



GEEZER BUTLER

BLACK SABBATH BASSIST TERRY 'Geezer' Butler reckons that all four band members were "clueless about finances" when he thinks back to the dark black cloud of legal proceedings that hung over the group around the time of 'Sabotage'. But the likelihood is that if anyone was going to at least try to hold the group's end up in a fight with former manager Patrick Meehan then it was going to be the 25-year-old from Aston. Despite having been once described by guitarist, fellow group member, and mate Tony Iommi as "from another planet," Geezer was reputed to be the most financially literate of the four musicians. Admittedly, the bar wasn't set particularly high. But at least Geezer had once trained in the accounts department of a Birmingham steel company and had looked after Sabbath's finances in the early days.

Of course, such meagre levels of fiscal experience would have been no match for the high-powered lawyers Sabbath came up against in their bid to break free from Meehan. And Geezer wasn't a financial whiz by nature. When, in 1969, he first suggested calling the band he was in alongside Iommi, Ozzy Osbourne, and Bill Ward 'Black Sabbath', the bassist looked about as far removed from an accountant as it was possible to get with his masses of hair, his hippy clothes, and his penchant for LSD. No matter. Geezer could really play the bass, and what's more, he had a definite way with words, so was able to elevate Sabbath's lyrics way beyond the "my baby loves me" drivel that many bands came out with at the time.

By the time Black Sabbath came to the conclusion that they weren't getting their just financial desserts – in 1974, after five years of hard work and incredible worldwide success – Geezer had already cemented his place in rock history as a *bona fide* legend. Putting real life worries to one side was far from easy, but Geezer knew that his safe space, the place where he was fully confident of his abilities, was there where he could keep the bottom end down with his mate Bill Ward providing powerhouse drum accompaniment to his thunderous bass. No matter what kind of gruesome stuff was going on outside of the Black Sabbath bubble, Geezer was determined to make more great music with his great friends. And if it came out angrier than previous albums, then so much the better...

GEEZER, HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK THE LEGAL WRANGLES WITH PATRICK MEEHAN AFFECTED YOU AND THE BAND DURING THE 'SABOTAGE' PERIOD?

"We were obviously immensely p*ssed off because we had hardly anything to show for five years of constantly touring, writing, and recording. Of course, everything is relative because materially by that point we had more than we could ever have dreamed of when we first came up with the idea of forming a band. We all had nice houses and cars to keep us contented, but it was when we started receiving tax bills for money that we hadn't ever seen that we started questioning where it was all going. And because we never expected the success we were having, I think we all had a touch of imposter syndrome. Maybe in some way we thought we didn't deserve the things we'd got, although everything we had was as a result of the albums we'd made and the shows we'd played. That feeling didn't help. But you have to remember that we were all from working class families, particularly me and Ozzy. He had five siblings, and I had six, so there wasn't

much money to go around when we were kids. But I had a very loving family and that's all I needed or wanted growing up. The first three or four years of the '70s were a whirlwind time for the band. By 1974 we were physically and mentally exhausted, and our family life was suffering too. I found it hard to communicate with anyone outside of the band, probably because of the strain that what we were having to go through put on us. We all had to put up a facade because people thought we were multi-millionaires after all the success we were having, selling millions of albums and playing sold-out tours around the world. Drugs were a big part of that facade. But the thing is, we were clueless about our finances. And of course, when we asked for accounts from the management they promised to give them to us – and then they never materialised. That was when we chose to split from Patrick Meehan, who then sued us for breach of contract."

DIDN'T YOU SIGN A MANAGEMENT DEAL WITH DON ARDEN AFTER YOU SPLIT WITH MEEHAN? COULDN'T HE HAVE DEALT WITH ALL THE LEGAL STUFF FOR YOU AND HAD SHIELDED YOU FROM THE STRESS?

"I'm pretty sure that Don wasn't involved at that time because he could have been sued for enticement when all the legal stuff was flying about. His involvement came later, once the lawsuits had been settled. But to settle the legal case with Meehan, we had to do a deal that involved future advances and royalties from our record companies, since we hardly had any personal money in our bank accounts to pay him off ourselves. It was a tough time."

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HOW IN YOUR VIEW DID ALL THIS AFFECT THE SONGWRITING FOR 'SABOTAGE'? WAS IT HARD TO FIND INSPIRATION TO WRITE, OR DID THE PROBLEMS ADD FUEL TO YOUR FIRE?

"It was difficult dividing time between creating music and time spent in lawyers' offices, with QCs, and in law courts. But in some ways it did give us inspiration because it was us against them – all of them. I think the lawyers treated us like a cash cow, and with major companies like Warner Bros. and our record companies outside of the States breathing down our necks for new product, we didn't know if we were coming or going. We were totally out of our depth as far as the business side of things was concerned, but with our backs against the wall I think some of the songs on 'Sabotage' were the angriest that we'd ever written."

DID YOU FIND THAT THE LITIGATION WAS DOMINATING YOUR THOUGHTS AS YOU WROTE LYRICS?

"Yes. The litigation was ruining our lives and only the music saved us from going completely nuts. Writing the lyrics was the only way I had of hitting back without it costing me my sanity – or without consulting a lawyer!"

UNUSUALLY, OZZY WROTE THE WORDS FOR 'THE WRIT'. CAN YOU REMEMBER WHEN HE FIRST BROUGHT THEM IN AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?

"I loved those lyrics. In that song Ozzy completely summed up everything we were going through. They came from deep within him, from his heart and soul. 'The Writ' is definitely one of my favourite Sabbath lyrics ever."

FROM THE START OF THE PROCESS, DID YOU WANT TO WRITE A HEAVIER RECORD THAN THE PREDECESSOR 'SABBATH BLOODY SABBATH'?

"No, that wasn't a conscious decision. Everything we wrote in those days came from jamming. The