

BSA • We're on Fire!

What: Making an Impression!

Where: Center Line, MI

When: Spring 1976



BITTER SWEET ALLEY • CENTER LINE, MI AUDITORIUM APRIL 2, 1976

Nothing beats the feeling of a great live stage show. The energy can be electrifying! After seeing Kiss play live, I decided it was time to step up our stage show by adding some explosive flash cans for our next gig at Center Line High School auditorium. I had no idea what I was doing, but that had never stopped me in the past. I did some research (at a strange place called the library) and found a diagram of the parts I would need to build my flash cans. I will confess I skip printed pages that look boring or start with the word “Warning.” I set out to buy some flash powder, wire, filaments, and some switches. It actually looked pretty simple. You just get a coffee can, drill two isolated screws into the bottom, connect a filament across them, then run wire to the switch that will deliver the 120 volts. When you flip the switch, it creates heat, burns the filament, and ignites the flash powder... BOOM! It couldn't be easier!

I was a teenager at the time, still living at ground zero. My mother would periodically scream out for no apparent reason... “Gary, be careful!”

Well, at this moment, it paid off, as I was putting together this contraption downstairs in the

basement. Heeding her words of wisdom, I moved to the garage to test the contraption. I added a little flash powder, flipped the switch, and, BAM! IT WORKED! I only tested once more, as I wanted to save the flash powder for the big show.

While setting up our equipment at the auditorium, I positioned my newly created flash cans on each side of the stage. I added a little flash powder. Then, I added a little more. I was concerned the flash would be small and I would be embarrassed, so I added a little more. At that point, there was hardly anything left in the bottle, so I decided to finish it off, and added a little more.

It was all set. Our lighting guy was ready to throw the switch at the end of our closing song. This was big time! I was hoping to make a huge impression. Though I did wonder... *maybe I should have bought two bottles of flash powder. Hmmm.*

Well, from the picture, you can see that it really did make a big impression! Needless to say, I got a serious lecture from the school authorities, who repeatedly told me I was lucky that the stage curtains didn't catch on fire or that the entire band didn't lose their hair.
























Let's just say it was a very warming experience, and it sealed the door shut to any ideas of a pyrotechnician stage show career.



BITTER SWEET ALLEY • CENTER LINE, MI AUDITORIUM • THE FLASH CANS WORKED!




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