

NOTE: This content is strictly from my recollection, forty years after the fact. I believe it is accurate though I am not 100% certain.

Meeting Alfred Morris III

I met Alfred (I always called him “Alfred”, never “Al”, as everyone else did) Morris III at Montgomery College in Bethesda MD in 1976 or so. I don’t know how I first ran into him, because we did not share any classes, but I think it was mere happenstance – a chance encounter in the college hallway or cafeteria. Alfred was tall, handsome, physically strong, and extremely shy. He was always very well dressed, very clean, and very soft spoken. Alfred always had a little towel over his shoulder or in a bag (to dab at any perspiration), lip balm, and a pick for his hair. He wore shoes that were shined and new shirts neatly pressed. He did not enjoy attention and was always exceedingly polite and calm. I remember that we talked a few times, and one day our conversations turned to music. During a more expansive conversation, our eyes both lit up when we discovered there were musicians and bands that we both admired (Jimi, Eddie Van Halen, Grand Funk Railroad, etc.). On subsequent occasions we repeatedly and deeply enjoyed discussing our passion for these heroes of ours and nuances of our deeply personal hobbies. One day, as we were building our musical friendship, I mentioned that I had drums set up in the basement of my mother’s Bethesda home and this would be a great space for us to jam in. He was genuinely thrilled at the prospect and we pursued it. From that point on, both of us grew into close musical partners and best friends. We never said, “Hey, let’s start a band!”, or something of that nature. We simply agreed that we were going to jam together and that was that. Neither of us was in a real band back then and we had no pretense of developing a set list and working in local clubs; we simply wanted to jam on a regular basis.

Logistics

Alfred lived all the way on the other side of town - 35 miles away - near Andrews Air Force Base in Camp Springs, MD, and had no car. I never once saw Alfred drive. He was very quiet and I think it unsettled him. Now, to be clear, if someone honked at me when I was driving, he would say, “*Don’t make me get out of this car!*” and I don’t think he was feigning toughness. But he seemed scared of driving. Anyway, finding a way to get together always posed a dilemma over the 10 years or so Force was together, especially in the early portion of Alfred’s and my relationship. My car was often broken or uninsured. On top of that, anyone that drove all the way from Camp Springs MD to Bethesda could not very well go back home and then come back to pick Alfred up and the end of our very long jam sessions. They had no choice but to wait it out and sit for hours while Alfred and I played. None of us really had any money to pay people for rides either. At that time, Alfred was using Montgomery Wards, Sears or Univox guitars with speakers and cabinets he built himself and even the prospect of scraping together \$10 or so for lunch was prohibitive. In the beginning, his brother Carl would bring him over. When Carl got sick of having to hang out for the entire afternoon and evening, Alfred would beg his other friends or family to bring him over. A year or so later, he would cop rides from a neighborhood

musician (our beloved first Force bassist, Brian, who had sickle cell anemia, and was too weak to really play properly), or random friends. And, when and if my car was active, I would make the 70-mile round trip.

A few years later, Larry's friends, like the guys in the Bad Brains, (DC hardcore punk/reggae pioneers) would bring them over and hang out. The Brains had asked Larry to join them back then but he wanted to stay with Force. On one such occasion, I remember H.R. Pufnstuf (rhythm guitarist Paul Hudson) and the Brains guys would get high in the basement and H.R. would pull out a large safety pin that he would carry. Every now and then, to get a laugh, he would stab "Fast Eddie", the drummer. Anyway, Larry's Capitol Heights MD friends loved our sound and enjoyed our friendship and we never knew when a van or two of those guys would pop up and hang out. However, in the first year or so, it was just Alfred and I, scrabbling for rides, and somehow we kept our sessions going. He continued to lay down extremely loud, full, even, thick and heavy riffs while I applied the stuff I was learning in drum lessons. One thing was clear to both of us from the outset, we had to play, and we savored our time together. Once we embarked on our musical adventure, it could and would not stop. Alfred had become my very best friend and a very special musical partner.

The Early Days

As our friendship evolved, Alfred and I continued to talk once or twice a day as we loosely planned our next get together. We would talk for hours, rapping about music. He would advise me about stereo equipment to buy and often he would play some of his original stuff over the phone for me. He would have his guitar (or even a bass) and he would say, "*Hold on, you got to hear this!*" He would then set up his amp and phone and show me, over the phone, what he had just established musically the night before. The next weekend we would get together and jam, just the two of us, for hours. The moment he arrived at my house, we would eagerly set up, and then run down, over and over, his original riffs or snippets of tunes from the great hard rock/progressive band (e.g., Pat Benatar, Scorpions, UFO, Rush) catalogs. From the beginning, Alfred always had their tone and style down. I don't recall Alfred ever once having to "get his sound" or fooling around with his pedals or amps and saying, "Let me try this out" or "Let me work on this". His sound was complete, from Day 1, and the only constraint was the money he had for equipment. He knew what the top guitarists sounded like, and he mimicked them flawlessly. Tapes of these 1978 jam sessions reveal Alfred playing UFO's "Rock Bottom" or Van Halen's "Ain't Talking about Love" flawlessly, with all the inflections, dominating the entire basement with a huge, monstrous wall of thick, even, heavy, sound, while I flailed and Larry Brown (Force bassist) eagerly kept up.

Musical Background

Alfred's playing and knowledge of hard rock and funk was much deeper and more mature than mine. He and Larry both loved Budgie, Parliament, Jimi Hendrix, and Graham Central Station

and both said Budgie (whom I knew nothing about) was their primary influence. Both agreed, unequivocally, that the first Black Sabbath album and Master of Reality's "Into the Void", were musically transformative. Personally, I liked Alice Cooper, Grand Funk, and of course Jimi, but what I was mainly into was big band drumming – the Count Basie Orchestra, Buddy Rich, Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, etc. From 1978 to 1983 or so, I was commuting to New York City and studying from a jazz master and trying to force (no pun intended) that quick, improvisational, jazz orchestration into everything I did with Alfred for better or worse. Sometimes, we would stumble onto perfect opportunities for our styles to meld (Sabbath's "Wicked World", Jimi's "Manic Depression", Force's "Rock and Roll Corral", etc.) and we would emote on those riffs for hours.

In the early days, he and Larry would often switch instruments and roles. Larry would become Mark Farner (Grand Funk guitarist/vocalist), Eric Burdon (The Animals vocalist), or Jimi. We would run the Band of Gypsy's songs, with Larry perfectly imitating all the Buddy Miles vocals and playing the Hendrix riffs on guitar from "Machine Gun" or "Message to Love". Alfred would plug in the killer Billy Cox or Mel Schacher bass riffs, where applicable, in perfect tempo and with perfect tone – an absolute drummer's delight. We would jam for hours with this musical change up and they would laugh hysterically when they discovered that each of them knew every single vocal and musical inflection of the old Animals or GFR tunes (e.g., "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood, "Inside Looking Out"). I knew this stuff too and one thing became clear to me – both of these guys could jam their asses off on either instrument and Alfred played bass as well as he did guitar. Alfred had a gorgeous, thick, warm and heavy bass part that was rhythmically flawless and so viscerally appealing in sound, tone, and texture. Just like the guitar, his phrasing was clean and uncluttered, every note rhythmically perfect, with an insistent groove that was both propelling and supportive. If we listen to any AM III original, from Force or Iron Man, from the first note to the last it becomes very apparent that rhythmic precision and forward propulsion and energy is the common denominator. From the beginning, Alfred always had a rhythmic accuracy and tone that took me somewhere that technical complexity or speed never could. It still does, and very few guitarists have that (Robin Trower, Stevie Ray Vaughan). However, back then, I never liked it when Larry and he switched off; I needed to hear Alfred on the guitar. In retrospect, we should have pursued this role reversal further. Larry had been asked to join the Bad Brains for a reason – he could play killer guitar AND sing and possessed a funky fluidity that was special in its own way. There is no doubt that Larry Brown, like Alfred, would have taken full flight as a career musician if professionally groomed and managed.

The Killer Riffs of Alfred Morris III (AM III)

What is interesting, in retrospect, is that the greatest work of Alfred Morris III may have been contained within a myriad of simple, homemade, Maxell cassettes that he was constantly creating in the late Seventies. He had dozens of these packed with hundreds of his personal well-developed riffs. Some of these he would play over the phone to me late at night as we talked music. All were extremely cool sounding, visceral and very heavy, with absolutely killer, super

thick, monster hooks and quick changes that would grab you by the throat. They were like a blend of Rush, Sabbath and Grand Funk but retained a heaviness that was bigger and fatter than them.

For several years, Alfred had been intentionally blending the sound of Black Sabbath's guitarist Tony Iommi and bassist Geezer Butler simultaneously into every guitar note and phrase. (Much later he was using a 1973 Gibson Standard to approximate Iommi's Monkey SG). Early Force tracks had Alfred playing gorgeous, piercing, Trower type licks using a Crying Tone wah-wah pedal (check out the screaming solo on "C3PO"), to cop Tony's sound he heard in the early Sabbath concerts. Alfred had added EQ, fuzz, flangers, etc. but again, I never saw him "trying to get his sound" when we were together. All his riffs had this meaty sound with perfectly even tempos that, for drummers like me that grew up on early Grand Funk Railroad (e.g., "Got This Thing on the Move" from the Red Album) and their signature simple, heavy pocket and grooves, was immensely appealing. (Iron Man's "Gomorra's Gold" or Force/Rat Salad's "Black Widow" are exemplar Alfred Morris III riffs that probably were somewhere in the bag of cassettes back then). I may even venture to say that 80% of the Force and later the Iron Man catalog originated as riffs captured within those late-Seventies AM III cassettes. Later, when we had a complete band with Larry, they created several instrumentals with names (Earth Garden project in 1978) where Alfred mentally cut-and-paste these riffs together into 100% complete, heavy, tunes with Larry's input. I still remember his excitement and delight as he showed me the new riffs over the phone or in person back then. He exclaimed, breathlessly, "*They keep coming to me! I hear them in my head. I HAVE to record them!*" He had literally hundreds of these Sabbath/Budgie/Rush types of riffs. Even back then, Alfred's tone and musical conception was always very mature and sonically complete.

The Evolution of Force

In 1978, Alfred decided to create "Earth Garden", an all-instrumental album under the identical band name. I think he wanted to model it off Budgie's "Into the Kill". Larry had been jamming with Alfred and me for a year or so, mostly on Alfred's original riffs, and we still had no real vocalist. Larry gave the songs names and we recorded 10 songs, all recorded in my Mom's basement. It was collection of our favorite riffs that we had been jamming on for a year or so in loose fashion. Alfred was clearly way beyond Larry and me in terms of musical skill and maturity. Like all the Force records, Earth Garden had no producer, cost a couple of hundred dollars, had no real plan, and musical errors were ignored. We were blissfully clueless and idealistic.

I don't recall how the decision was made, but in 1978 or so, we came upon the realization that we needed a vocalist to do gigs and we started auditioning for the role. Alfred decided to call the band "Force". There was no elaborate discussion regarding the name or what we were going to do except get a singer and get some gigs. The original incarnations of Force had male vocalists.

Some were quite good and all were definitely more experienced regarding band preparation, promotion, and presentation than Alfred, Larry and I.

In 1970, Alfred, Larry and I met Simona Queen at Louie's Rock City, in Bailey's Crossroads VA and shortly thereafter, she joined the band. She was friendly, passionate, and gorgeous. Accordingly, Larry and I eagerly welcomed her into the protracted basement rehearsals. Simona always had a great sense of humor and it was obvious she delighted at the new founded attention and dynamic creative outlet. Alfred was too polite to leer and flirt with her but he succumbed to Larry and my locker room antics in private. Simona was a hard worker and had a lot of passion for the material, creating lyrics and shaping some of the song structures. By 1979, we had a strong set list packed full of Scorpions, Rush, UFO, King Crimson, Pat Benatar and dozens of songs from the first four Sabbath albums. We also had several very strong originals that absolutely exploded with energy and passion. In the beginning, Alfred's riffs had seemed too rhythmically similar to me, but now, with the addition of Simona and the musical reformatting, several truly great songs had evolved (e.g., "The Beast", "Not Today", "Never Again"). By 1980, Force was now doing occasional club work and we always enjoyed a large assortment of huge, overflowing, Bethesda MD/DC house parties. We still were not making any real money, however, not by a long shot, but now we had acquired a genuine identity. People no longer were coming to our gigs to hear Black Sabbath, see the hot female vocalist, or watch Alfred kick ass, they wanted to hear Force's originals.

1981 Force EP

Over the years, on multiple occasions, Alfred, Larry and I had always talked and fantasized about getting promoters, record deals, professional management, and college tours. We had met a senior Warner Brothers executive who appeared interested but he knew we had no clue about what we were doing and I think that the thought of him having to groom and promote us was mandatory but problematic at best. A vocalist from The Platters came over several times to rehearsals and attempted to promote us but he kept mangling critical venue logistics leaving us embarrassed, frustrated, and broke or even owing money. We had other semi-pro managers but nobody that really knew how to deliver the musical direction, vision, and production to ensure even a modicum of financial success that could even being to match our immense popularity within the Bethesda MD/Washington DC community. We had some decent gigs, mostly in the way of huge parties, but we weren't truly an established, working, band that actually made real money. We still enjoyed a very large following though. At this point, Force had forged its own identity with our odd mix of two black guys, a white guy and a Jewish woman, doing mostly Sabbath and a strong set of originals that people loved and knew by name.

In 1981, Alfred decided to release an EP. It was a 45 RPM, four song affair, and was on a new record label of his own creation. ALACA Records (named after Alfred, his wife Audrey Morris and his brother, Carl Morris) was created. Audrey rented an office in Camp Springs MD and attempted to back and produce other bands with little success. Alfred and his family had virtually

no money and I believe this EP release was only 250 records and cost less than \$1,000 dollars. We recorded it in one session at Hit and Run Records in Rockville, MD without any real producer or advance discussion about the record concepts, optimum song selection, cover, etc. Simona had a pop song that she wanted to do (“Running Away With Your Love”), Larry had his favorite (“Control Agent”), Alfred loved “The Beast”, which we had performed locally with a good deal of fanfare, and “Do It Again” was also a DC/MD fan favorite. My sister’s boyfriend, Reginald Monroe (RIP), created the original red on black Force logo red on cheap poster board for free and the Force musical concept was complete for a cost of perhaps \$750. The EP was only four tracks with my insisting two of them be used for the drums to be in stereo. (Larry was not happy about that and when we played back the test pressing he shook his head and saying, “That don’t sound like no album.”).

However, in reality we didn’t care that much. We finally had a product to show off and our amateur promoters could carry the EP under their arm at the gigs they got for us and we began to feel like we were going somewhere.

Side note: “Control Agent”, like “The Wolfman”, captures Larry singing in a loose funky, sort of half rap and chant. The riff is straight from the bag of AM III cassettes and the song opens with the James Bond guitar lick. The lyrics are about secret (CONTROL) agents from “Get Smart”, a 1960’s comedy television series which parodied the James Bond movies. CONTROL is a secret counterintelligence agency and, like the Bond heroes, a CONTROL agent has supercars, gadgets, partakes in unbelievable plots, and of course, has hot women. The song, like the TV show, has signature catchphrases (e.g., “Sorry about that Chief”). Unfortunately, we didn’t bother to really listen closely to see if anyone could make them out. The lyrics are barely decipherable, except to me, at this point. Simona did her best to complement the song’s intent:

*“I will be driving and all that jazz
I want to be a number one star first class
Figuring out what kind of move to make next
Who knows, maybe I’ll lay aside my guns and have sex.”
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to have a little savoir-faire, living life everywhere!”
“I’d like to have me an attache case,
Wall to wall women all over the place! < Ooh yeah baby! >
When the Chief calls me on my shoe phone,*

He has to keep calling because I will be gone!”
“I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to have a little savoir-faire, living life everywhere!”
<I’ve got my Aston Martin parked outside. Alright!>
<It’s got oil slicks and everything>
<All kinds of little gadgets. Alright!>
“I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to be a CONTROL Agent,
I want to have a little savoir-faire, living life everywhere!”
<I’m ready to go on my mission! Are you ready? Uh huh!>
<Sorry about that Chief! >
<Max. MAX! Come back Max!>
<Not this time!>

1991 Force LP

This collection was released in 1991 (Doom Records) though all songs were recorded between 1979 and 1982, except for three. Most were recorded at Hit and Run Studios in Rockville MD in 1982 in a couple of hurried four hour sessions. (We were broke and this likely included a couple of hours devoted to “production” time). The exceptions were the instrumentals: “Kids with Nuclear Weapons”, “Rock and Roll Corral”, and “Last Days”.

➤ **“Kids with Nuclear Weapons”, “Rock and Roll Corral”, Last Days”**

These represent classic AM III cassette bag riffage. All were taken, unbeknownst to Larry or me, directly from old tapes of Force’s first “recording session” in 1979. My much older friend and musician, Jim McKiel, who lived across the North Bethesda Junior High School field in one of the “rich houses”, had begged his sound man Loy for his personal “recording equipment” on behalf of Alfred and me. This consisted of a TEAC reel-to-reel and two Radio Shack microphones.

It was freezing outside and Larry and I had started an enormous fire in the basement fireplace. We got pleasantly high and then strategically set up the two mikes. The fire was absolutely gigantic, with the old bricks of my mother's poor walls burning hot to the touch (this was not the first time). I was genuinely scared that one day we were really going to burn the house down. My family was broke, never cleaned the chimney or screenless fireplace, and Larry and I had packed it with anything we could find, including a good deal of pine and Christmas wrappings. We were dying to jam, as usual, but now we were even more excited. Prior to this day, we had never recorded many of the reformatted riffs within the continuously expanding Force repertoire. Now was our chance! We had dozens of these "songs", and, without hardly a word between us, we must have played for three hours in a row without a break.

I still remember our incredible focus; all the songs unusually tight, dialed in, and extremely passionate. (I tried and tried but I still can't play the groove on "Last Days" with the same feel I had that day). Within this very special session, Alfred uncorked what may be his first and greatest doom riff of all time (go to 1'45" and 3'22" of "Last Days"). Mars Hall (Doom Records) agrees and to this very day, Mars and I consider "The Beast" and "Last Days" as two of the heaviest and coolest doom riffs ever. Mars Hall and Alfred decided, many years later, to overdub a lead guitar solo on "Last Days".

Side note: Mars Hall told me recently that he started Doom Records because of Alfred Morris III and "The Beast" and "The Beast" was one of his top five or six Doom songs of all time.

➤ "C3PO"

Alfred named this after the Star Wars droid built by Jedi Skywalker. It contains one of my absolute favorite AM III guitar solos. This is Alfred at his scorching best, channeling a classic Robin Trower ("Too Rolling Stoned") and Jimi ("Crash Landing") type of attack, with a wah wah, approach, and tone that jump off the track.

We performed "C3PO" as a concert opener in a small auditorium in Riverdale MD. We had developed a relationship with a new promoter who proudly carried our EP throughout the older, intimate, venue as he talked up the excited crowd. We were viewed as the hot, "out of town" opener, with "two black guys who knew all the Sabbath stuff and had great originals." The venue was packed with noisy fans that had primarily come to see us though their hometown heavy metal bands shared the bill.

Alfred and Larry did not read music, like I did, and we had always played C3PO strictly on instinct. The song moves quick, shifting back and forth from a 4/4 "Are You Ready" (Grand Funk)" type of groove to a Rush type of 5/8. We had not rehearsed it recently and

it did not help that we all got wasted in the van on the way to the gig. Alfred tended to get nervous back then, high or not, and, even though the set list was taped to his huge homemade speaker cabinet, just like it always was, he kept saying ‘*What’s next? What are we doing? Just tell me the song!*’ just like he always did. Larry and I always anticipated this and maliciously enjoyed the predictable, self-inflicted, dilemma. Alfred was terribly polite and conservative; a perfect foil whom we always enjoyed teasing. We would torment him by telling him to “Just read the list!!” (Thinking back, I remember Alfred had bad vision, and he did not like to wear his huge Clark Kent type of glasses in public.) It was bad enough that Simona seemed forgot her lyric sheets, had no music stand, and was worried about her hair, makeup and where her boyfriend was sitting, but when Alfred descended into panic mode, as he often did, Larry and I looked at each other and just shook our heads and laughed.

The promoter played us up a bit, waving our EP. I counted off the song too fast but we were good for about eight bars of the GFR riff. However, Alfred was clearly nervous and he changed to the 5/8 too early. Larry followed but I stayed put hoping that Alfred would stop freaking out and they would both self-correct. When they didn’t I switched to the 5/8 but by then they had reverted to the original 4/4 phrase. Then the opposite happened, and then back again, and then Alfred decided to force the Trower lead onto the 5/8 that Larry and I were now trying to lock in. Back and forth we went, without synching up one time in the four minute train wreck. We force (no pun intended) landed the song and tried to cover up by affixing a new and out of context noisy hard rock ending, replete with drum rolls and Hendrix screams on the guitar. The large and once clamoring audience was stunned at this clear disaster by the “hot out of town band”. They must have been embarrassed for us, because they were virtually silent. They had too much respect for us to boo or laugh and fortunately they were mostly silent. Fortunately, they became quickly distracted by the ever hot Simona who blissfully ignored, or did not recognize the extent of our disaster. She grabbed their attention with “Take My Hand” and swiftly saved us.

➤ **“Take My Hand”, “Two Bit Romance”, “Not Today”**

These three had clearly become “Simona’s songs” over the years. Even though Alfred and I had jammed on the core riffs since our very early days, Simona had reshaped these and personally related to their lyrics. She never forgot the song structures, no matter how nervous she was, and she visibly owned the songs every time we performed them live.

We started playing “Not Today” in 1977, without vocals, with Force’s first bass player, Brian. It remains a Force icon and fan favorite. When Alfred passed away in 2018, I asked my sister Bridgit, forty years after last hearing us, what Force song was her personal favorite. Without hesitation, or asking me to name a few, she simply stated “Not Today.”

Side note: Upon Alfred's 2018 passing, Bridgit was indirectly referenced in the Washington Post article, "Remembering the Doom Metal Mastery of Alfred Morris III": "I was dating this girl," Weinrich (Scott "Wino" Weinrich of The Obsessed, Potomac MD doom pioneers) said. "One of her girlfriends came over and said: 'Yeah, my brother's in a band. I'll bring you a cassette.'" The tape was by an early Morris band called Force. "That tape blew me away," Weinrich said. "It hit me right away with that heavy grooving."

Bridgit recounted: *"In those early days Al and I dated for several months and shared many intimate moments together. He was an exceedingly kind and gentle soul. Though we never talked directly about music he was always smiling while prepping for the jam sessions and when they were ready to start rehearsal he became quite intense. He was absolutely driven by his music. He continuously conveyed a strong sense of purpose and desire to share their message with the sound of Force."*

It was quite a scene to just watch as Alfred strummed and rocked with his music. He was extremely intense and gifted. Kim's drumming kept the action going while the riffs continued. I know the lyrics are forever implanted into my psyche. Although my favorite is "Not Today," I could probably follow along by memory any of the tracks Force laid down.

Early days at Beech Avenue in Bethesda MD included the constant inspiration and expression of the Force sound. We would go down the steps into the hovel-like basement, often a mass of people, with a deafening, deep, rhythm that was perpetually driving the evolution and blossoming of Doom Metal's Force. I was just beginning my teen age years and I had daily exposure to the metal band in our basement. At least four days a week, starting around 2:00 to 4:00 PM until midnight, the floors and walls of our old house shook with a huge, deep, bass sound and a strong drum beat. My brain and senses were full of Force. Several fans visited during their jam sessions. Invariably, heavy partying ensued, with weed the most prevalent drug of choice. Musical bonds and friendships were forged and plentiful as the smoke clouded the room. Then the amps were fired up. Their equipment was tapped into our old, overloaded, electrical system and suddenly everything became LOUD. I remember that the amps were turned up so loud that the majority of the house literally shook. Most of the hoodlums in the "hood" liked to hang around the house as it vibrated doom into the street late into the night. There was no stopping or quieting of this band's sound. They shared a purpose that wasn't easily known to me. I just knew they had something to share. They drilled the songs, the lyrics, and their blend of material for hours on end. I never understood why my brother found this important to his life, but it certainly changed all of their lives; I see it clearly now.

➤ **“The Way Out (Searching for Freedom)”**

My biggest rock drumming influence has always been Don Brewer of Grand Funk Railroad. What attracted was the enormous, fat, pocket and the intense hi-hat openings that really cut through and shaped the bass grooves. “Not Today” captured that intensity and is probably my best Force drum part. I liked “The Way Out” too. On this track, I attempted to cop Don Brewer’s style on Grand Funk’s “All You’ve Got is Money” off of their Survival album.

Side note: I never understood why Alfred overdubbed the terrible Farfisa organ sound on top of the great groove. He gave some reason or named some song that had that sound, and he thought it added intensity. I hated it and told him to at least turn it down in the mix but he refused.

➤ **“Do it Again (Four Leaf Clover)”**

“Do it Again” is probably the first Force song we ever added vocals to. We had been performing it live since 1978, with or without vocals, and it was always a big fan favorite. This version is stronger than the EP version. The band was more seasoned at this point and Larry and I played with more confidence. Alfred and Mars Hall (Doom Records) overdubbed guitars many years later.

➤ **“Wolfman”**

“Wolfman” is one of my very favorite Force tunes. We had been jamming out on its core grooves since 1979, and performing it instrumentally at the Bethesda MD parties. Larry formalized the song in 1982 with lyrics describing the Wolfman as a neighborhood boogeyman who possesses an irresistible, animalistic, charm and enormous, almost magical, power. The Wolfman is both sexually alluring and threatening with women powerless upon his choosing. He will snatch your girlfriend or wife when you are at work and cannot be stopped. Larry always fancied himself as a real life Wolfman and I can personally attest to this being the case. From the day we met him, and every couple of weeks since, he relayed colorful, dangerous, stories, about his conquests. He would be playing with someone’s girlfriend, or fool around with his own girlfriend’s sister (in the same apartment on one occurrence), get caught, and then brazenly repeat the process again with impunity. Larry was known to have a strip club in the small basement of his parent’s District Heights, MD home, built pre-World War II. I went over there a couple of times and I still cannot fathom him setting up shop there.

I love this particular version of “Wolfman”. I love Alfred and Larry’s raw tone, the tension, the rawness, the manic energy, and the feeling that we are lurching out of control, capturing the true nature of a real Wolfman. The lyrics are half-chanted, half sung, and, as usual, any vocal imperfections were ignored. As I said previously, we never, ever, redid any of the Force tracks that contained errors. We didn’t know better or

we didn't care. The EP was the only release that was sort of planned and we were blissfully ignorant back then. "Wolfman" was the lone exception. For some reason, we had a block of time that ran from 8:00 AM to noon and we made the mistake of recording immediately after getting high in the control room. Something else more dangerous was going on back there and the result was a frantic, manic, mess. We knew we screwed up the parts but we kept playing anyway. We went back to the control room and eagerly listened to what constituted our first take. We were incredulous. We heard a wild and amped up Alfred, ripping a crazy guitar solo that sounded like a howling wolf taking off on a Learjet. He was wired out and the solo was three times as long as intended and the transitions were all messed up. Unfortunately, the track was unusable. This particular take was from the same morning, almost as manic, and just as exciting.

Like "Control Agent", the "Wolfman" lyrics are virtually indecipherable because we didn't bother to tweak the vocal part or turn it up. I will try laying them out here in honor of my very dearest Brother Larry:

"He *<goes somewhere to do something>* with women

And it takes just about an hour for him to find little pretties,

And if he wants to stay out all night long,

He'll be walkin' down the street, singing his song:

He says, "*I'm the Wolfman, you know you don't want to go, because you can't stay away*

– no, no, no, no, no, you can't stay away!

In the day he's on the street while the husbands out at work,

And there's all these woman out there, sharp with the thirst!

He says, "*I'm the Wolfman, you know you don't want to go, because you can't stay away*

– no, no, no, no, no, I'll bet you can't stay away!

< C'mere girl! >

<Let me take you for a ride!>

<Mmmmmm mmm>

- 2 – 3 – 4!

Side note: Mitch Mitchell (The Jimi Hendrix Experience) was my second biggest rock drumming influence. The first big drum fill within “The Wolfman” is accidentally almost identical to the one in “Hey Joe” (1’53”).

“Rat Salad”

In the early 80’s, Force continued to do random gigs without any notable success. Touring plans, record deals, and major concerts fell through as we lacked true leadership and long-term vision. Simona grew disenchanted as did Larry, and she briefly left the country. At that point, Alfred and I occasionally experimented with different line ups, especially vocals.

In 1984, Larry, Alfred and I met Sherry Bacon, a local vocalist who, unlike us, was very clear on her musical career objectives and had a genuine game plan on their achievement. Alfred invited Sherry over to the Bethesda basement and after several days of musical interaction it became apparent that Sherry was absolutely thrilled at the prospect of joining Force. We did not want to replace Simona, however, but we definitely wanted to lay down some tracks with this exciting Goth, post-punk, type of vocalist who possessed a much more dangerous, crazy, vibe than Simona.

Alfred decided to call this project and recording session “Rat Salad”, to distinguish our product from Force, and call this version of the band Cheri Blade. Purposely, Sherry and he injected a dark, heavy, Sabbath type of feel into the set of four songs. All foundational riffs were contained somewhere within Alfred’s bag of cassettes whether we knew it or not. Larry, Alfred, and I had been grooving on these for years and “Never Again” had been performed live since 1978 with both female and male vocalists and was perpetually a crowd favorite.

In 1984, Sherry wrote lyrics with Alfred for “Black Widow” and rewrote the lyrics for “Never Again”. She clearly owned these songs in terms of passion and identity and they were perhaps the strongest set of Force songs regarding concept and musical maturity. Collectively, they displayed a musical cohesion that was absent on the other 15 or so Force tunes that were randomly released over the years. All four songs (“Last Chance”, “Black Widow”, “Hell to Pay”, and “Never Again”) were recorded at Cue Recording Studios in Falls Church, VA using eight tracks. Unbeknownst to Larry or me, Alfred decided to release these as a split-album with a local

heavy metal group, Obstination, whom we had befriended and shared gigs with over the years. Obstination added their three songs and the effort was complete.

The four song demo was shopped to major labels and was turned down. Sherry ultimately formed her own band, Chained Lace, and one of the songs on their first record was their own version of “Black Widow”, which she and Alfred had co-written.

Radio Play

None of our songs ever were played on the radio that I know of, except for “The Beast”. In 1981, immediately after the EP release, the extremely popular WHFS radio station (located in Bethesda MD) played “The Beast” over and over again at the request of our friends. This came to an end after a couple of months when the DJ said he was sick and tired of having Force fans ring their phone off the hook. He stated that if WHFS kept getting calls for Force our fans would never hear our album again. He kept his promise and Force’s material was never played again, as far as I recall.

Miscellaneous Recording Trivia

- All releases were recorded between ~1979 to 1984
- None of the records were released with all band member's agreement or pre-release knowledge except for the first EP
- None of the releases had any genuine band agreement on concept, song list, cover, intent, etc.
- Most recordings were done in one take
- All songs or foundational riffs were performed live as early as 1979 except for “Black Widow”
- All the Force riffs are somewhere in the AM III cassette bag
- Larry, Simona, and I made no money off any of the releases. Alfred may have made a couple of hundred dollars.

The End of Force

From 1984 to 1986, Force continued to play occasional gigs and parties with great fan appeal but little real money. Major initiatives continuously failed and we were collectively frustrated. In 1986, Alfred and I decided to create a Black Sabbath tribute band. From the beginning, Force had been routinely interspersing material from the first four Black Sabbath albums into the set list and this was consistently a very successful, impressive, and tight staple within the shows. We decided to start a band dedicated to Alfred's favorite group. In 1986, regular rehearsals were held in my mother's home in Bethesda MD with the set lists refined. Alfred and I experimented with alternate bass players and vocalists and he suggested that the name Iron Man was to be used whenever this exclusive list of Black Sabbath covers were performed.

In 1986, I was a full time musician and drum teacher and I decided to quit the tribute band to pursue full time variety work. Alfred and other musicians were not happy at this change of heart but continued on with the Iron Man concept and, approximately two years later, Iron Man became an all-original act with Alfred Morris III driving the band vision and sound. Alfred Morris III continued to write Iron Man songs, formalizing and actualizing the large catalog of riffs he had built and saved over the years within the AM III cassette collection. Though our break was amicable, Alfred and I never spoke again. Larry continued on with Iron Man for several years while Simona went her own way.

Current State

To this day, I dream of Larry and Alfred at least once every couple of months. The musical bond and protracted friendship was way too long and too deep to ever go away. It never will. We had spent almost ten years together, with them spending the night in my mom's basement dozens of times. They were a considered part of our family and all of our Bethesda/DC friends absolutely adored them, far beyond mere casual acquaintances. Most of these dreams are difficult and leave me feeling very unsettled upon waking. I want to go back and fix something or relive an experience that cannot be actualized. These dreams typically revolve around Force struggling to prepare for a gig in time, forgetting a key element to ensure musical success, or, more often, I cannot get my drums set up properly or on time. A drum is missing, they can't be assembled, or I left a critical component at home.

*~ Kim Geoffrey Martin, November 26, 2021
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