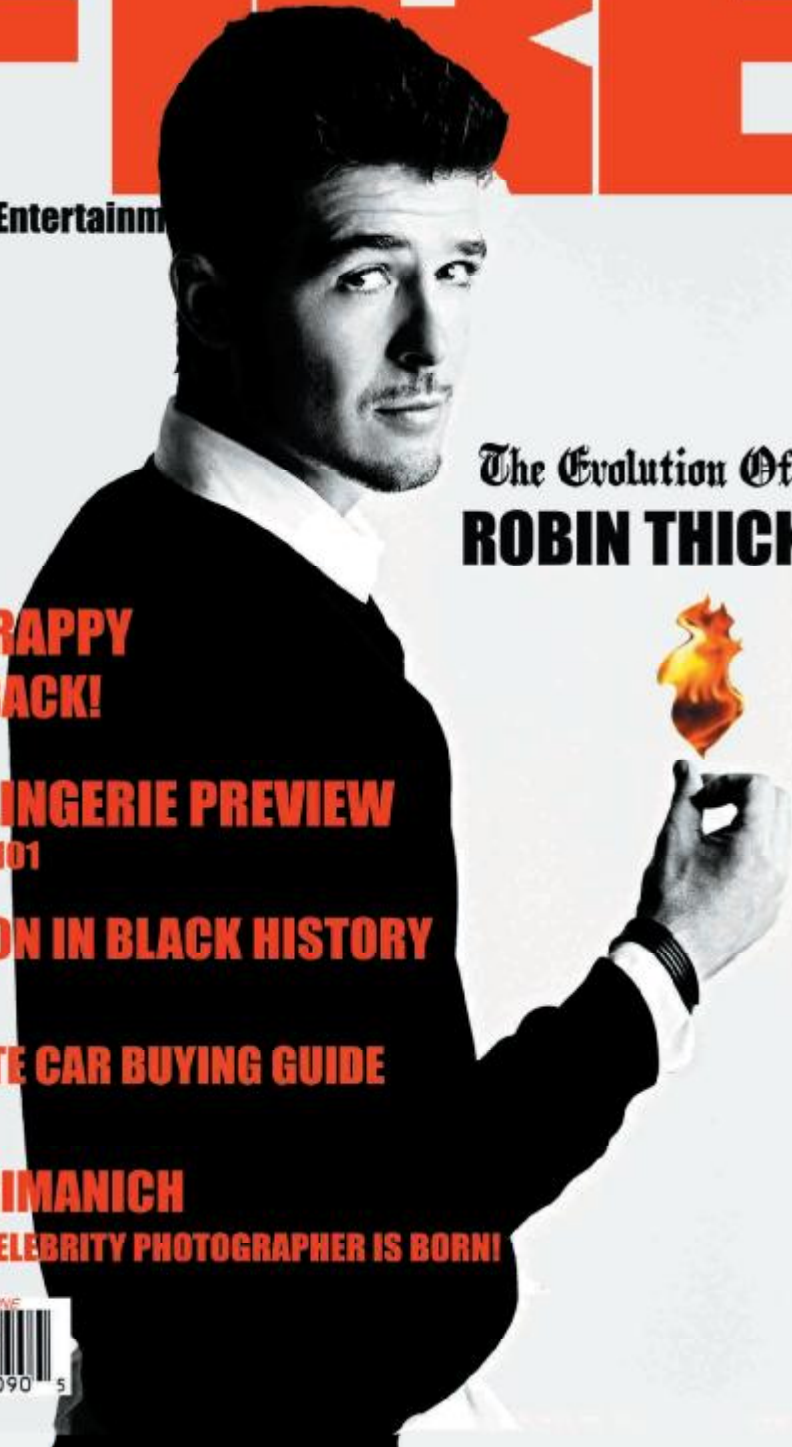


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# BRIAN RAY

BY Adam Bernard



**B**rian Ray has led a fascinating musical life. His resume includes being Paul McCartney's guitarist, bassist and backup vocalist, spending 14 years as Etta James's musical director and guitarist, and sharing stages with the likes of Keith Richards, Santana, Joe Cocker, Bonnie Raitt, John Lee Hooker and Bo Diddley. Ray has also worked with Shakira, The Bangles, and Adam Cohen and collaborated with Peter Frampton and Rita Coolidge. In addition to all this Ray has penned a long list of famous songs, including co-writing Smokey Robinson's "One Heartbeat." Finally Ray has released his own album, *Mondo Magneto*, and recently he sat down with us to talk about working with so many legends, playing the Super Bowl, and bumping the president from an elevator.

**Talk to me about *Mondo Magneto*, your resume is just gigantic in terms of the artists you've worked with, what can people expect from you as a solo artist?**

I don't think that people really know what to expect because I spent 14 years with Etta James so they think oh, he's going to be a rootsy guy, right? Then I've been playing with Paul McCartney for four years so OK, he's going to be a Brit-Pop guy, right? I guess you look at my background and I'm from the states. I'm from Glendale, California and was raised in sort of the hot period of rock n roll. The 60's was what I was raised on so I guess my music is informed by all those things, by the kind of music that brought me to Etta James, that excited me about music in the mid-60's, and the Brit-Pop stuff. I think that people come with a lot of curiosity but they don't really know what I'm gonna bring. I guess my music is somewhere between all those things, it's rock with a pop sensibility but it's informed by rhythm and blues and blues music that formed rock n roll.

**I want to go through some of the names here on the list of people that you've worked with and I want you to tell me what it was like working with them. We can start with Paul McCartney. What's it been like working with a Beatle?**

It's amazing. There are nights where we're on stage together, one night in particular where we had just gotten footlights installed on the stage. We had been without them up to this point and were in the middle of the show. I look over at Paul and he's wearing like a purple sorta Nehru collared sport coat and he's looking like he's 25 and the footlights are on and I'm like what does this remind me of? I said oh my God this looks just like Shea Stadium. I'm standing here next to Paul fucking McCartney and it just gave me goosebumps in that moment. Then there are other moments, like the first day of rehearsal with them. We plugged in to play our first song with him which I think was "Hello Goodbye" and just the buzz of hearing his voice come through the monitors on a song that is in all of our DNA by now was quite a thrill.



**Were you friends before? I'm guessing he didn't put out a personal ad that said "Needs New Band Members." Yeah, please come down to the YMCA for tryouts.**

Ya know what, I got the call through Abe Laboriel Jr., the drummer. Abe and I had been playing in France for years with a couple of different French artists and when Abe got the call to do Paul's Driving Rain record I was really excited for him and expressed to him that if they were looking for another guy I'd love a shot at that. He apparently just went over to David Kahne, the producer of Driving Rain, and let him know that I would be a good call for that to play guitar, lead guitar, bass, acoustic and sing. David Kahne gave me a call and said hey we're gonna go do the Super Bowl, 2002, to do one song, would you be willing to come down to my office and meet with me and see if this might be a good fit? So that's what happened. I went down, talked to him, it felt really good, he said hey I have a good feeling about this, I'm going to put your name for it and I got a call the next day saying can you be on a plane tomorrow to go to New Orleans to do the Super Bowl? I got to hang out in New Orleans and I had the inside track on the tour and I then got the tour.



**So hit me with your best Super Bowl story.**

We're leaving out skybox after having played the pre-game show and having watched the game in our little skybox and now we're being escorted out by security right at the end of the game and we're getting in this big elevator and the security holds back a crowd to give us priority on this elevator and in the crowd, being held back so that we can get on the elevator was George Bush senior. We out-heavied George Bush senior to the elevator!

**BRIAN**

**Damn, that's real celebrity! Now you've done two Super Bowls, 2002 and 2004. Why didn't you show your breasts at either one?**

And I have the jewelry, too. I was ready man. I have some shit going on you wouldn't believe.



**From rock to R&B, what was it like writing with Smokey Robinson?**

Man it's like you write a song, you write a bunch of average songs, you write a couple of crap songs and I was writing every day like my life depended on it. It was a job even though I wasn't yet being paid for it really, and then we wrote a song. We submitted it to Smokey for his approval, and long story short we submitted it on a Friday and we got a call that Sunday saying Smokey loved the song, we're gonna cut it Thursday, come on in and bring your gear. To get that kind of a boost when we'd been writing for three years was really stunning, but we really aimed that lyric and that song and that melody right for him, it was written just for him and it's just really pleasing when something like that hits its mark and you're recognized for it.

**RAY**

**Working with all these different artists how much have you been able to take in, then put out and have it sound good?**

Well you know what, I don't really consider all of those people and all of those years and all of those gigs and records did when I go to write my own stuff. It just becomes a part of a gumbo inside of you that then informs your work as you write. You don't even realize that something is coming out that was informed by Paul McCartney until it's out on the table and on the tape recorder. For instance I wrote a song on the new record called All I Know and it's about a guy who's a real player who finds he really doesn't know much of anything because he's now met his match and she has proven to him that he doesn't know shit. "All I know is that I don't know" is the hook and when I finished writing this song it all came out in about 40 minutes at home writing on a guitar and a pad and paper and a tape recorder, I listened to it back and I went where did that come from, it's just so different than the kind of melody I would usually write. It's then that I realized that it was really from being around Paul McCartney and his influence on me melodically. He's such a melodic guy and somehow, through osmosis that seeped into my own creativity to be an influence on my own writing. But you don't really realize it until later. When I'm writing for myself I just try to come from some place genuine inside of me. Some kind of experience, some kind of hurt, some kind of joy, or some kind of narrative. Some kind of topical songwriting as well.





Dale

Resteghini

By Adam Bernard

**I**f you've turned on any music video channel in the past three years you've probably seen some of Dale Resteghini's work. Whether you're a Hip-Hopper who's seen his videos for Lil' Wayne, or various members of The Diplomats and The Lox, or you're a headbanger who's enjoyed his work with Hatebreed and Anthrax, Resteghini's work has found its way to your senses. Recently we sat down with the famed director to talk about his path to where he is today, his unique way of making even the most cliché scenes different, and how much work really goes into creating a music video.

***First off hit me with some background info. Tell everyone about how you got your start in this business.***

I started out with a very humble beginning as a non-union actor in Boston. I worked my way up to getting my union card for acting and I moved to New York City in 94. I started working as a production assistant on TV shows and films and then I eventually decided I wanted to write my own screenplay and direct a film. Actually I just wanted to write and star in it because I didn't know how to direct and when I didn't get the kind of funding that one needs to make a film I decided the hell with it, I'm going to do it myself. That's when Raging Nation Films was born and my alias, Rage.

***I noticed you've worked with everyone from Fallout Boy to Anthrax to Jadakiss. How do you go about mapping out videos for such radically different genres of music?***

It's a combination of me not being closed-minded and also exploring the song and then the community of people that buy that song. It's kinda like doing some detective work. I want to find the hook in the song and I wanna find out why people like this song or this artist, and that's what I grab on to and that lets me go ahead and be effective telling a video story.

***Music videos have almost become cliché at this point. We all know what we're going to get from a specific artist depending on the genre they're in. What do you do to avoid falling into the pitfalls of cliché?***

That's sometimes tough because the major labels, want input since they are paying for the video most of the time, and even the artists themselves. A lot of these artists grew up watching the artists who were big 5, 10, 15 years ago, or the kids on the block, they grew up wanting to have the hot car and the hot girls. In Hip-Hop in general the stuff that sells the most deals with being as flashy as you can be. For the most part, 70% of the labels want them to follow that general rule of having as much bling as you can get on the screen; flashy cars, jets, the clubs and just really depicting a certain kind of lifestyle for the kids who go and want to buy this music. My take on it, and why I think I'm having some success, is I bring a different element to it. If we're gonna be in a club, or on a certain block, my approach to lighting it and the lenses I use, it comes from a different tone, it's more of a rock edge. Visually I need to set myself apart from other directors.

***You've moved up the ladder fairly quickly in this business, building your resume in only three years. How did you manage to do that?***

In this business, like anything else, there is nepotism and if you don't have it you have to create it on your own merit and hard work and I didn't know anybody. I literally have worked seven days a week for the last three and a half years to get to where I am. I see weekends as getting in the way, I see holidays as getting in the way. I spent the first year going to every metal and rock show within a hundred miles of where I lived. When it was clear to me that everybody in Hip-Hop kept saying the same song and dance, such and such is our fam and so and so is our people, I said let me break in on the rock and metal side. I was hired to shoot the Tattoo The Earth tour. On that tour I met a lot of different bands and the first video I did was in 2003 for Jamey Jasta (of Hatebreed) who is in a genre of music called Hardcore. With that one video in hand in 2003 I was able to go to various metal-fests and metal labels and I started to get work from that. My first year I did 13 videos, then in 2004 I did 65, in 2005 I did about 95 and this year we've done about 70. I recently signed with a company called FM Rocks, one of the top production companies in all of music videos.

***Do you have bigger feature film aspirations?***

When I got into directing I was around 25 years old. I never went to film school. The school of thought is that you have to go to film school and then get into the business and do short films. When you're 26, in a relationship, and you're trying to decide what you want to do with your life there's no time for doing a short film because there's no revenue stream in a short film. Perhaps there is today via the web, but in 97? The DVD was just a brand new skew. I basically came up wanting to do features and my film school was growing up working on sets. When I make my film I want to be like the big guys, I don't want to be just one room and tell the story twenty different ways and just keep rearranging furniture and have it look low budget. I emulate film makers like Michael Mann, Tony Scott, Ridley Scott, Peter Jackson and Steven Spielberg. I enjoy big popcorn type of films, that's what I aspire to do. There are a couple of projects that are on the table from me right now that are in the 5-10 and 10-15 million dollar range, but then that's a whole nether game, too. Once you've achieved one level of success in one medium like music videos then pretty soon the studio looks to see who is next.

***Then they ask you to make another version of Belly.***

No no. It's unfortunately that someone as talented as Hype Williams had a non-success with his first film because you very rarely get a second chance. But if you can make the transition like F. Gary Grey, Brett Ratner, when you're able to have a huge crossover success you can pretty much write your ticket for the next 10-15 years so I'm going to be very selective of what I do and make sure I'm surrounded by the right kind of people.

***For more on Dale Resteghini check him out at [myspace.com/ragination](http://myspace.com/ragination)***

