

The time I got a call from the guy who wrote "Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida"

This story may well be "beyond the pale" in that it deals with a slice of time and a piece of music history that have long since had their heyday...and so it may seem *WAY-IRRELEVANT* now - like the ravings of a demented old man (probably true!).

But, if you will indulge me for just a few minutes, I think you'll find it to be a story that is so much stranger than even the most inventive fiction - and so worth the telling.

First, let me try to give you some sense of why the song *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* was important - to me, at that time. Why don't you start with the associated Wikipedia article (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida>)? Then, cue it up on <your favorite music app>...and follow along with me!

It starts with a faux-ornate arpeggio of a D minor chord. Sounds impressive. Not particularly difficult to play...but, not exactly easy, either. To teenagers back in 1968, that arpeggio was like a siren, an instantly-recognized signal that something truly earth-shattering was about to follow. And, in a lot of ways, it was...a truly ground-breaking track - the first really HEAVY rock song.

As you might expect, we played *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* in my very first band. Our guitarist bought a "fuzz" pedal - an essential ingredient in the song...and our organ player had a Farfisa organ - exactly the kind used in the song...so we had everything required!

Except...

Our organ player ALWAYS seemed to stumble (and I mean NOT slightly...rather, mightily - BIG-TIME) on that arpeggio. Now, had he EVER played that arpeggio CORRECTLY - i.e. JUST LIKE THE RECORD - it would have been "an instantly-recognized signal that something truly earth-shattering was about to follow". Monumental, magical.

But, when flubbed...mightily - BIG-TIME...well, it made the moment laughable. Decidedly *NOT* monumental, magical. Eventually, these flubs got to be SOOO deflating - like a really lame joke (hilarious, but, still - lame!).

Being the singer in the band - standing there helplessly as the intro to what should have felt like a **Thunderbolt From Mount Olympus** became very sad slapstick...EVERY DAMNED TIME! - I got tired of being embarrassed. So, maybe out of curiosity more than anything (i.e. "*Why can't he get that right? How hard can it be?*"), I decided to sit down at the organ in our living room and try to learn how to play that intro.

Well, before you know it, I was learning that, the rest of that song, a bunch of other songs, different chord types - and I was hooked. That was the point of no return for me, when I taught myself the keyboard.

From then on, I wanted to be a musician.

So, I guess a few months later, our band is playing a gig in Berkeley Springs, W. VA. - and we're about to start our third and final set of the evening. Since we always wanted that final set to be the high point of the evening, we usually started it with *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* (it being an instantly-recognized signal...etc. etc. etc.!).

On a whim, I asked our organ player if I could play the organ part this one time. Not sure how excited he was about the prospect of that...but he agreed. We set up my mic stand so that I could sing and play at the same time...and OFF WE GO!

Well, I played that arpeggio perfectly! Then the rest of the band joined in. We were all elated...and the dance floor was immediately packed. A very thrilling moment!

So far, so good. Then, when it was time to start singing, I had a sudden epiphany: I had spent so much time perfecting the arpeggio and learning the rest of the keyboard part that I'd completely whiffed on practicing playing AND singing AT THE SAME TIME! And it was kinda like juggling: the left hand and right hand played distinctly different rhythms in that song...and then the voice was yet another different rhythm! Three at once! For a split second, I worried that I was about to be embarrassed worse than ever by that song - but, somehow, luckily, I acclimated to it very quickly. Whew, dodged a bullet there!

As you might imagine, our keyboard player was none too thrilled when it was all over - and, actually, rightfully so. I really had somewhat selfishly and obtusely made him feel inadequate and disrespected - so it took a bit of talking to get him to resume his rightful place at HIS organ. But, right or wrong, things were thus set in motion. It wasn't long before he quit the band, and I was the new keyboard player - as well as the singer.

So, when you get down to it, the song *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* essentially started it all for me.

Fast forward - many years, many bands, doctorate in music, doing everything on computers and synthesizers. I had started on a piece that I liked to think of as the first of its genre: *JAZZ COMEDY* (I know...ridiculous, right?). You can find it <somewhat buried, title: "*Oscar Pianoson and the Fabulous Jazz Clowns*"> on my website. (FYI: I have always liked it, and I'm even proud of it!)

At a certain point in the work, I decided that I needed to quote or parody something that was about as far removed from Jazz as any music could possibly be - and I immediately flashed on *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* (I mean, seriously - with so many pop songs and standards traditionally getting jazz treatments (even "*My Favorite*"))

Things!) - I couldn't imagine that ANY song would be more quickly rejected as a candidate for a "jazz version" than *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida*!)

Somehow I got it in my head that I'd better first be sure that it was legally OK for me to use it as I intended (as if ANYONE in the world would care anyway!). So I actually (and incredibly) wrote to the composer of *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* (a guy named Doug Ingle), and asked for his help.

Next thing I knew, I received a letter from Warner-Chappell Music (who owned the copyright) - rejecting my request. Again, it's incredible to me now that I spent the time and effort to pursue this AT ALL - much less, FURTHER! - so that makes my subsequent appeal even more jaw-droppingly unreal.

Although I didn't say so in my response, I knew that *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* had recently been licensed to "The Simpsons" for a HIGHLY-VISIBLE, foreground-featured use (the most expensive type of use when it comes to licensing), so I knew that Warner-Chappell's rejection really had to do with the fact that they'd make no money from me. Nonetheless, I persisted - trying to finesse my language to win them over. Again (although in a bit more relatable way), they said NO. Resoundingly.

So I finally got the hint, and resolved to do what I eventually did to work around this non-issue (guess now you'll just HAVE to listen to the piece to find out what I did!).

Then, a couple of days later - mid-afternoon, WHILE AT WORK - the telephone rings at my desk.

It's Doug Ingle.

[INSERT HERE THE LONGEST, MOST "PREGNANT PAUSE" THAT YOU CAN IMAGINE!]

Actually, a very nice, very kind guy. I suspect, to some extent, that he must simply have been curious as to what kind of crazy person would write - TWICE - to a major publishing house for something so off-the-wall. I think he was also flattered a bit; I mean it had been many years since he and Iron Butterfly had had their moment in the spotlight. And, sad truth be told, *Ina-Gadda-Da-Vida* very quickly fell from its lofty pinnacle (of being the first HEAVY rock song, the first song ever to consume AN ENTIRE SIDE of an album, the first extensive use of fuzztone-d electric guitar, the first extended rock drum solo) to the depths of near total obscurity - maybe even suffering a bit of retrospective ridicule (because it had been such an anthem for the counterculture?). So, maybe I held a bit of 'validation value' for Doug Ingle as well?

I'm speculating about all of that, of course. In the call, he expressed regret that he no longer controlled the copyright, and so could have no say in the outcome. Said he would have agreed to my request. Asked how he

could hear my piece. Told me a bit about his current group (a pure 180 from *Iron Butterfly*: a New-Age-ish group he called *Carefeather* (of course!)). Then after about 15 minutes, he wished me well, and rang off.

If nothing amazing ever happens to me again, I'll still be satisfied - because I will always have this.

(Sorta like in the movie ***Casablanca***: "*We'll always have Paris.*")