?
GT: A COUPLE OF HOURS??? Who told you that? Who do you think I am, Bruce Springsteen? Geez, a couple of hours?
JF: OK, ninety minutes
GT: Very good, thank you! Jesus, John!
JF: OK, we need to wrap this up, anything else that you would like to tell folks?
GT: I didn't want to talk about myself to begin with! I started out talking about baseball and I got you on the wrong track!
JF: If my father was around I'd put him on the phone so you two could talk about baseball! I can't talk about baseball
GT: You guys have to take care of yourselves, he's got hip replacement, you've got bronchitis, it's a sad state of affairs when Thorogood's the most healthy guy in the room!
Ut, oh, DeNiro's checking in as usual...
JF: Maybe i will catch you at the show
GT: Hey, your pleasure
JF: Ok
GT: Hey, rock and roll never sleeps, it just passes out!
JF: Ok, thank you
GT: You tell your dad to take care of himself now
JF: You, too, thanks for calling
GT: Bye, John
JF: Bye, bye
GT: I hope that I'm a rock star!
JF: You are a rock star
GT: Bye, bye, see you at Fenway Park
JF: Take care
GT: Bye

George Thorogood will be at the Zeiterion Theatre in New Bedford this coming Tuesday, June 6th. For more about the show, "Move It On Over" to: www.Zeiterion.org That's it for now. Thanks for reading. www.JohnFuzek.com