

BSA (Dancing Days) Led Zeppelin

What: Playing for Led Zeppelin

Where: Troy Hilton - Troy, MI

When: Spring 1977

Fate delivered Bitter Sweet Alley an unforgettable moment.

One night we were on stage playing a gig at the Troy Hilton Ballroom in Troy, Michigan. I remember it vividly. We were playing the Led Zeppelin song “Dancing Days,” which was part of our young career song list. As we played, I noticed some out-of-place, totally cool-looking rock stars standing at the back of the hall. I turned to get Tim Marko’s attention (our drummer) and motioned for him to take a look. From the expression on his face, he verified my belief. That’s right! We were onstage playing a Led Zeppelin song for the members of Led Zeppelin! I’m serious... Really!



PETER GRANT AND JIMMY PAGE AT THE TROY HILTON

I couldn’t believe this was happening. You have to understand I spent thousands of hours learning every guitar solo Jimmy Page has ever recorded, and there he was, watching and listening to me play. It was surreal. I kept thinking I was going to wake up. Actually, I was hoping I would wake up. I mean, it’s not every day that Jimmy Page is in the audience. After they listened to a couple songs, Jimmy Page came and stood on my side of the stage. We played a few more songs, and then we took a much-needed break.

We all grabbed a table backstage and talked for a while. Jimmy explained they were staying at the hotel and were having a little party up front in the bar area. He said they were excited about playing at the Pontiac Silverdome the next night in front of the largest indoor crowd in history. One of us mentioned how much BSA would love to go. Jimmy smiled and said he would get us all tickets.

Tim asked if Zeppelin wanted to sit in with BSA on a few numbers. Jimmy politely turned Tim’s request down, as the place would have gone ballistic. And then, as if the evening wasn’t surreal enough, and I do have witnesses, Jimmy Page said he was “very impressed” with my playing and wished he could have played like me at my age. I was shocked, but I was still able to find the words to say, “I had a great teacher by the name of Mr. Page.”

After we finished our show, I went by the hotel bar where Zeppelin had booked their private party. As I walked past the front door, Jimmy Page and Peter Grant, their manager, were walking in, and Jimmy (I call him Jimmy now) invited me to come along. Suddenly, I found myself sitting at a table with Robert Plant, Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones, John Bonham, and an assortment of their Zeppelin women. I can honestly say I was Dazed and Confused! The booth we sat in backed up against a glass wall leading out to the hallway. I felt like I was in a fishbowl. A crowd in the hallway was just standing there, excitedly staring at us. Tim squeezed his way through the crowd and motioned through the glass for me to get him in. However, they weren't letting anyone else in the party, so I shrugged and shook my head. I do recall Tim giving me a very unhappy look, along with a particular finger gesture. I can't blame him, but there was nothing I could do.

Sitting with rock royalty like Led Zeppelin, I thought they would have a major star trip attitude, but they were all down-to-earth. Jimmy Page even remembered to ask his manager to get us the concert tickets. Peter Grant said they wouldn't have the tickets until the next day. Jimmy told me to come by his hotel room to pick them up. I was like, *Wow, how cool is that?! I'm gonna stop by Jimmy Page's hotel room tomorrow.*

The next day I went back to the Troy Hilton to pick up the tickets. Knocking on Jimmy Page's hotel room door, I heard someone yell, "Hold on a minute!"

After a short time, the door opened, and there was Jimmy Page with soaking wet hair and a towel wrapped around him. I can only imagine the look I had on my face because he laughed and said, "Sorry, I was just getting out of the shower."

Without any awkwardness (on his part), he nonchalantly directed me to the adjacent room, where the stage manager handed me enough tickets for the entire band.

I only wish I had some solid evidence of my encounter. But I don't. I can understand not having a camera or forgetting to ask him for his autograph that first night, but when I went back to his hotel room to pick up our tickets, once again, I did not bring a camera or ask him for his autograph. That has really bothered me ever since.

Led Zeppelin played at the Pontiac Silverdome in front of the largest indoor crowd in history. And Bitter Sweet Alley was in the audience, thanks to Mr. Jimmy Page.



THIS IS NOT MY ACTUAL TICKET... COME ON, I CAN'T SAVE EVERYTHING!
 THE BSA SEATS WERE ON THE SIDE, AND IF I MAY SAY, THE ACOUSTICS WERE TERRIBLE