

NAMING THE BAND

A
SHORT PLAY
BY
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CAST

PERSON #1 – Guitars, vocals.

PERSON #2 – Drums.

PERSON #3 – Bass.

PERSON #4 – Keyboards.

NOTE: Although the characters refer to themselves as ‘he’ and use male names in the play, they can all be played by male or female actors. Female names may be substituted for the male names at the end.

TIME

The present.

SETTING

A small, open space: a garage, an attic. The type of place where a band would practice. Chairs. Maybe instruments, maybe not.

AT RISE

Music playing. The four band members are on stage, gathered in their space. They could be tuning up, or just sitting and writing lyrics, or smoking. They are comfortable here together. They acknowledge the audience all throughout the play.

(PERSON #1 steps forward.)

PERSON #1

What’s the first thing someone asks when they meet you? They ask for your name. (Pause.) Why that? Why not your birthplace? Your job? Hobbies? Giving someone your name tells them nothing. Right?

(Beat.)

Although I’ve always had problems with guys named Bradley. What does that mean?

(Beat.)

So I’m standing here again, the booking manager is looking at me. He’s waiting. He’s holding a pencil in one hand, over his calendar. And he’s asking me, what are you guys called? And like every time, I have to answer honestly, so I say, well, we’re a band...

PERSON #2

We were a band!

PERSON #3

We were a band.

PERSON #4

We WERE a band.

PERSON #1

Right. We were a band. And the music came easy. For most bands, the music is the hardest part.

PERSON #2

But not us!

PERSON #3

We fuckin' rocked!

PERSON #4

By my count, we had six albums worth of songs. Plus one B-sides.

PERSON #2

And a Greatest Hits.

PERSON #1

I would tell the managers that we were a band, a prolific band, but we didn't have a name!

PERSON #2

We did! We were The Detroit Funky Galore.

PERSON #3

No, we were Thumbtack Strumpet.

PERSON #4

All wrong. At our first gig we billed ourselves as Dumpster Haven. And everyone loved it!

PERSON #1

So what do I say to the manager? How hard is it to name a band? Really, how hard is it? After all, great bands have gotten away with calling themselves The Band or The The. What the hell? HOW HARD IS IT TO NAME A FUCKING BAND! (Beat.) But I digress.

PERSON #2

There's a band name: Fucking Digression.

PERSON #1

The problem was, we all had personal connections to different names. And no one wants to give up something personal. (Points at PERSON #2.) His dad, for instance, preached at First Avenue Methodist over on, ironically, Second Avenue. He wanted to call the band –

PERSON #2

Crystal Methodism.

PERSON #1

(Points at PERSON #3.) His mother, on the hand, came from Syria, and he always felt a deeply profound connection to his roots:

PERSON #3

Falafel Basement.

PERSON #1

(Pointing at PERSON #4.) And he was a shallow philosopher and shallower politician:

PERSON #4

McCarthy's Chi.

PERSON #1

Me, I always voted for The Tee-Ball Pitcher.

PERSON #2

Lame.

PERSON #3

Stupid.

PERSON #4

Insignificant.

PERSON #1

But was overruled by the intelligentsia. (Beat.) For a while we dabbled in number names, inspired by another local band, Stigma 17. We were...

PERSON #2

Scientific 88.

PERSON #3

Malkovich-Point-Five.

PERSON #4

Prisoner 6.

PERSON #1

But that has to be taken.

PERSON #2

Tungsten 11.

February 30. PERSON #3

Alf 18. PERSON #4

PERSON #1
And what about those bands that feature the front man in their name? Echo and the Bunnymen, Hootie and the Blowfish, Kenny Rogers and the Final Edition. We tried that. We shouldn't have.

PERSON #2
Don and the Chevy Cavaliers.

PERSON #3
Rocketboy and the Aging Babies.

PERSON #4
Steakcheese and the Absolute Chunk-Chunks.

PERSON #1
You see what I mean. (Beat.) Of course, there's always the tact of naming yourself after a famous person:

PERSON #2
Gregory Peck.

PERSON #3
Norman Bates.

(They try to trump each other.)

PERSON #2
Donald Trump.

PERSON #3
Haley Joel Osment.

PERSON #2
Tom Cruise.

PERSON #3
Han Solo.

PERSON #2
Michael Keaton.

Gertrude Stein. PERSON #3

Sally Ride. PERSON #2

Pete Rose. PERSON #3

William Randolph Hearst. PERSON #2

(Laying down the trump card.) Angela Lansbury. PERSON #4

(Lets it hang.)

PERSON #1
I'm not gonna lie to you... we almost were Angela Lansbury. (Beat.) But no, the names kept coming. We wrote long lists, hung them on the walls. They kept coming... but they never stuck.

Torpid Magneto. PERSON #2

Symbolic Aroma. PERSON #3

Cat Sick. PERSON #4

Rambunctious Freak. PERSON #2

They kept coming. From the classical... PERSON #1

Telemachus Rex. PERSON #2

Baby Dionysus. PERSON #3

Menelaus Overdrive. PERSON #4

To the universal...	PERSON #1
Orion's Bible Belt.	PERSON #2
Estrella's Pâté.	PERSON #3
Pluto's Revenge.	PERSON #4
To the pseudo-scientific...	PERSON #1
Acetylene Candy.	PERSON #2
Donkasaurus.	PERSON #3
Trapezoid.	PERSON #4
To the... well, just plain weird.	PERSON #1
Sodium Tile.	PERSON #2
Screaming Ditch Hogs.	PERSON #3
Lesbian Seagull.	PERSON #4
Uncle Box.	PERSON #1
Adult Poncho.	PERSON #2
Artificial Ism.	PERSON #3

PERSON #1
And my personal favorite...

PERSON #4
Spank Wagon!

PERSON #1
How do some bands do it? How does it work?

PERSON #2
Everyone knows, they get the name from one good song.

PERSON #3
No no no it takes months of arguing.

PERSON #4
Or someone just says it one night.

PERSON #1
There's no formula to naming yourself. We made lists, we played songs, we argued constantly. (Beat.) I think that part of naming yourself... part of making yourself known... is that you have to own up to what you are. Which means you have to take a good look at yourself and decide.

PERSON #2
Sometimes that's hard to do.

PERSON #3
I think we should change our name at every show.

PERSON #4
If you name something, you give it beginning.

PERSON #1
And an end. If the band never existed in the first place, we could never break up.

PERSON #2
What about Studebaker Phil?

PERSON #3
School Bus Riot?

PERSON #4
File Cabinet Jock Town?

PERSON #1

Sometimes, though, being temporary can be a good thing. When there's something worth forgetting, or at least not worth dwelling on. (Pointing at PERSON #3.) For one night only, he named us An Evening Dead. This name sprung directly from news that his (Pointing at PERSON #2.) sister had died in a car crash. We all knew her. She was just a year behind us in school. We mourned her by improvising a slow dirge for six hours.

PERSON #3

Mostly because none of us knew what to say.

PERSON #1

We played until the garage door light went out, then we kept playing in the dark. Since then, we've written eight –

PERSON #4

Seven.

PERSON #1

Eight songs about her. (Referencing PERSON #4.) He says seven, but we know his song "Autumn Green" is about her.

PERSON #4

It's not.

PERSON #1

(Beat. To audience.) It is.

PERSON #2

I know why we didn't choose a name. Because we would have broken up.

PERSON #3

We did choose a name. And that's why we broke up.

PERSON #4

We broke up because we ALMOST chose a name.

PERSON #2

Over our worst suggestion yet:

PERSON #3

Four Guitars and Drums.

PERSON #4

It sounded marketable.

PERSON #1
Although there's only two guitars.

PERSON #2
And drums.

PERSON #4
And keyboards.

PERSON #3
But it worked.

PERSON #2
It kinda worked.

PERSON #4
It sorta worked.

PERSON #1
It worked on some level. We argued over a name as stupid as Four Guitars and Drums. After years of Lucado Tomato...

PERSON #2
Hurricane Donkey Wax.

PERSON #3
Ballistic Grassland.

PERSON #4
Tubular High-Rise.

PERSON #1
After years of that, we didn't name the band. So you see, we were never quite defined. No beginning, no end. And sometimes things are just like that. And it's better. When you focus the microscope too sharply, it takes away some of the mystery. So... I don't feel the need to name everything.

(Beat.)

I'm Adam, by the way.

PERSON #2
I'm Brian.

PERSON #3
I'm Carl.

PERSON #4

I'm Dave.

PERSON #1

I usually end up telling the manager that he can call us that. Adam, Brian, Dave, and Carl. At least we have that to go by.

PERSON #2

We have the names our parents gave us.

PERSON #3

Which raises an important question...

PERSON #4

Do we name ourselves?

PERSON #1

Or does someone name us?

END OF PLAY.