

Bad to the T-Bone

by Erik_Deckers

I had a combination "Ha, ha, serves you right/wow, that's too bad" moment a few years ago when I heard that Chris Hamill (aka 'Limahl'), former lead singer of '80s British band Kajagoogoo, was working at a London record store. This followed his failed solo singing career that he launched after Kajagoogoo's one big hit, "Too Shy," hit number one in the UK charts. It seems Limahl suffered from the same disease that most lead singers do: the mistaken belief that their one fluke success is somehow attributable solely to them, and their 15 minutes of fame is more than enough to launch them to international success. Instead, it gives them barely enough juice to clock in at number 98 on "The Top 100 Flops" on the E! Network. This hubris is what compels people like Al Sharpton, Steve Forbes, and other little known political figures to run vanity campaigns for President of the United States. Of course, it's also what prompts governors of small Southern states like Arkansas to run for President too, so I shouldn't scoff. I've never been a big fan of celebrity gossip though, but after hearing Limahl's rags-to-obscure journey, I've become a sucker for a good "Where are they now?" story. So I did some digging into one of my favorite bands from the '70s and '80s, George Thorogood and the Delaware Destroyers, the blues-rock band best known for their hit, "Bad to the Bone." (Real fans also know all the words to "You Talk Too Much" and "Move It On Over.") I had heard rumors that George, their eponymous lead singer, was out of music. So I paid a little visit to our neighbors in the Northeast, and made a surprising, if not spurious, discovery. George Thorogood has quit the music business entirely, and is now the owner/operator of the Bad to the Bone Butcher Shop in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. "I guess you could say meat is in my blood," laughed the former rocker. "My dad was a butcher, and his dad was a butcher. I was getting tired of all the rock and roll B.S., so I decided to pursue something I really loved. I capitalized on some of my former success and opened up my own store." It wasn't such a dumb move. In 1994, Thorogood opened a small, 2000 square foot butcher shop, and turned it into a 23-store chain that dots the landscape in Delaware, Vermont, and New Hampshire. He now makes more money than he ever saw from a 200-day-a-year touring schedule. But George remains a showman, no matter what business he's in. He told me, "One of the things I learned in the music biz is that people love a good show. That's why our meat cutters and packers practice their craft with the same flair and showmanship as those show bartenders you see in the clubs. Kind of like Tom Cruise in that movie 'Cocktail.'" Of course, it's this same showmanship that may have ended George's playing career for good. He points to the place on his left hand where his pinky used to be. "I was showing off for a small crowd a few years ago, chopping up some short ribs. I do this trick where I throw the slab up, catch it, and slap it down on the block. At the same time, I'm swinging the cleaver down in this huge overhead arc -- kind of like how (The Who's) Pete Townshend does that windmill thing with he plays -- and I'm supposed to cut the slab right down the center." Well, I was a little hung over from the night before -- you wouldn't believe the parties some of these meat men have. And the groupies! Oh my God! -- anyway, I slap down the slab, just as I swing my cleaver, and my pinkie ring catches on a bone, and whack! Now I'm Nine-Fingered George. "I asked George if he missed the life -- the road, the booze, the women." Not at all, man. Let me tell you, that s--- gets old after a few years. We eventually got to the point where we'd hit a nice jazz club after a show just to unwind. A little wine and cheese joint where people don't scream your name or hurl their panties at you. "Nowadays, George prefers hanging out with his family and friends at home, instead of partying into the wee hours of the morning. And he says he's happier and more content than he's ever been. "Just some steaks on the grill and a few beers?" I ask. "No, I'm a vegetarian."

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