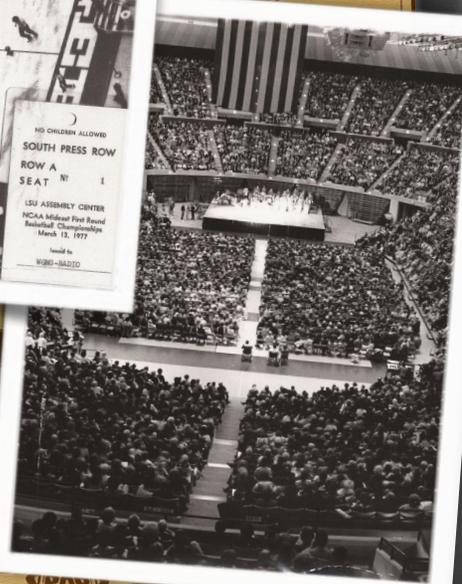
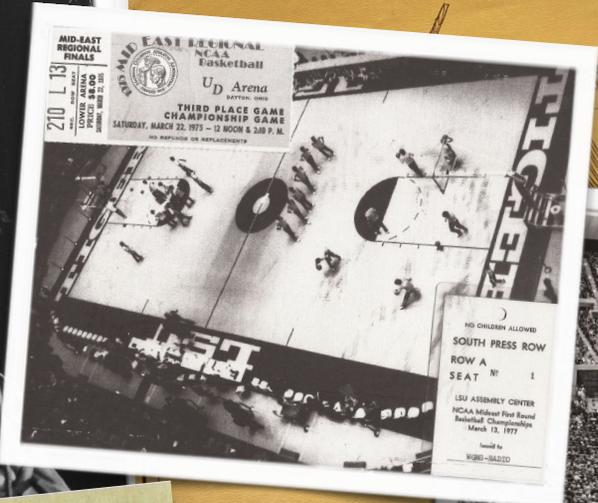
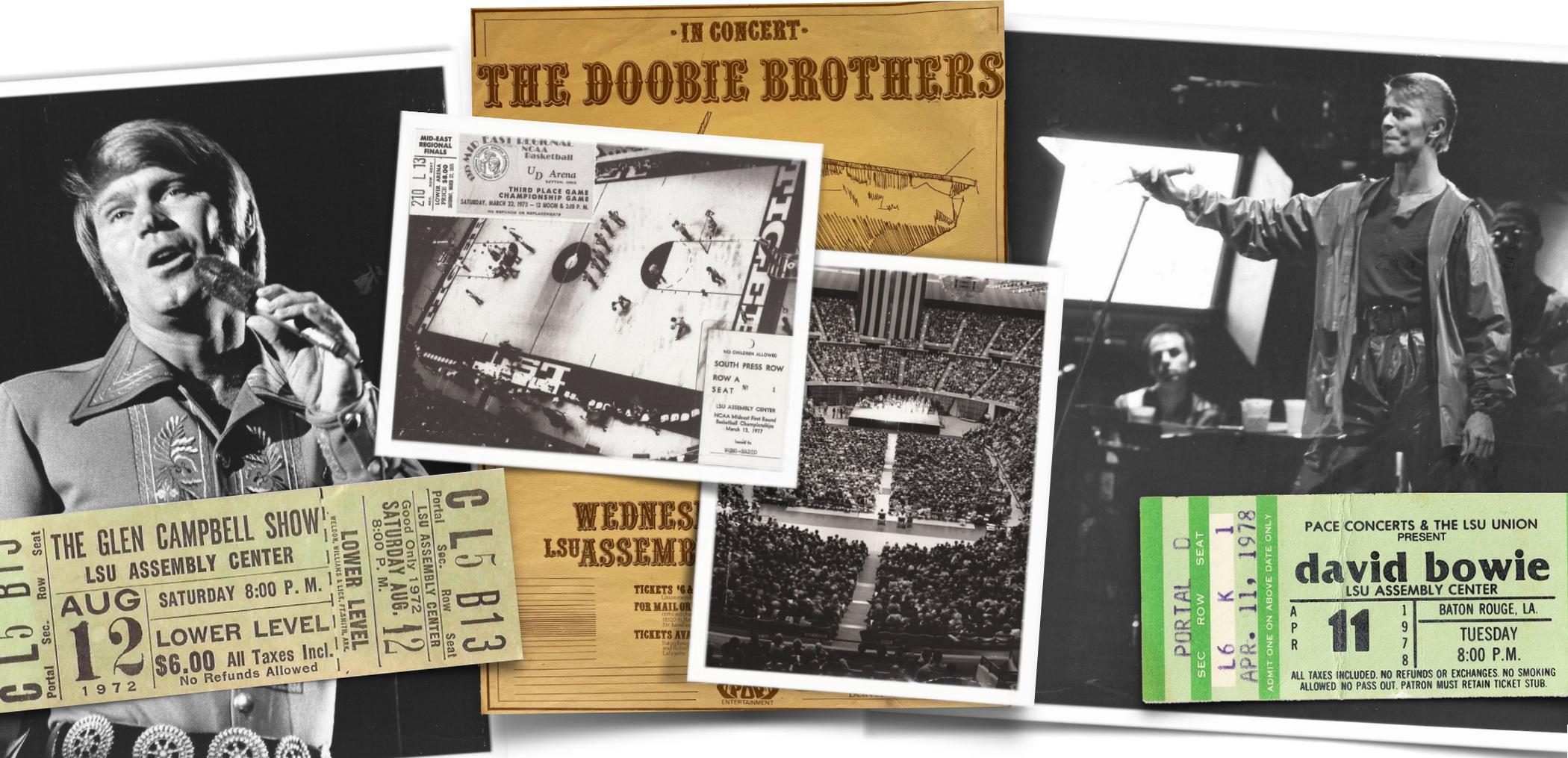


# A MULTI-PURPOSE ARENA

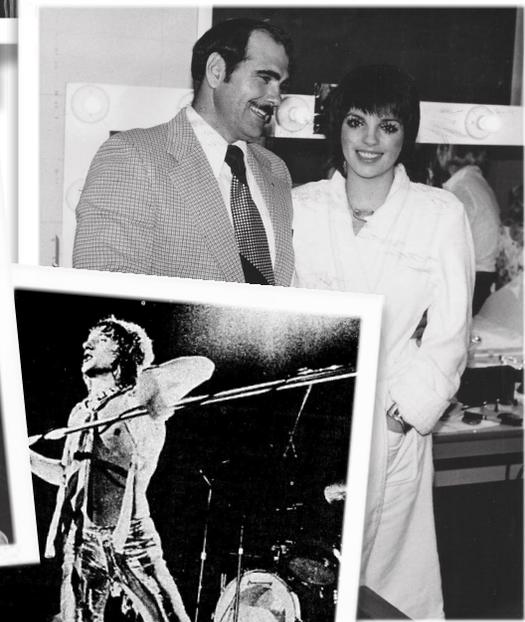
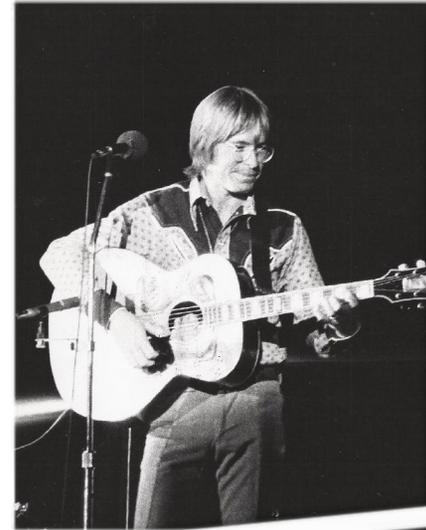
Now, on to the purpose for and use of the Assembly Center determined in this order of priority: Commencement, athletics, University and State large gatherings, select social gatherings, and entertainment. Although the first four are mentioned (and will be covered in more detail later), the main purpose featured deals with “The Greatest Shows on Earth” - performers and acts that played the Assembly Center during the years 1972 to 1982 when the International Association of Auditorium Managers named the ASSEMBLY CENTER as one of AMERICA’S TOP TEN MULTI-PURPOSE ARENAS.



## ENTERTAINMENT

It's this use of the building that I intend to spend the greater portion of the book telling you about because, frankly, they are the most interesting. I have intermingled a story or two about non-entertainer events that I feel you might enjoy, but in large the stories are about musical entertainers who topped the charts and played the Assembly Center between 1972 and 1982. Some of them you may remember and some you may never have heard of before. I hope the stories of their performances will either bring back memories or give you an insight into a time in history when superstars including Olivia Newton-John, The Jackson 5, Rod Stewart, Neil Diamond, Earth, Wind and Fire, Lawrence Welk, Billy Joel, John Denver, Loretta Lynn, Pink Floyd, Elvis, Tina Turner, The Who, Elton John, George Harrison, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Bruce Springsteen, Liza, and even the cast from the national TV show "Happy Days" dominated popular culture.

Before I get into their stories, allow me to tell you the procedures used in locating, booking, preparing for, and staging a show for a popular performer or act during the seventies and early eighties.



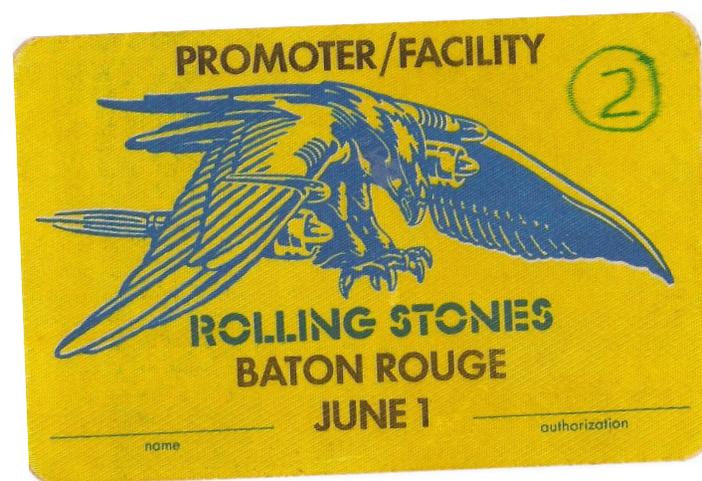
## FROM BOOKING 'TIL THE FAT LADY SINGS

Before I tell you about events that took place in the Assembly Center between 1972 and 1982, I'll explain the sequences that took place once it was decided to book an event - all the way until the house lights came back on, the curtain came down, the final whistle blew, or as the old saying goes in show business, the fat lady sings.

When I accepted the position as Director of the Assembly Center, unfortunately, the job did not come with a manual. In fact, it did not even come with a job description. I was the first person on campus to ever hold the title and one of the few in the nation at the time. Multi-purpose buildings mixing entertainment with sports was a very new concept, especially on college campuses. Most of those buildings had not been designed for entertainment and traveling shows found them hard to use. In addition, it was difficult to find dates between athletic events that would fit into a planned entertainer's tour. Not to mention, the acoustics

were generally horrible. The Assembly Center was different. It was built for both athletics and entertainment. My job was to book both, and it had the greatest acoustics of any building of its size in the United States.

Because my job was to make the two live in harmony, the administration of the building was wisely placed under the Dean of Student Affairs. As a Director in that division of the University, I held the same level of position as the Director of Athletics and was able to stand toe to toe with him. Fortunately, the AD was Carl Maddox (for whom I previously worked)

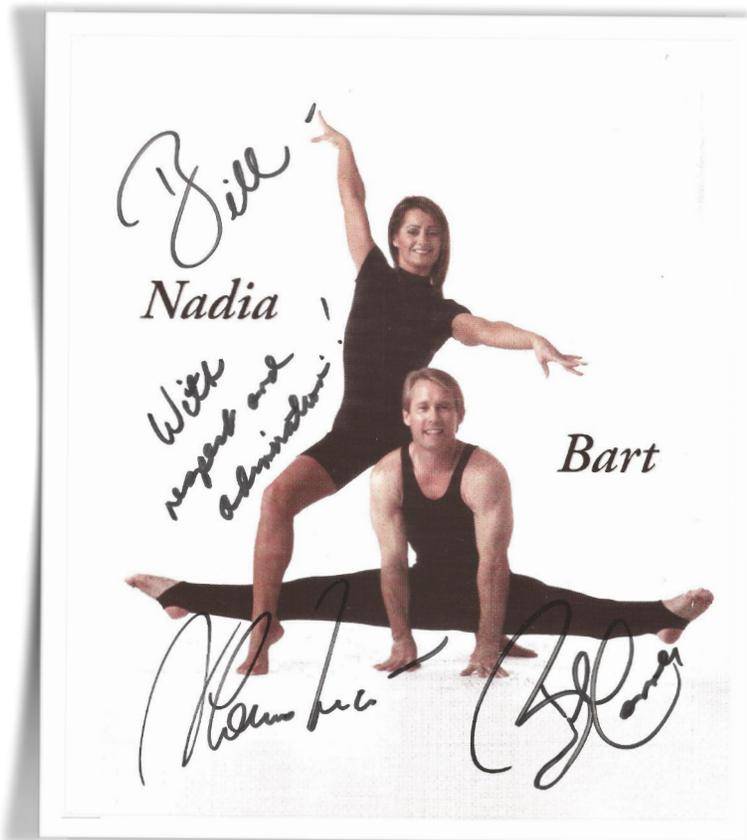


and was one of the greatest people I've ever known. We certainly had our differences, but he tried every way possible to

make my job work. I was also fortunate that the Head Basketball Coach, Dale Brown, was very supportive and worked with me every step along the way. Like Carl, a true gentleman and friend. The other sports that competed in the arena - Women's Basketball, Volleyball, Gymnastics, and Wrestling - all followed Dale's lead, developing their home schedules far enough ahead of time so that I could work around them. They understood that I always had priority over their practice schedule. Fortunately, there was a practice gymnasium in the building for Basketball and the other sports teams seldom needed to practice in the arena.

Because of the delay in constructing the building, I had time to develop the policies and procedures for use of the Assembly Center. In fact, I spent so much time and effort on these that the manual became the basis for my Doctoral Dissertation, which I submitted prior to receiving my Doctorate in Education in 1975. My dissertation title, "Administrative Policies and Procedures for Large Multi-Purpose

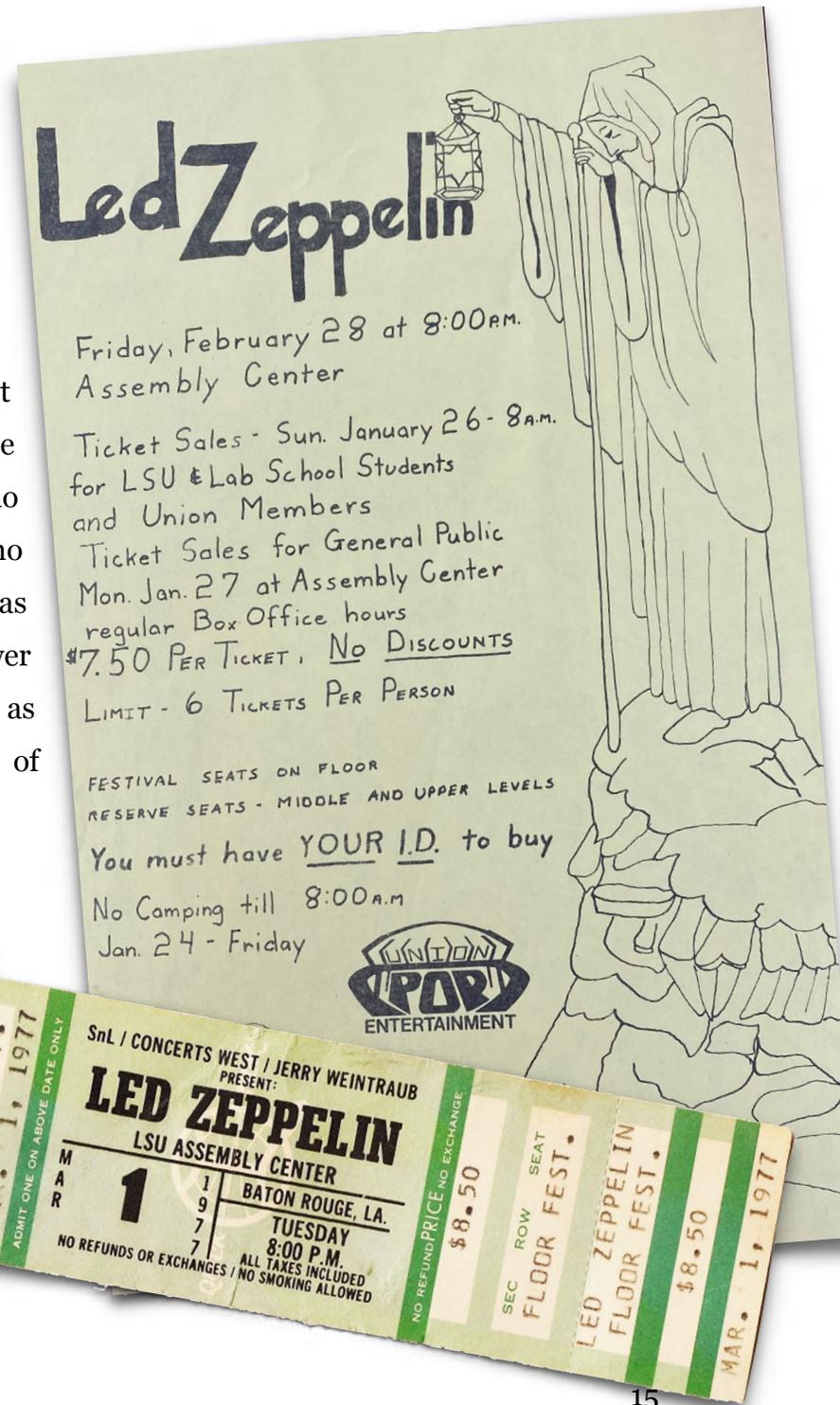
Arenas on University Campuses", was accepted by the International Auditorium Managers Association as instructions for administering a new facility and was used by several facility directors and building managers in writing their own policies and procedures. Unfortunately, one of the things I didn't know at the time and did not cover in those procedures was the art of booking an event, especially shows that were currently on the road - what it took to play the building and stage their



production from start to finish. Or, as stated above, “until the fat lady sings”. I learned it as I directed the facility while flying by the seat of my pants.

Actually, the booking of an act is not the start of the process. You first have to decide what is popular (in my case, with the student body and the city population). This was very different back in the '70s. There was no Google or Wikipedia. In fact, most individuals like myself had no computers at all. The University had computers, but they were as big as most rooms and worked on a punch card system. You might get the answer to your question overnight. We depended on trade magazines such as *Rolling Stone*, *Billboard*, *Record World*, or *Cashbox*. Also, by word of mouth.

In my case, I was very lucky that the University Student Union Entertainment Committee stayed current on acts that were popular and whom the students would like to see. Some of the trade magazines, in addition to ranking acts and giving information on their lives, talked about their planned tours. This was generally confirmed by calls from promoters trying to put together the tours. In addition to these methods, I made it a point to stay in touch with other building

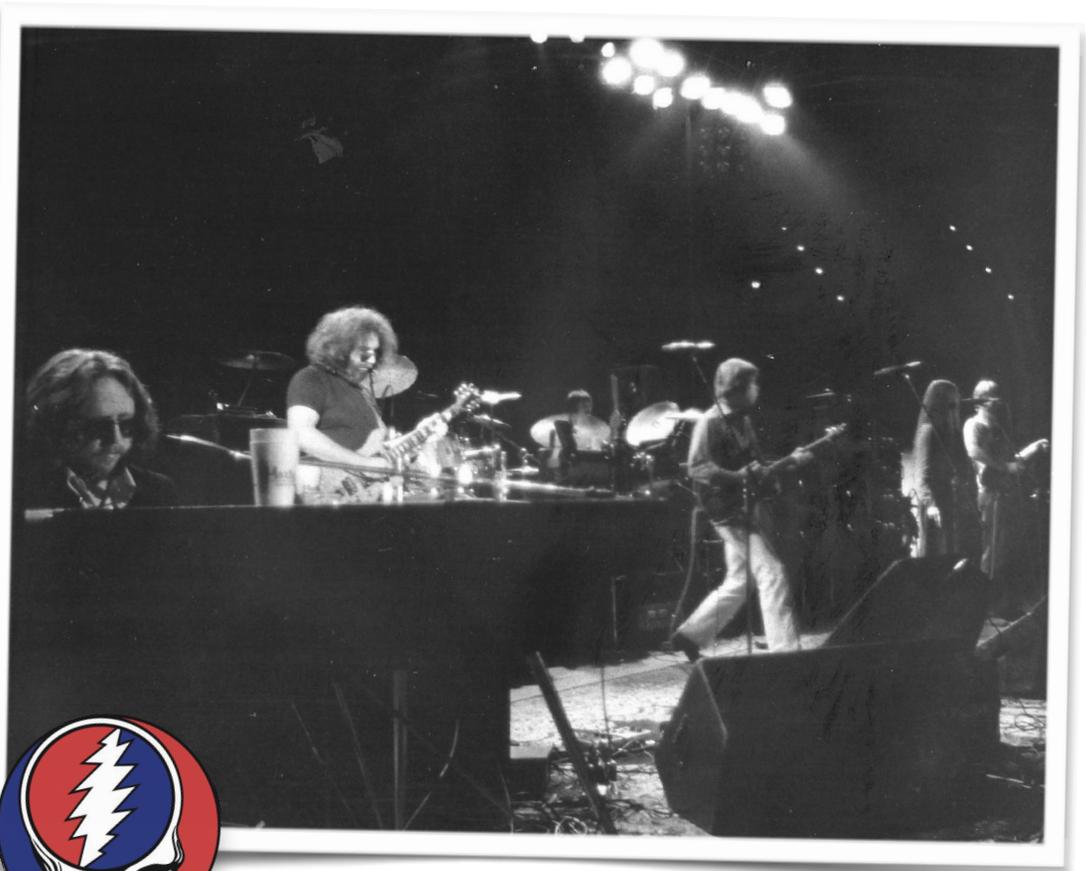


directors and managers. They let me know what acts were to play or had played their facility and how the ones that had played drew spectators. Most importantly, how they worked with the building staff. The latter was very important at the time because many of the rock acts were banned from returning to a facility because of their behavior. I was especially cognizant of this fact and would not take a chance on bad publicity for the University. All of this considered, I would finally decide on an act, check to see if I had open dates compatible to the performer's schedule, contact the promoter, agree on terms and price, and book the act.

The actual booking generally was very simple.

The promoter would send me a contract stating

the price along with a rider listing all stage, lighting, dressing room, and other requirements. Many times I would feel the price was too high or we could not meet all the requirements. We would discuss this by phone, and if we agreed on the price and the requirements, I'd have the University comptroller, Odrie Ortego, sign the contract. A delightful and most congenial South Louisiana Cajun Frenchman (or, as Cajuns are lovingly called, "Coonasses"), Odrie would be at the building an hour or so before the show with me to meet the promoter. If there were any changes financially or





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ELVIS PRESLEY SHOW - STAGE REQUIREMENTS

1. Stage size: 48 feet wide  
36 feet deep  
5 feet high (approx.)
2. Band riser: 20 feet wide  
8 feet deep  
4 inches high
3. \*1st orchestra riser: 16 feet wide  
4 feet deep  
12 inches high
4. \*2nd orchestra riser: 16 feet wide  
4 feet deep  
24 inches high
5. One grand piano - tuned at 4 p.m. for evening show and 11 a.m. for matinee show.
6. Tympany drums (25" and 28")
7. Music stands with lights. Total of 15.
8. Kitchen type stools, total of 12, approx. 36" high.
9. Spotlights - a total of 8 Super Troopers with intercom is preferred but if not available, please advise what is available.
10. Power requirements: 3 phase, 100 amps per leg within 50 feet of stage right.
11. Risers (Sound) - Stage right - approx. 3' lower than stage 8' x 12' - stage left - 4' x 8'.
12. Forklift is required.
13. Whenever possible, the front row of chairs should be as close as possible to the stage.

\*These risers are flexible, do not build special risers. Please call me collect with approximate costs of the above thirteen items as these are needed for the R.C.A. accountants.

Charles Stone  
(214) 526-2850

KSG

otherwise in the contract, he would always smooth out the differences in his wonderful Cajun dialect.

There was generally a separate contract regarding show concessions such as merchandise and programs. These were always outrageous and took a lot of back and forth, but generally settled by show time. I was always very tough and demanded more of a cut than offered. I did this because I knew they would generally change counts, bringing in and selling more than admitted. It was impossible to catch them, so I made the difference up front. I also knew that they were going to hire many of our students as sellers, making a commission on what was sold. This put a lot of money in the pockets of our students. It was not unusual for some of the more aggressive sellers to make three or four hundred dollars on a good night.

Now we've booked the show. Where do we go from here? First, we determined what was promised by contract (technical rider) and how to fulfill that promise:

- How many spotlights do they need and do we have to rent additional ones?
- Do they need a piano (upright, baby grand, or concert grand) and where do we rent it?
- How big is the stage and where will it be on the floor?
- What is the arrangement for the seats on the floor and how many if any?
- Can we meet the electrical requirement or do we need to up our existing power?
- How many stage hands and riggers will we need, and the biggie?
- How can we find all the crap they have requested for their dressing room???

You wouldn't believe the things rock acts asked for in the star's dressing room (artist rider). It was a game between them and us, but we always took on the challenge. The typical request went something like this:

