

# **BANG! BANG!**

By Gerard S. Coard

On a day in March 1981, John Hinckley Jr., in an act of violent madness, shot the president of the United States, Ronald W. Reagan, on a sidewalk in Washington, D.C. The scene that followed was chaotic, frightening and tragic. To this day, whenever that subject comes up, I am immediately transported to a sidewalk in Brooklyn, New York, in the summer of 1978, where I too was shot on an equally frightening and chaotic morning.

In 1978 I was a young musician playing lead guitar in a band called FACES. On an early Saturday morning, around the time the club patrons were leaving, and way before sunup, my band members and I were standing outside the club after our gig. We were discussing plans for our next gig that was scheduled for Sunday afternoon. Suddenly our conversation was interrupted by the shattering sound of gunfire. BANG! BANG! BANG!

In a flash, people were clearing the sidewalk by racing down the street, diving back into the club, and every which way. They were all seeking an avenue of escape from the sheer terror of this crazed gunman. The club's bouncer, the shooter, and myself were the only ones not running.

I was not running because I had tripped on my guitar case and fell on the sidewalk. I was now looking up at the person with the gun. He wasn't shooting at me, but in my direction. Time went into slow motion as I anticipated, with every shot, that I was going to be hit in the stomach by a bullet from this mad man with a gun.

Finally, the shooting stopped. The shooter had been wrestled to the ground, and people started returning to the sidewalk. I stood up and composed myself, much to my chagrin, I found out the bass player was bleeding from the head, and the lead singer had been shot in the leg.

You might be asking, "Did you guys play so badly that someone wanted to shot you?" And, "Did you get shot too?" Of course, the shooting had nothing to do with our performance and yes, I was shot.

Here is the thing: I pieced it all together over the next few days. After the bass player was released from the hospital with just a graze to the head, and the lead singer was

released from surgery, we were all upstairs in the bass player's room talking about what the hell had happened. I was standing in the middle of the room and noticed a little hole in the left leg of the jeans I had worn that night.

Then I had the answer to why my right ankle was in such pain! I had been struck in the ankle by a bullet!

You might say, "Three layers of denim will not stop a bullet" and you would be correct, but the high-top leather boots I was wearing helped. The next day I took my guitar out of its padded plywood case, and saw two little holes in it. That might have helped stop a bullet too. And months later I found out that the firearm was a .25 caliber. That explains the size of the holes, and makes clear that it was not some big old "Dirty-Harry" handgun.

So, What is the lesson learned? The lesson for me is gratitude.

I am grateful that I returned to my family that morning alive. I am grateful that I can tell this story, almost 40 years later, and it is not a tale that ends in tragedy. Life is precious and wonderful in many ways, and I am grateful when I look back on my young self, with all my potential ahead of me, lying on a Brooklyn sidewalk, looking up at the barrel of a smoking gun, that I was given a chance, to "dodge the bullet."