



R. Buckminster Fuller is credited with coining the phrase, “the sum of the parts is greater than the whole.” What he was really trying to say was that if a group of individually talented people work together successfully “that teamwork will produce an overall better result than if each person” was trying to do their own thing. That’s a overtly mathematical explanation for a successful band. But with a successful band, you got your math and then you got your chemistry. The end result is an unpredictable outcome of the collision between math and chemistry...with a whole bunch of emotion in between. And when it works out, it’s a miracle.

Exile may well be the most textbook illustration of this theory; if not in deed certainly in accomplishment and longevity. Case in point: How many other bands formed in 1963 are still speaking to one another?

God would probably not singled out Richmond, KY, 1963, as the starting point of His grand cultural experiment. Since the primary industries in this smidge of a central Kentucky community were tobacco-growing, whiskey-distilling, the Blue Grass Army Depot and God-fearing, band-rearing is in nearly direct conflict with the mission of the neighborhood. Cooking up rabble-rousing musical concoctions of rawknroll, R&B & LA-scenster pop are all dern good reasons to cast out the long-haired, mod clothes-wearing, rebellious rascals. So cast out were “The Exiles” as the band was originally named. The lemons-to-lemonade good news in being cast out, in part, gave them their name. It also planted the “sing for your supper” seeds they would use grow their career from that point forward.

As usually happens the first big performance moment is best remembered for what went wrong. Founding member, J.P. Pennington recalls, “It was our big debut in the Richmond City Park, summer ’63. We’d told everyone we were related to and everyone we knew about our big night. We were nervous. It got off to a good enough start then suddenly we were upstaged...by a fist-fight right in front of the stage.”

With skivvies changed and more tunes in tow The Exiles embarked on a heavy diet of sock hops, pool parties and any other gathering that music made better through ’63 into ’64. Every performing artist wants to hear more than their echoes playing when they are done. That’s why God invented the miracle of garage recording. It’s the classic cheap-but-effective path to musical immortality. Their miracle arrived in 1964. While not all the details can be recalled, the recording of “The Answer To Her Prayers” is a readily cited turning point for the fist-fight inspiring sock hoppers.

It seems like no time at all now but a long two years later came the seminal “big break” every artist prays for: The opening and backing band slot on the vaunted “Dick Clark Caravan of Stars.” As “American Idol” of its time, the exposure & experience gained doing the 15 minute opening slot then backing the likes of Freddy Cannon, Bryan Hyland and B. J. Thomas was wrapped in the package of great advice dispensed by Mr. Clark himself. After several shows he recognized the potential and boiled it down the primary essence. To J.P. it seems like yesterday Clark delivered his cogent career advice. “We had just finished a blazing show and were beside ourselves. We thought we’d done about as good a job could be done when Dick came over and gathered us around him. He looked us all right in the eye and said, ‘boys, you aren’t out here to entertain yourselves; it’s about the people who bought the tickets. Never forget your audience.’” It’s the band’s mantra to this day.

1967 found the band residents of the Big Apple all sharing a one-bedroom 4th story walk-up apartment on the upper west side. When Central Kentucky decides to take mid-town there’s gonna be a learning curve. Communicating with the locals, running with the “Blade Runner” traffic & how to get a slice without getting cut are the kindergarten lessons. They coped by moving in and unpacking their tried-and-true play-live-and-loud tools. The performance-addicted band utilized the band-on-the-lunge method & assaulted the area’s vibrant music scene. In their own way they stood out as soon as they drove up to a gig. It was unclear what their chosen mode of transportation said about their hopes or image. A hearse is either a sign of obtusely dark sense-of-humor or things to come.

For The Exiles the crucial “thing to come” was a record deal with Clive Davis’ Columbia Records. The recordings were highlighted by “Church Street Revival,” a song written, produced and performed with Tommy James who was as

bright a star in the musical universe as there was at the time. They met opening a show for him in Baton Rouge that wowed the white hot star enough to offer his tune and talents.

It was straight to the Columbia studios for marathon 30-solid-hour session to cut this track. It also brought J.P. the first cut of his young songwriting career for the B-side, "John Weatherman." In 30 hours you can think of everything; except maybe a way home. Midtown gas stations closed long before the track was wrapped and they were on empty. Time on the road spawns a strange brew of skills. Ironically among them is siphoning gas. But this was a band with a conscience: they left cash under the windshield wipers of the "vampire" vehicles. Considering it was cash left out in the open on cars on a New York City street they will not take bets as to whether it was still there when the owners returned to their fuel-lightened rides. It's the thought that counts, right?

Although the road took them out of New York for a couple of years, it brought them back for a second all-in-one-room arrangement in 1968. This time it was the venal Broadway Central Hotel near the not-so-upper-west-side Bowery. No place does skid row like NYC & the Bowery. Only Army-cots-as-beds can make it the completely unforgettable experience. It brings its own share of history being known as the birthplace of Major League Baseball hosting the formation of the league's first team, the Cincinnati Redlegs...along with birthing more cockroaches and rats than NASA could count.

Their collective experience to that point taught them they were one skill set short of a total band: songwriting. Their Bowery proximity fueled the motivation to write their own music which has transformed musicians to artists since time immortal. That motivation is best summed up by oft-repeated, seldom-thought-through phrase: "Well, hell. I can do that." By 1971 they were writing incessantly. Shows & records from that point were dominated by their homegrown songs. It's the whet stone for an image and the sharp edge on identity

Things always change when that set of artistic hormones kick in. The first big change was the name. The more semantically economic "Exile" became the handle. The just-opened Wooden Nickel/RCA became the label home. Chicago became the recording locale. The renovated recording blueprint was an album that was half-studio, half-live and the exiting-member revolving door spun at an unprecedented pace. The two albums that emerged from this period were Exile and Stage Pass on Wooden Nickel/RCA Records. Short of a conversion to country music, not much else could have changed. Even that would come later. While on the right path, the road got longer. Oh, and they found out that Chicago is freakin' cold in January.

The next creative bastion to haunt were the warmer climes of Los Angeles and that was home base by 1973. At this moment in show biz history the shift of geometric center of the rock music business from New York to L.A. was in full swing. Though they were camping in a new town, they kept it old school, whuppin' out the axes at every showcase venue and gathering with a P.A. and lights in Hollywood they could, just to play live. The menu was broad & deep: The Whiskey-A-Go-Go, The Troubadour, The Roxy, maybe even a Hamburger Hamlet or two; hold the Jerry's Famous.

The first memory highlight in the LA chapter was a meeting with legendary entertainment executive, Jerry Weintraub. As excited as they were about the meeting, the enthusiasm ran out of gas faster than they did in New York when he made plain he expected to be addressed only as "Mr. Weintraub."

The real highlight, however, was the connection with über producer/writer team, Mike Chapman & Nicky Chinn known collectively as "Chinnichap." The Australian Chapman had already revolutionized the early 70's British pop scene as a member of "Tangerine Peel" when he met creative partner Nicky Chinn. Star producer Mickie Most hired them to produce and write what turned out to be a string of 19 top-40 hits in '73 & '74 alone for the likes of Suzi Quatro, Smokie, Hot Chocolate, Mud, then more with Sweet & Toni Basil. The point is that dudes were a Big Deal and Exile was ready to elevate their game with the right Big Deal producer.

An Exile tape made it onto the desk of Chapman in 1975 who decided he'd discovered the "Steeley Dan of The South" as the band had returned home to Lexington, KY. A brief creative romance ensued. Chapman crossed the country to Lexington, loved what he saw, cut an album on them and got them a deal on Atlantic that produced the barely-charting single, "Try It On." It didn't fit and they were dropped without an album coming out. But all was not lost.

Along with meeting the Chinnichap guys, this time period brought some of the most significant upgrades to the band personnel yet. Keyboard player Marlon Hargis came aboard in 1973 and he recruited and bass player/singer/songwriter Sonny LeMaire who joined in 1977.

Sometimes, mining the misery of a failure can produce the path to success. The short flight and quick crash landing convinced the band's creative brain trust by '77 that a change in musical direction was the answer. The harder-edged rock gave way to a more pop sensibility. Groovemeister drummer Steve Goetzman was now the rhythm section rocket and the songwriting had seemed to be drifting that way for some time. So it felt a natural evolution. Re-enter Chinnichap.

Always intrigued by the band's potential Chapman made another trip to Lexington at their urging to witness their version of the new direction. This moment was magic. Writing custom-made hits they produced was Chinnichap's stock-in-trade. The rabbit pulled out of this hat was the iconic '78 hit, "Kiss You All Over." The third-time-is-the-charm LP, *Mixed Emotions*, exploded around the world on the strength of this mega-hit. Selling five million units, it was the classic story of how three minutes and thirty seconds can change several lives, virtually overnight. One week they were playing for the door at a club in Lexington working schlubby jobs like landscaping; the next week they were in LA taping "Midnight Special." It went that fast. All the frat gigs and bar band gigs got cancelled and in their place came major tours with Fleetwood Mac, Boston, Heart, Aerosmith, Dave Mason and Seals & Crofts among others.

Everything they had hoped, dreamed and worked for over the long preceding decade was coming true. The tour dates were better, the money was much better, the road longer—stretching as far as Europe and South Africa. The second single, "You Thrill Me" didn't raise any goose bumps in the U.S. but the hits continued to roll across the pond and further away in South Africa. They pragmatically followed the Yellow Brick Money Road the hits paved there.

There were wise strategic business moves that fell in place at this time as well. Among the most beneficial was signing with the highly regarded manager, Jim Morey, who had guided careers as diverse as The Osmond Bros, Dolly Parton, The Pointer Sisters, Whoopi Goldberg and Neil Diamond. A low-profile, high-powered master of the behind-the-scenes career direction, his was the perfect temperament and experience base to guide the transition and channel the band's energy as much as any band makes that possible.

Morey recalls his "a-ha" moment of discovery in late '78. "I was on the road driving in a Hertz car somewhere and I heard 'I Want to Kiss You All Over.' I pulled the car over to hear the song turned up loud. Since there were no cell phones in those days I quickly found a pay phone, called my office and said.....'find out who they are, I want to manage them.' As it turned out my friend Dick Clark had the information I needed. I flew to Lexington and we made a deal. It's a signing that I am still very proud of today."

The dark lining to the silver cloud was that the internal conflict had never been worse. There is an inverse relationship between success and happiness they don't tell you about in Rock Star School.

The fourth album, *All There Is* (Warner/Curb Records), was completely recorded and then lead singer Jimmy Stokely decided he'd had enough. That ensured no singles being released from the album so the record company advances hit drought mode. The live show money stayed mean-and-green abroad but not so much at home. A three-month-and-out tenure for new lead singer, Randy Rickman, opened the door for the hiring of Mark Gray and Les Taylor, both in the course of one day in 1979. A new & enduring career path was also minted after this album: make record, release record, have little success, beg Curb Records' executive Dick Whitehouse to get off the label, get request denied then repeat cycle.

A fifth album was made called *Don't Leave Me This Way* (Warner/Curb Records) and yielded one single in "Take Me Down" that was a career record ...years later for trailblazing country super group, Alabama. For Exile it was top-80 track. Although something they would be aggravated at the time but very happy about later, there was another career record for Alabama on this album in the presence of "The Closer You Get." Aggravating because it was not the stuff Exile's career would be made of.

With gnashed teeth and bloodshot eyes on the horizon they were absolutely certain they had a smash follow-up in the track from their sixth album called "Heart and Soul" which was also the LP title. And they were absolutely right; it was a huge hit...for Huey Lewis and The News several years later. A side-by-side comparison would convince the most discerning musicologist that Chinnichap had just put Huey's voice on the Exile track. Why records don't work first time out of the gate with an act who'd had a hit and did with another act a short time later is a mystery of life. One that was devastating to the band.

What were they going to do now? Go country? The unflappable Mr. Morey shrewdly saw the logic and lodged the suggestion. Robin Williams never got the laughs Jim did when he proposed the country conversion to these heart-proud rockers. Nonetheless, they thought enough of the idea once the laughter subsided to start listening to country

radio. Turns out, country wasn't as bad as it first sounded. There was even connection between the songs they were writing and what was beginning to work in country. When they began to hear their songs on country radio performed by others, the verdict was in. Perhaps most importantly, Morey was able to finally get the band released from Warner/Curb Records which freed the bird to fly.

Delving deep into their own creative soul they took themselves out to the woodshed for what turned into two years of top-to-bottom reinvention. The game plan was a new musical direction, new songs, a new vocal group sound to soup up the strong-as-steel band chassis and a new industry home as the target in Nashville. Now they were good to go country.

Another crucial move Morey made was to put the band in the arms & ears of producer/publisher Buddy Killen. Aside from playing bass for Hank Williams' Drifting Cowboys and co-founding Nashville publishing juggernaut Tree Music Publishing, Buddy was a prolific and successful producer. From Dolly Parton to Joe Tex with Roger Miller squeezed in between, Buddy was as diverse as a happening producer can get. It was love at first cut.

Then, with the new direction neatly folded into hot new recordings, the band only had to go to Nashville to showcase for labels twice before being snatched up by CBS' Epic Records. They got off to a roaring start by Exile standards. The first single, "The High Cost of Leaving" clawed its way to #14. But the second single, previously the bane of their musical existence, shot to #1 in early '83. "Woke Up In Love" woke up the career-in-waiting like a marching band stomping into their bed and you can bet they were never happier to see that bunch of tuba players.

This opened the floodgates on nine consecutive #1 singles: "I Don't Want To Be A Memory", "Give Me One More Chance", "She's A Miracle", "Crazy For Your Love", "Hang On To Your Heart", "I Could Get Used To You", "It'll Be Me", "She's Too Good To be True" and "I Can't Get Close Enough". The record sales and award recognition that had eluded them for more than 20 years was finally in their hands. Points in fact include three gold albums, two Greatest Hits CDs, several multi-platinum singles and thirteen award nominations from the Academy of Country Music (ACM) and the Country Music Association (CMA). All totaled they notched 11 number ones and a respectable host of top 10's in the Epic years. The discography here on the website has all the album titles for you to check out.

Morey retained the William Morris Agency. In a company as large as William Morris even successful acts can have important opportunities pass them by without an enthusiastic, experienced agent on the inside that has their back and shares the vision. With Ray Shelide as their responsible agent they had the right guy. The dates came in fast and furious. Shelide recalls, "Exile was my first 'responsible agent' duty shortly after joining William Morris. This band had hit hard one time before only to watch it all go away. They were a great band AND unique vocal group which has always been a rare combination, especially in country music. I was honored to help them make the most of this second chance. And they delivered, above-and-beyond the call of duty at every show. It was a great relationship that lasted for close to 8 years."

One of the first big touring opportunities that came along was to open the Ricky Skaggs tour. Although they all laugh about it now, Ricky sent word to the guys that they could not perform "Kiss You All Over" while opening his dates. His organization felt it sent the wrong message to his audience.

Given the impact of their live performance they were once again awash in tour opportunities. They shared shows with the biggest stars on the scene including Lee Greenwood, The Oak Ridge Boys & The Gatlin Brothers. At one time the Judds opened for Exile then as the Judds' career exploded their roles reversed with Exile opening for the ladies.

Remember that inverse relationship between success and happiness? It never goes away. It only gets worse.

By 1986, tempers and tolerance were short & fragile and the demand on their time & energy longer & harder than ever. In the best of times dispute resolution on all levels of importance is a challenge. When one stirs in fatigue, distractions, financial inequities, creative differences, less-than-coherent thought & decision making processes, all hopped up with a healthy dose of Ego Rollerball, it's amazing the cracks didn't form before 1986.

First off the ship was keyboard player, Marlon Hargis. "To quote B.B. King, the thrill was gone. We were doing things because we had to, not because we wanted to anymore." Then went Les Taylor. "It's an age old story: I had so many people telling me that I ought go my own way, I finally gave in to try it out." J.P. Pennington was not far behind. "I was tired and missed my family and they missed me." What was left of the band left Epic.

J.P. and Les got their opportunity to spread their solo wings with Epic clinging to Les and MCA eagerly signing J.P. Each had one hit single before the bloom was off their solo rose.

Still on board were Sonny LeMaire & Steve Goetzman. Lee Carroll replaced Marlon. Les' absence thrust Sonny into a more prominent role with lead vocals and Mark Jones filled Les' spot onstage. Paul Martin took up some of J.P.'s slack.

Given some divine providence in the timing department, Tim Dubois was opening the Nashville division of Arista Records and he was looking for a marquis artist to launch the label. The updated Exile landed the spot.

A rose by any other name may still be a rose but the romantic logic doesn't apply to bands. While each of the gentlemen who replaced the members who left is very talented and worked hard, plainly this wasn't the same band despite the name. This wasn't a mystery to Lemaire or Goetzman. Lemaire elaborates, "When we signed with Arista we tried, unsuccessfully, to convince Tim to allow us to change our name. We felt we were a very different band with the new members & new sound emerging. Songs I was writing were taking a different turn from the things J.P. & I used to write." Dubois' insistence on a marquee artist to kick things off made the idea a non-starter.

After two albums and four top-ten singles the long and winding road wound down for the Exile brand in February '94 leaving Goetzman and Lemaire tired of mind, body & spirit. Dubois puts it in perspective saying, "Although we didn't achieve the success we dreamed of, I am incredibly proud of the music we made and proud to have played a small part in a huge career. I love these guys."

Lemaire goes even further. "After we asked off Arista, I was certain we'd find another label. It became apparent after some time that the winds of change had caught up with us. Labels didn't want an old act with 'baggage' no matter how good we sounded. I felt I couldn't continue without being able to do new music so my passion for continuing just 'left the building.'" I struggled for some time with my decision to quit but I finally could not deny my true feelings. After I told the guys I could not go on, we came to a mutual decision to lay it all down with dignity."

With every ending come new beginnings.

What sets the Nashville music business apart from the other major hubs is that it is a songwriter-publisher driven community where the others are artist-driven. Whether the artist is Kenney Chesney or Keni Thomas, virtually every Nashville artist has to make the pilgrimage to Songwriter River for the songs they need to make their records. Some artists decide they, too, want to write songs and seasoned songwriters know writing with the artist gives them a better chance of getting a song recorded. Some artists end up "sitting in the room and on the song" while the pros do the real work. Others like Pennington, Lemaire & Taylor have an aptitude for the trade and used their place in the Artist Food Chain to learn how to write really well.

While riding the crest of hits, the best-of-the-best songwriters beat a path to the bus to write with Exile's writing trio. The three guys, in turn, reached outside their own nest to cultivate quite the healthy peer group of co-writers. It proved to be an important career decision on their part.

This was the tether to the business for Pennington, Lemaire & Taylor when the wheels came off their artist vehicle. They honed their skills to the point they all had hits on other artists. Among many others, J.P. had "The Closer You Get" and "Take Me Down" for Alabama; Sonny scored hits such as "When She Cries" for Restless Heart and "Beautiful Mess" for Diamond Rio; Les clocked in with "It Ain't Easy Bein' Easy" for Janie Fricke as well as cuts on Travis Tritt and Shelby Lynne..

Lemaire has remained most rooted in the Nashville songwriting community and has a crystal clear perspective on what this skill set means. "Outside cuts are validation of your work. In our case it gave us 'props' that we were, indeed, the real deal. In a town & business where the song is everything, the fact that we could deliver the goods for other artists, gave us credibility. It was a major factor in Exile getting a second shot, which rarely happens in this business."

Les has reflected on his decision to go solo and then move back to Lexington many times in the intervening years, commenting, "If I had it to do over, like most people I would do a lot of things differently. First, I realized what being in a great band really meant to me. Second, Lexington is a beautiful, charming place. It's home but it's not Nashville. It

doesn't have 10 songwriters per square mile; the unbelievable creativity that feeds my stream. I have a great life but I really miss being smack dab in the middle of it all like we were."

Goetzman snapped up the opportunity to go into management with guitar wizard Steve Wariner and later Eric Heatherly. J.P. dug into developing the regional music he found back home, recording and writing as much as ever. Marlon played with Jerry Reed, dabbled in management, ran a music store and honed his production chops.

Some other members of the later versions of the band put away their dancing shoes and exited Nashville and show biz; wiser for the wear. It seemed as though all they had collectively wrought would simply fade into history. The primary five went their own way treating every day as the rest of their lives without being in the band.

Opportunity is like water running down a roof; it will find a way in through the smallest openings. After years apart a common cause created reconnection. Former road manager Raymond Patrick had suffered a serious motorcycle accident. Unable to work he was drowning in medical bills. A lasting band reunion was not the first thought J.P. had when the urge to help an old friend out of a bind popped up. He observes, "It became apparent that the best way the five of us could help him was to stage a benefit show to raise funds for him." Old friend and fellow musician, Doug Breeding donated his club, The Blue Moon, in Lexington. Solely by word of mouth the show sold out in one lucky week for the St. Patrick's Day 2008 benefit.

Another former tour manager, Clarence Spalding (who now manages Brooks & Dunn and Jason Aldean) jumped in to help as well. The evening was a stunning success. Between ticket sales and auctions, \$20,000 was raised. Being the blue-through-and-through, Kentucky gentleman he is, Spalding wrote a check matching the gross. Nearly 23 years after having played the last note as a band they found themselves back in familiar positions. The unbounded excitement of a successful show enveloped by the like-we-never-left gathering of brothers & others made playing together again a must.

Soaked in a shower from the Band Fountain of Youth the band talked openly about the previously unconsidered: A reunion. A few rehearsals, some more discussion and a few more months elapsed before they scheduled a show at Nashville showcase venue, 3rd & Lindsley. Nov 5, 2008 became the chosen night. Looking back Goetzman grins as he remembers, "It was an amazing night; one of those incredible 'supposed to happen' kind of nights. We had so many friends like members of Restless Heart, Diamond Rio and all the songwriters who showed up to cheer us on. We can't tell you what that support meant to us."

And now here they stand. Reinvigorated from the sabbatical; energized in making new music and reinforced by new appreciation of the good old days. They have learned a good bit along the way and the distilled wisdom tells them to not cast all their other interests aside as they embark on the new chapter.

They have learned that the individual talents and interests offstage are intrinsic to the collaboration onstage. There's therapeutic value in knowing once the Exile gig is finished tonight, each has other responsibilities to meet tomorrow. Those activities are as varied as the potpourri of personalities. Here on the website you can read more about what each member's journey into, out of and back to the band. It's their stories in their words. Please don't leave until you check that out.

The moral is the right combination is a group is the magic. Steven Van Zandt of Springsteen's E-Street Band has been quoted as saying, "If you've got a band that works, it's a miracle—hold on to it and don't let it go.

Exile's story, wrapped in Little Steven's insight, would constitute proof-positive that "the sum of the parts is, indeed, greater than the whole."

In the end one could either say the band was always a group of guys on the way to the middle...of their career.

Or, better yet, they're back where they belong: In Exile.