

AUDIO DISTORTION

All About
The Music

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“Being allowed to play here, tops everything **Audio Distortion** has ever done – and maybe, everything we ever will do.”

~ Emma Campbell

prologue

In the total darkness of the arena, a single female voice is heard...

“Ladies and gentlemen,” the voice says, “my name is Misty Maitland...”

A single spotlight illuminates the source of the voice – a petite female, with bright red pigtails, and a face full of freckles, standing center stage.

“...and most of you know me as the lead singer of *Ransom*. Tonight, however, along with the rest of you, I’m just a *fan*...”

A huge digital monitor behind her suddenly comes to life, displaying the image of an album cover, across the bottom of which are the words *Begin Again*.

“They started in a pizzeria...”

The image on the monitor changes to an old faded photo of Papa Roni’s.

“...with a singer who was shy to fault...”

The next image is of Emma, ‘sliding’ across a stage, while belting out *Crazy Road*.

“...and a lead guitarist who was determined to make the five of them stars.”

The next image is of Emily, her hair five different colors, on stage, shredding a lead riff.

“When they finally played together...”

Another concert shot fills the monitor – it’s of Stanley and Cadi, facing each other, deep into a performance of *Being Noticed*.

“It was magic.”

The monitor comes to life with a video this time, of *Audio Distortion* the first time they played Staples Center. After a few seconds, the audio stops, but the video continues to play.

“Like many other bands, the five of them have suffered their share of problems and personal disasters over the years, but they always seem to fight their way back...”

The video stops, and is replaced by images of each of their albums.

“Back to each other and... *back to music.*”

After a few seconds, the monitor is again filled by a huge image of the *Begin Again* cover, this time with two large Grammys – large enough the crowd can read the inscriptions indicating what they are for – superimposed over it.

“And out of respect for all of you – their peers and contemporaries – they moved back the start date of their upcoming tour. You see, although the five of them believe music is about the fans, in this case they know it’s *all of you...*”

As the house lights come up and spotlights begin scanning the audience, the remaining members of *Ransom* join Misty center stage.

“...who are bestowing this honor on them tonight,” Misty finishes.

“It’s taken them thirteen years...” one of the kids says.

“An absurd amount of struggle and diligence...” adds another.

“And an extended hiatus,” adds a third.

“But, tonight the members of *Audio Distortion* have, in *our band’s* opinion...” Misty says, and is quickly interrupted by broken and sporadic

applause, whistling, and yells of agreement, “...finally gotten their due.”

The audience again breaks into enthusiastic applause.

“Tonight,” Misty continues, as her band mates line up on each side of her, “the members of the Academy, have allowed the six of us, the honor and privilege, of presenting to all of you, for their *first live performance* of this year’s Song of the Year, *Begin Again*, from this year’s Best Pop Vocal Album of the same name...”

The lights go out, and as the curtain behind the kids begins to rise, six voices are heard as they simultaneously scream...

“AUDIO DISTORTION!”

...which is quickly followed by a thunderous round of applause.

When the lights come up, Emma is sitting on the floor center stage, microphone in hand. Cadi and Emily are on stools behind her – guitars in hand. Sitting on the floor on either side of Emma, are the two cutest little girls you’ve ever seen, each holding a Grammy. The arena falls silent, Stanley starts the background track, Willie joins him on the drums, and Cadi follows with the bass line. The moment Emily strikes her first note, Emma begins singing.

They play *Begin Again*, acoustically, in its entirety, and when they reach the last chorus, Emma holds out her mic, letting Bailey and Melissa, who are now standing on each side of her, sing the last few lines with her.

The very second the last note fades, every single one of the 18,000 people in the Staples Center, is on their feet applauding...

one

EMMA

“I’m not sure the label can support that idea, Emma,” Richard says, looking at me as if I’ve lost my mind.

“Yeah... my boss isn’t crazy about it either,” Stephen – our road producer – is quick to add. “Too many things that *could* go wrong...”

“Emma,” Richard says hesitantly, “it’s far better not to start, than to end up cancelling...”

“Guys... *seriously*. I’m *pregnant* – not terminally ill for crying out loud.” I pause and look right at Richard. “And *that* wasn’t even fair, and you know it...”

Richard blushes a bit, and quickly picks up some papers off his desk. I know inside, that it was the ‘manager’ in him that generated the comment about the first tour.

“And, just for the record, *both my doctors* say that, if done in moderation, a tour isn’t out of the question.”

Richard, Stephen, and our engineer, Terri, all turn and look at Stanley.

“Yeah, right. Like any of you think for a second, she’ll listen to me?”

Cadi and Emily are both trying their best not to laugh.

“How many shows?” Richard asks, slowly shaking his head.

Willie stands up, grins at him, and hands him a printed spreadsheet of our plan.

“We figure each Friday, from the beginning of May through the first week of August. If any of the venues want second shows, we’ll see if we can pull off Saturdays as well. Our fan base isn’t what it was...”

Everyone hears Terri mumble, “*yeah, you wish*”, right in the middle of Emily’s explanation. When we all turn to look at her, she blushes bright red.

“Anyhow,” Emily continues, “we’re figuring single dates at each location, and a total of twelve locations. We intend to limit each show to twelve songs – which works out to about an hour or so, and leaves us some time to mess with the crowd. Emma,” she turns and looks at me, “says she can handle that.”

“*And you*,” Richard says, raising his voice a bit, and pointing directly at me, “*will not* be doing that silly ‘slide’ thing – *understood?*”

Everyone cracks up, and Willie says, “We have the kids for that, Rick...”

“*You what?*”

“We’re taking the girls, Richard – and Georgia is going to watch them. Is that a problem?” I ask.

Looking completely dumbfounded, he shakes his head, and mutters, “If it will keep *you* from jumping around on stage...”

Again, everyone laughs.

“Have you picked the venues yet?” Stephen asks, scribbling notes on a pad in his lap.

“We’re going to let the fans decide...” Cadi says, grinning.

Simultaneously, Stephen and Richard say, “*You’re what?*” and again, make everyone laugh.

“We’re going to put the word out that we plan to go on tour again, and then let the fans decide where we’ll play, based on input on our website,” Cadi says.

“*Oh how totally cool!*” Terri blurts out, also writing in a notebook. “The twelve places with the most votes are where you do the shows.”

“Exactly,” Emily adds.

Again, Richard shakes his head, in total disbelief.

“You guys are still a bunch of nut cases... I swear.” He turns, looks at Terri and Stephen, and asks, “Well?”

“From an engineering standpoint,” Terri says, “it’s easily doable. Steve?” She turns and looks at him.

“If we stick to the smaller venues, I don’t see a problem with production.”

“So...” I say, glancing at each person in the room, then locking eyes with Richard, “is our label going to support *Audio Distortion’s fourth tour?*”

As Richard looks around the room at each of us, he gets a strange little twinkle in his eyes. He looks down at the spreadsheet he’s still holding, then back at us.

“You know... Donna was right...”

“About?” Emily asks.

“With the five of you, from the day this started, it’s *always* been about the music... *and your fans...*”

He lays the sheet of paper on his desk, takes a deep breath, and stands up.

“I only have one more question...”

“And that is?” I ask, not even trying to hide the big, silly grin on my face.

“Can I come?”

TWO

EMMA

I never gave Stanley a chance to propose – instead, I took Georgia’s idea and made it happen. First, I asked Logan for a copy of Stan’s birth certificate, then sent it, and the other required documents, to Leonard. He had everything processed for me, and even reserved a time for the Justice of the Peace at the courthouse, to perform a civil ceremony.

Using the excuse Emily needed us for something, I told Stan we needed to go to Tahoe. He of course, never questioned it. Well... not until we pulled up in front of the courthouse on the Nevada side of town...

Once he figured out what I – with the help of our friends – was up to, he jumped right in. His dad and Logan met us at the courthouse, and Mr. Campbell gave Stan a set of rings he personally picked out – simple, slim, platinum bands, with our names inside them – and they’re perfect.

Cadi and Emily spent the hour before we arrived, wandering around Reno, talking to people. If someone recognized them, they would ask them if they wanted to attend a wedding. Of course the moment they found out *who* was getting married... well, you get the idea.

We were walking down the hall, headed for the room where the ceremony was going to be, when I found our photographer. He looked to be about fifteen or sixteen years old, and was making adjustments to a large Nikon digital camera that was in his lap. I asked him if he was any good with his camera, and he immediately started showing me

photos – turns out he just photographed his older brother's wedding, and was waiting for them to finish the paperwork. I asked if he wanted to make a couple hundred bucks, and he looked totally confused.

“Ma’am, I’ll do it for free... it’s really not all that hard,” he offered, a sheepish little grin on his face.

I laughed, told him to follow me, and sent Cadi to tell his brother where he’d gone.

The ceremony – now that was amazing. Stanley opened the door to the room it was to be held in, and we found about a hundred people waiting for us. I almost burst into tears. It was the most diverse group of people I think I’ve ever seen – families, teenagers, older folks, and a bunch of little kids. Seems our *fans*, span generations...

The part that actually made me cry – Mr. Campbell brought his mother, and in lieu of Grams, she gave me away. All in all, it was the best wedding I could have ever hoped for.

Oh... and our photographer? He definitely knows his way around a camera. The images were amazing! Stanley ended up giving him an envelope with five one hundred dollar bills in it, which he immediately stuck in his pocket. What I’d give to have seen his face later, when he opened it. After it was over, I pulled him aside, and we had a discussion about the photos.

“I’m hoping that should you decide to sell them, it will be to someone respectable...”

“*What?*” he blurted out, looking totally shocked.

“People are going to offer you a lot of money for them,” I said in response. “You’re the only person with photos of our wedding...”

“Are you famous or something?” he asked, as he changed the memory card in the camera, and to my

complete surprise, handed me the one with our photos on it.

“She’s Emma Greene,” his new sister-in-law – still in her cute little wedding dress – said, as she walked up behind us. “And the guy she married is Stanley Campbell.”

“They’re in *Audio Distortion*,” her new husband said, stopping next to her. “You, little brother, just photographed the wedding of two of pop music’s biggest superstars.”

When the kid looked back at me, I swear, I thought he was going to faint – even if he had no idea who we were...

“Well... be assured *you* will get full credit for the photos when our record company releases them to the press. You ready to be famous?”

I got his name and address, and the names of his parents, and promised to send him – and his sister-in-law – signed copies of all our CDs.

Two weeks later, Stanley and I were on the covers of almost every tabloid in the country, and even made the third page in *Rolling Stone*.

And... every single image that was printed had the words ‘*Photograph by Roland Cruz*’ prominently displayed across it.