

My Son the Rock Star (For Two Days); The Story of How He Came to Sing at Carnegie Hall

When I first heard about it from Jim, it didn't sound like that big a deal. My son, 15, came home from school one day in February and said something about the high school music teacher asking him to sing at an upcoming concert. Oh? Nice! Slowly I came to understand that the performance was going to be at the world famous Carnegie Hall. Even then, I just assumed it would be some kind of school choir event or something, maybe in one of the two smaller side rooms (Zankel Hall or Weill Recital Hall), attended by parents and aunts and uncles and whatnot. The previous spring, my wife and I had traipsed down to his middle school auditorium to see him sing with a couple dozen boys and girls in the school choir, all of them wearing masks—as we were too, in the half-empty hall, as the pandemic still made everyone wary. (It's hard to sing with a mask on, but it *was* nice to see any kind of performance.) This time, I did think, "I've never been to Carnegie Hall and I've been curious about the place all my life." But otherwise? Ho de hum!

Eventually, though, the details become clearer, and they were shocking. First of all, Jim wasn't going to be singing in some choir, but alone as a frontman leading a young rock 'n' roll band made up of four other students he only knew in passing (they're all a grade or two above him): two guitars, bass, and drums. That's a different kettle of fish! Never saw him do anything like *that* before! And far from some little cute performing-children event, awww, this was going to be the blockbuster all-star charity concert put on at Carnegie Hall each year by **Michael Dorf**, of the City Winery club, to raise money for music education programs/opportunities for underserved youth. (Over the years, these shows have raised over \$1.6 million.) And the other performers weren't going to be from PS138 or PS36 or James Madison School or something. Jim's band was going to be the only kid band on a bill that would also feature Jim's lifelong favorites **Graham Nash** and **Peter Asher** of **Peter & Gordon**, plus 1970s **Wings** guitarist/1964-1966 "Go Now" **Moody Blues** frontman **Denny Laine**—those three get me where I live—as well as **Lyle Lovett**, **Glen Hansard** of **The Frames**, **Christopher Cross**, **Heart's Nancy Wilson**, **Bruce Hornsby**, **Natalie Merchant** (who didn't show up, but was replaced by *the* **Patti Smith!**), ageless 1960s R&B legend **Bettye LaVette**, and many more! What the what the? What in the hey? "You must be joking," I said, sitting on the couch feeling puzzled, even though it's not the sort of gag Jim pulls. It just didn't seem possible!

And here was the kicker. All were going to be performing the music of **Paul McCartney**, and Jim was going to be singing 1970 *Let It Be* #1 "Get Back!" I've raised Jim and his sister **Caroline** on **The Beatles** since they were old enough to coo and point. None of this made any sense to me. I'd joined The Beatles fan club in 1968 at age six, when I already owned and had devoured all their albums to that point. (My mother began sending off the membership checks to the New Jersey branch, as I didn't have a bank account in First Grade.) That band has done so much to propel (still!) my lifelong love for music, as well as my musical education on its various roots and forms. And plenty of young people still revered The Beatles; it wasn't like I was playing them **Guy Lombardo** records, or something. As well, as a boy I'd set my alarm to watch *The Beatles Cartoon* on Saturday mornings in the 1960s when they first ran, and those cartoons were still on YouTube in the early '10s and were a great gateway drug for our kids. The Beatles were something we could all share together—my wife has also loved them since her own childhood.

So that extra cherry on the whole crazy sundae felt like stars or planets were aligning. For starters, I'd heard of this series that Dorf curates. This was going to be its 18th annual tribute

show—though it would be their first in four years, thanks again to Covid—and past concerts had paid homage to **Aretha Franklin, David Bowie, David Byrne, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, R.E.M., Prince, Rolling Stones, Van Morrison, Judy Collins, Jimmy Webb, Paul Simon**, etc. But let me get this straight: out of all the talented kids out of the 1,050,649 that attend New York City's 1851 public schools, 542 of them high schools, somehow *my* boy was going to be representing *all of them* at such a show? On a night that's about raising money so that more kids like him could be musicians? As the only teen representatives on a stage with people I've been a fan since *I* was a kid, *singing the bloody Beatles*??? I couldn't really wrap my head around the whole thing. But I sure liked it.

"OK, Jim, spill it," I demanded. "How did this all come about exactly?" I mean, I'd seen his report card; he's not even taking a formal music class this year. So he doesn't *have* a music teacher! And how did this music teacher he doesn't even have know he can sing? Turns out, it's typical Jim. On his free periods, Jim just heads like a homing pigeon to the school's music room. There's a piano, you see—and if you know my boy, you know it's been the same since he first learned how to play in preschool. He's *bound* to politely ask if he might use it. And if he's given the green light, he gleefully makes the sounds of a young heart's pure joy or sorrow, whatever an adolescent might be feeling. Apparently, he's been slinking in there on an almost daily basis, playing and singing his favorite **Sloan** and **Beths** songs. So that one day in February, said music teacher, **Josh Paris**, asked if Jim might join in this school band thing he had been mentoring for the upcoming appearance. One of the organizations benefiting from Dorf's event is a nonprofit called Music Will (formerly Little Kids Rock), that "encourages and enables children to play popular music, by providing free music instruction and instruments to public school districts across the country, from kindergarten through high school." The folks who run it are friendly with Mr. Paris, as the instructor is a great representative of their mission. (Any high school teacher who atypically doesn't neglect guitar/bass/drums-type rock has my respect.) Music Will wanted to field one teen band for the concert as a shining example of what they're trying to accomplish. Mr. Paris already had the musicians in place, and good ones at that as I would soon discover; both guitarists, **Johnny** in 10th Grade, and **Cassius** in 11th, are surprisingly accomplished lead players, as is the 11th Grade bassist **Nina** (so much so that she too was given a solo to play), and a solid drummer in 10th Grader **Leo**. But what Mr. Paris lacked was that sink-or-swim role, a vocalist. (Few of us love an otherwise great band with a lousy frontperson.) Well, how 'bout that little mop-topped smiley blonde kid who keeps coming in and singing up a storm at the ivories, just 'cause he likes to? It just so happens he already knows "Get Back" and pretty much every Beatles song by heart, anyway. Problem solved.

Once we understood what was happening, our family unsurprisingly got pretty excited. But how would Jim do? After all, these were going to be pretty big shows! First, there would be a public warm-up/open rehearsal at City Winery, in front of 500 ticket-buyers, with all of those heavyweight performers. And I looked it up: Carnegie Hall was going to be *2800 people*, and both nights were already sold out. Gulp! After 43 years of doing gigs, the most people I've ever played for is 1100, with **Springhouse** opening for **Belly** and **Velocity Girl** at Minneapolis's First Avenue in 1993, and I'd had plenty of experience before that. Plus I was just the drummer. I could hide behind the kit if I felt nervous. (Before that, I'd played for 1000 in **Even Worse** at age 20, opening for **The Misfits** at Irving Plaza in 1982, but Even Worse had already done 60-70 gigs.) Heck, I hadn't even *seen* my first rock gig until I was nearly 17. My parents wouldn't allow anything earlier. Jim had just turned 15! True, unlike me at 15, he's already seen 40-50

concerts, including some pretty incredible bands like **The Who**, **Buzzcocks**, **Undertones**, **Beths**, **Death Cab For Cutie**, and uh huh, **Paul McCartney** three times! (Ah, symmetry.) But it's not the same as having a mic in your hand in front of 2800 strangers staring at you.

And yet somehow I just *knew* Jim would have no problem. It's just who he is. I have watched Jim play piano and sing Beatles songs at micro-public events his whole life, almost all of them McCartney tunes: at annual recitals for other parents and students doing "For No One" or "Hey Jude"; performing "Hey Jude" for a dozen diners at The Smokehouse in Wallace, Idaho, back when he was eight. (The staff had been reluctant to let him try, because they thought he would just bang on it like children do, but soon the barmaid was singing along.); singing "Blackbird" at a talent show in Helena, Montana; and warbling a whole set of Beatles covers on piano and ukulele in Helena's downtown walking mall to raise money for the local ASPCA when he was about nine. (He got over \$100 in his tip jar.) And every time a friend or group of his pals comes by our house, Jim sits down at the keys at some point and jams with them. So what a strange stroke of luck he got picked to sing a McCartney song under such grand circumstances. He wouldn't have a guitar, uke, or a keyboard to play, but Jim just loves this music down to his marrow.

Moreover, it couldn't happen to a nicer kid, who would both understand the magnitude of the event and the historic nature of the performers, yet would thoroughly appreciate and revel in being a part of it, too. He's a sunny boy, pleased to meet you, and appreciative of nice things people do for him, and whatever good fortune comes his way. So heck—you go get 'em, Jim!

The only hitch to get around was that there weren't going to be any free tickets for the parents on either sold-out night. I guess with over 100 people performing in 23 acts, they couldn't get free tickets for a benefit show. Mary and I are \$300 poorer now, having paid for two scalped tickets for Carnegie Hall on Stubhub. I mean, how could we miss it? The City Winery show was more problematic; tickets were not offered on secondary ticket sellers. Fortunately, the Music Will folks were able to finagle five passes, one per family—I think we were all formerly the band's roadies?—so at least I could go. Phew.

On the afternoon of the City Winery show, I posted a recent picture of Jim in a dark black Beatlesque suit on Facebook, and wrote, "Our boy Jim is amazingly singing at City Winery tonight and Carnegie Hall tomorrow, vocalizing on 'Get Back' for a small rock combo of his new high school classmates. (A teacher asked for him.) It's for an all-star tribute to Sir Paul McCartney with Graham Nash, McCartney's old friend Peter Asher of Peter & Gordon (McCartney gave them "World Without Love" for a smash #1 hit nearly 60 years ago), Lyle Lovett, Nancy Wilson, Christopher Cross, and more. Strange doings!!! They're the only kid act playing. It's absolutely bizarre and we're a little stunned. But I hope the kid has an absolute blast! He loves playing music for people—just not that many before, lol! He will remember it the rest of his life and so will we. And no, he won't be dressed like this tonight and tomorrow in a suit, but if he were in a '60s mod band like **The Action** or **Small Faces**, he might easily fit in. He would be the Smallest Face of them all!"

And, I added, because I couldn't resist the old joke: "And how do you get to Carnegie Hall? He practiced; I'm taking the Q train!"

For what it's worth, 659 people liked the post, seemingly as surprised to read it as I was to write it. Some of my favorite comments: "This is just the coolest and most exciting thing ever!" "Outstanding! No better kid out there for this gig!" "OMG!!" "Too cool for school!!"

“WOW! That’s a big deal!” And my favorite, “That’s so amazing! They belong on the next cover of *The Big Takeover!* I know a guy...”

For the rehearsal concert, I happily trotted uptown to the Manhattan City Winery club on the Hudson River at 11th Avenue and 15th and visited the young band backstage, and found them wearing matching black Music Will t-shirts. Jim was plumb excited that Peter Asher had just come to visit them in their dressing room. Over the years, Jim has played a couple of Peter & Gordon songs on the piano, of course that McCartney-written 1964 #1, “World Without Love,” and the less remembered, even better, and quietly devastating 1965 #9 penned by the late, great **Del Shannon**, “I Go to Pieces.” Jim had just told Asher, 78, how much he liked those songs. (The Music Will guys said that Asher was surprised that someone so young would know them—or even know who he was.) On my way back to the floor, I saw Mr. Asher myself, and stopped and said something similar, mentioning that I had several Peter & Gordon’s albums, “even the Nashville one” (1966’s *Peter and Gordon Sing and Play the Hits of Nashville, Tennessee*), and loved such deep cuts as 1965’s *True Love Ways*’ “Any Day Now (My Wild Beautiful Bird).” Again, he smiled and graciously said it was really nice to hear that—so an extra little thrill for me, too. I always like telling musicians how their songs or LPs have “made it good to be alone,” as **The House of Love** once sang, and it feels even better with music you loved as a small child.

The show began, and various performers took the stage, backed by a seasoned house band helmed by current Rolling Stones drummer **Steve Jordan**, with some *Saturday Night Live* and *David Letterman Show* musicians, and **Art Garfunkel**’s keyboard player. I went up to the balcony to film the kids’ appearance. Typical Jim, he hadn’t mentioned that Jordan was going to sit in with them during their song. (Jesus, Jim is playing with *Steve Jordan*, now, too? Will the surprises never end?)

I filmed the performance, having never heard them play before, and became more and more thrilled while it was happening. All five of the kids killed it! I’d hoped they do OK, and suspected Jim, being Jim, would pull it off with his usual enthusiasm. But again, 500 people, no instrument, in a proper nightclub... Amazingly *none* of these five kids looked nervous! And sure it was only one song, but I was caught by surprise by the level of talent of Jim’s cohorts; in general, you couldn’t tell they weren’t a seasoned band. And there in the front was Jim, diminutive, smiling, delighted, swinging his arms in excellent time, and slashing his head forward while stomping his leg to the accents at the end of each “Get Back!” just like he was his beloved **Steve Marriott** of The Small Faces on *Beat Beat Beat* in 1966, or **Jan & Dean** on the *TAMI Show* in 1964, or **Feargal Sharkey** of **The Undertones** on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1979. If you like, you might watch the iPhone film on my Facebook page, scrolling down to the March 15 entry. After telling people who they are and thanking Mr. Paris, he says, “And yeah, that’s it, let’s go!” And the crowd happily chuckles at that rev-up. Playing quietly so as not to drown out the student drummer Leo, Jordan is a rock, one *hell* of an anchor, and that would help anyone; who wouldn’t want Steve Jordan to nail the **Ringo** rhythm for them? Ha! But the zeal and kids’ evident ability caught me unawares. That bass solo! And there’s Jim, again, dance-hopping in the non-singing break, singing in pitch with good timing and some command, and what might fell me and others in his place, without any nervous catch or quiver in his voice, despite his total inexperience at this level. Finally, with a kind of elated grin, as he exited with his mates at the end, he waved with his back to the crowd to acknowledge their extended applause. Well! **Pete Townshend** was right: The kids *are* alright!

The video on Facebook, the proof in the pudding, drew unanimously kind and exited comments. For one song, Jim even made fans out of many musicians from bands I've long admired and have covered in these pages forever, from **Bad Religion**, **Nada Surf**, **M.I.A.** (the punk band), **Channel 3**, **The Last**, and even his Springhouse "uncles," **Larry Heinemann** and **Mitch Friedland**. Typical comment: "Jim that was stupendous. Love every second of it. Thank you Jack for posting this video. It just made my day." It's a nice small point: Lifelong rock 'n' roll lovers know the real spirit, so in many ways it's an us, not a me. Also, who doesn't want to see kids showing some real moxie? I admit it gave me goosebumps to watch **The Linda Lindas** in action last year at Irving Plaza opening for **Jawbreaker**, because musically, I'd like them even if they were 30-, 40-, or 50-something women. But that they do what they do at ages 12, 15, 16, and 18—it's just a plain old *gas*.

The following night at Carnegie Hall, March 15, is even more of a blur, and was a little breathtaking even for someone who has been going to concerts for 45 years, given the stately setting. Let's start with the legendary locale—I knew its history, right down to the historic opening night on May 15, 1891, when it was called The Music Hall, and the special conductor was the most famous musician of that time, **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky**, who came all the way from Russia via train and ocean liner. According to *The New York Tribune*, he conducted "The Marche Solennelle," an adaptation of the march he composed for **Czar Alexander III's** coronation in 1883. After a long, loud ovation, "he was compelled to respond with an encore." Tchaikovsky died two years later, but he was followed by other famous conductors (**Richard Strauss**, **Sergei Rachmaninoff**, **Arturo Toscanini**, **Leonard Bernstein**, etc.), jazz age and WWII greats (**Benny Goodman**, **Glenn Miller**, **Duke Ellington**, **Billie Holiday**, **Judy Garland**), and into the rock 'n' roll, folk, R&B/soul, blues, country, and pop eras (**Bill Haley & His Comets**, **Nina Simone**, **Simon & Garfunkel**, **Beach Boys**, **Ike & Tina Turner**, **Kingston Trio**, **Harry Belafonte**, **Patsy Cline**, **Ernest Tubb**, the blacklisted **Weavers** doing their famous live LP—all in their primes). In my favorite story, bluesman **Jimmy Reed's** fantastic 1961 album *Jimmy Reed at Carnegie Hall* wasn't even recorded there; his label Vee-Jay felt like they'd blown it by not recording his sensational concert at the renowned hall, so they "recreated" it with his band in a studio nearby! (HmMMM.) And most notable for our purposes, it had been the site of The Beatles' own first-ever proper New York concert, February 12, 1964—just three days after Beatlemania had launched with their appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (73 million viewers) four blocks south and one block west, and one of only two they gave that sensation-causing trip. What would you have paid for *that* Carnegie Hall show on Stubhub?

You sure feel the history when you walk in, and I won't lie, I was a little awed. It's a grand place of beauty, surprisingly elegant rather than ornate, with spotless maroon red carpets and seats, ghost-white balconies, and frosted white and gold-trimmed stage. The acoustics were famous when it opened, and they remain impeccable. The place is regal, buffed, and shined, fit for a royal coronation. The sound is so pristine it lends itself to any performance, august or upstart. I could imagine Jimmy Reed drawling "Big Boss Man" there a year before my birth.

The big show began in a more hushed atmosphere than at the Winery, after Michael Dorf explained the purpose of the benefit, and then read a small message from Sir Paul himself: "I am so honored by you all doing this tribute for such a wonderful and worthy cause. It really is exciting! The only pity is I am out of the country at the moment—but please accept my deepest thanks for doing this. Sending love to you all." (Macca was on holiday in St. Barts with his wife,

or else who knows, maybe Jim would have met *him*, too!) The next day, McCartney would tweet, “Last night’s tribute concert made this boy from Liverpool very happy.”

I have already filed a critique of the 23 act, three-hour show in this issue’s live reviews section; it was marked by an extraordinary rendition of *Sgt Pepper’s* “She’s Leaving Home” by the unbilled, inimitable Patti Smith (a teenage hero; in 1978, our quasi basement punk rock covers band in Summit, New Jersey, knew only eight songs, and one of them was “Ask the Angels”). Here is the full spoken word verse she wrote herself to conclude her poignant, elegiac version—as if the song’s girl was more conscious of the pain she was causing than that she was feeling, but knew she had to go—from the perspective of the runaway girl who had left her parents devastated. “Dear mother and father. I’m sorry if I hurt you/But I had to leave to find what you already have/Companionship, love, to find laughter, to find freedom/And to find, most of all, myself.” Other highlights included Nash’s delicate, wrenching “For No One,” a string-filled, beautiful revamp of “Mother Nature’s Son” by Cross, and a rousing “World Without Love” by Asher with Lovett, who was standing in gracefully for the late **Gordon Waller** (as “**Peter & Lyle**”). There was also an exuberant, righteous gospel choir, ukulele folk, a bearded Hansard covering “We Can Work it Out” with just an acoustic guitar, accordion, and tambourine, **LaVette** converting “Maybe I’m Amazed” into a slow-burning soul ballad, and many a similar stripped down or sensitive turn.

Perhaps the tender tenor of these performances explains why—and I can’t say I foresaw this—my son’s cheeky kid band was the first of those to bring the large crowd to its feet, hooting and cheering. I had to watch the videos attendees posted on YouTube (my own was from too far away, from the back balcony), to confirm that I didn’t just make that up. But it was true! Again, all of the other acts were not only older, some like Nash, LaVette, and Asher with careers dating back to the Beatles’ ascent, but all—apart from the vaguely-irritating **Shovels & Rope**, who could’ve used a bassist like McCartney himself, to help save an abrasively high-end-y “Helter Skelter”—chose somber, chamber, or quiet, moody songs from McCartney’s catalog or sang them that way, likely because they thought it best fit the majestic venue and event. In contrast, here were five smiling 15-17 year-olds stomping out “Get Back” with the same youthful spirit that animated Sir Paul and his own teenaged bunch, pre-fame, circa 1959, when they began the transition from their **Lonnie Donegan**-style skiffle band, **The Quarry Men** by slamming out covers of *their* heroes, **Larry Williams, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, Gene Vincent, Carl Perkins, Eddie Fontaine, Johnny Burnett, Buddy Holly, Little Willie John, and Chan Romero** instead of “Rock Island Line” and “Maggie Mae.” There’s that, and there’s no denying teen energy. And well, there’s Jim. I’ve watched the video a few times. Oblivious to any magnitude, he radiates joy and energy being up there, like he was still belting out “Hey Jude” for some surprised diners in Wallace, Idaho. (See for yourself; google “Paul McCartney Tribute Get Back” and a **Maggie Clarke**’s close-up YouTube video comes up. There’s also a full-concert video from the back posted by a **Stephen Fisch** on YouTube as “The Music Of Paul McCartney At Carnegie Hall In NYC On 3/15/23”; the kids are on at 1:11.) One last time, at the end of the show (both nights), all five kids joined the other 120 or so other performers for the whole-ensemble finale of “Hey Jude,” a fitting ending—happily and sincerely moving. (You can see the kids in the back, off to the left, in more YouTube videos, if you search “Paul McCartney Tribute Hey Jude Carnegie Hall.”) Good music itself is the ecstasy, and rock ’n’ roll is the transcendent church, if anyone wants to join in the feeling.

And though we weren't allowed backstage, Mary and I kept receiving excited texts from Jim. Graham Nash had recognized Jim from meeting him at Nash's show at Town Hall four years ago, and went up to him and said "Hi Jim!" Nash knew what a huge **Hollies** fan Jim has been since he was three, because when Jim was that age, I had done a Hollies interview with Nash for these pages—and I had shown Nash an iPhone video of pre-K-age Jim singing Nash's 1967 Hollies classic "Dear Eloise" start to finish, a capella. (Jim had to know it by heart as he hadn't yet learned to read.) And here they were, 12-years later, on the same bill at Carnegie Hall! Life sure takes many strange twists and turns. (The beat goes on. Just last night, I recognized Jim singing the 1964 Merseybeat-ish *In the Hollies Style* gem "To You My Love"—the first song Nash ever sang lead on—upstairs in his room with his new portable organ.) Likewise, Peter Asher remembered Jim from the night before, and like Nash, happily posed for a photo with him. Later, Asher watched the kids play "Get Back" from the sidestage, and gave Jim the thumbs up and winked at him as he left the stage. And hats off to Nancy Wilson, who ran into their dressing room before they played to tell them how much she'd enjoyed them at City Winery the night before, and asked if she might take a photo with them to post on her Facebook page—which she did in real time, praising them, "We're playing a benefit at Carnegie Hall tonight for [organizations such as] Music Will performing The Music of Paul McCartney. And these kids came on stage last night at the dress rehearsal. They were so amazing!" (Jim texted, "She couldn't have been nicer.") As a final little frill, as the kids stepped out the backstage exit onto 56th Street, headed for the subway and back to normal lives, they were recognized by people out on the sidewalk who kept telling them how inspiring their performance had been and asking for autographs. Priceless.

The final point, much as the Sloan interview this issue has a lot to say about kids and music, too. We live in an era where the majority of kids Jim's and Caroline's age are *not* animated by *any* rock 'n' roll at all. At their dances and parties, they want bland, million-selling, bad dance-pop hits, the kind of unadulterated pap that always comes with a giant choreographed video with 30-40 dancers and precious few musicians, so overproduced you can't hear much that's imperfect or at all fallible and hungry, or nakedly human. It's all so endlessly overdubbed, punched in, autotuned, pitch corrected, and/or made by robot-like machines and sequencers. But actually heartfelt music that has the energy that boisterous youth crave still penetrates more deeply. This is not only in my life, or for my kids, but possibly for yours or your nephews' and nieces', or any friends' kids you know. Try to introduce it! It can be as old as the hills. Heck "Get Back" turned 54 recently, let alone "The Hippy Hippy Shake," "Bad Boy," "Dizzy Miss Lizzy," "Roll Over Beethoven," "Long Tall Sally," "Ooh! My Soul!" and "Some Other Guy." (Tip from my wife: Pre-K kids *love* **The Ramones**, and try **Devo** for toddlers.) Or it can come from *current* bands. You should see Jim play and sing Sloan's "Take Good Care of the Poor Boy" or Caroline sing The Beths on piano, much as I used to gleefully sing Ramones songs in my bedroom circa 1979, howling "beat on the brat with a baseball bat!" (My sister thought I probably needed professional help for that.) "There's no stopping the cretins from hopping!" It never stops, and can always be renewed across generations. As well, as Sloan's Chris Murphy observes in the interview, and as seen in our Nyte Skye feature this issue, what a profound yet fun way to bond with young people, in a way we never could with our own parents in those last decades of the generation gap. (My problem with modern pop isn't that it's immoral or bad for you or too sexually advanced, or too primitive-sounding like parents in my youth worried about rock. My concern is that it's ultimately too *boring*, too generic and lowest-common denominator

spoon-fed, when more vivid and visceral gut-punch and heart-searing music has never been more available!)

Well, good on you Jim, living the dream, a rock star for two nights—then back to soccer practice and math quizzes the next day. I have to say—even though I’m biased—but it really couldn’t happen to a nicer kid. And how serendipitous that of all the teens in all the schools in this giant metropolis, fate found such a boy to personify and embody the young rock ’n’ roll spirit so happily, to show the way rock ’n’ roll has always gotten the blood of young people boiling, as a soundtrack to a new life full of hormones, desire, new experience, and the first rush of making their own way.

Here’s to the next generation. By all means, expose them to great stuff, have some instruments around the house, and they’ll take it from there. It was indeed two nights I know he will never forget, no matter what else he does in his life; and for that matter, neither will I. And every time I think of it I’ll just smile ear to ear. “Wasn’t that *something*? I still can’t believe it! Good job, Jim! You did it! You and that younger sister of yours: like the girl in Patti Smith’s version of “She’s Leaving Home” may yet, whenever you get the chance, you show them who you are.