

# Freddie Mercury

*by* Peter Freestone with David Evans.



**'An intimate memoir by the man who knew him best.'**

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the man who knew him best*

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Peter Freestone

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David Evans

  
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This book is for my late mother, Olga, and my Father, Leslie, who always let me get on with my life and yet were always around if I needed them. I couldn't properly grieve for my mother because her death coincided with my growing involvement with deeper care for Freddie and so in some ways this book is my acknowledgment to her.

# Introduction

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November 28, 1995, and October 10, 1997,

*“I lived for art, I lived for love  
Why does God repay me thus ...?”*  
–Tosca. Act II. Puccini.

In the *Sunday Times* of September 24, 1995, a league table of artistic achievement, Masters of the Arts, was published. Included in this were two sections, favourite pop performer and greatest pop performer. Amongst the favourite group which included the likes of Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Elton John, the name Freddie Mercury ranked number ten. Amongst the greatest pop performer which again included Elvis Presley, The Beatles and Elton John, Freddie’s name again appeared ranked at number five, oddly enough above that of Elton John.

During his life, Freddie greatly admired both Elvis Presley and John Lennon, almost regarding them as heroes. He never dreamed that when he died, he would be included in the same league. And in October 1979, when I first had the offer of working with Queen, I never dreamed that I would be involved with a man whom I see as one of the greatest composers of the late twentieth century.

I was involved with Freddie on a day-to-day basis for twelve years, almost to the day, in a multitude of different roles which eventually all came together under the umbrella description of Personal Assistant. I was chief cook and bottle washer, waiter, butler, valet, secretary, amanuensis, cleaner, baby-sitter (the baby being him) and agony aunt. I shopped for him both at supermarkets and at markets, I travelled the world with him, I was with him at the highs and came through the lows with him. I saw the creative juices flow and I also saw the frustration when life wasn’t going well. I acted as his bodyguard when needed and in the end, of course, I was one of his nurses.

And I was indubitably one of his friends. I’m one of a handful of people who were lucky enough to have witnessed the creation of much of his work, from conception to performance. There is so much more to creating music than putting lyrics and notes down on paper. The feelings involved and the reason for them mean so much and Freddie had a bottomless well of feelings.

By undertaking this project, I find I have a responsibility to be as truthful as I can in portraying what Freddie went through both as an artist and as a man. I want to show that there was much more to Freddie than has been written about until now. I also want to dispel some of the grosser imaginings of both press and biographers alike, who, doubtless writing from the best of motives, didn’t know the man they were writing about. I realised very early on that the man about whom I am writing was one of the most complex creatures anyone could ever encounter. But, at the same time in writing about him, I also realised that he was in fact just a human being like the rest of us and I sincerely hope that in reading this, anyone will be able to find elements of themselves contained within this very special person. In my time, I have discovered we are all very special and complex people.

A large percentage of the population of the world have read all about Freddie’s comings and goings and doings of this and that but many people have come up and asked me: “What was Freddie really like?”

With this book, I hope I can answer some of their questions. I don’t believe that anyone person can know a hundred per cent about another person and so I would never lay claim to writing anything definitive. What follows is *my* telling of Freddie’s life. I want to show both the man and the genius.

and the results of the collaboration.

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*Peter Freeston*  
*London 1995-1999*

# Preface

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## CAST LIST

I thought it might be helpful to the readers unfamiliar with the cast in this slice of life to have a list of those major players for easy reference as to their place in this tale.

### A

HRH The Prince Andrew *Great fan of ballet dancers.*

Thor Arnold *Nurse, friend and confidant.*

James Arthurs *Businessman and longtime friend in New York.*

Debbie Ash *Actress.*

Jane Asher *Actress and, later still, cake-maker.*

Gordon Atkinson *Freddie's General Practitioner.*

Mary Austin *Former girlfriend. Lifelong Friend.*

### B

Roy and Barbara Thomas Baker *Mr and Mrs Record Producer.*

Tony Bastin *Lover.*

Jim and Claudia Beach *Queen's manager and his wife.*

Stephanie Beacham *Actress.*

Martin Beisly *Art expert at Christie's auction house.*

Rupert Bevan *Picture frame gilder and furniture restorer.*

Debbie Bishop *Actress and singer.*

David Bowie *Composer, musician. Still a private company.*

Bryn Bridenthal *Friendly ally at Elektra Records, Los Angeles.*

Dieter Briet *Physiotherapist.*

Briony Brind *Prima ballerina.*

John Brough *Sound engineer and scapegoat.*

Kim Brown *Wife of Pete Brown, once Queen's day-to-day manager.  
Cake-maker.*

Michael Brown *Ballet wardrobe master for the Royal Ballet.*

Jackie Brownell *Sympathetic contact at Elektra Records, LA.*

Bomi and Jer Bulsara *His parents.*

Joe Burt *Guitarist and sometime boyfriend to Mary Austin.*

### C

Carlos Caballe *Artist's manager.*

Montserrat Caballe *La Superba. Opera diva and friend.*

Montsy Caballe *Niece and personal assistant to Montserrat.*

Piers Cameron *Father to Mary's children. Interior Decorator.*

Rupert Cavendish *Furniture dealer.*

Annie Challis *Record company executive and friend.*

David Chambers *Tailor.*

Charles the Canadian *Lover.*

John Christie *Actor. Colleague of Dave Clark's. Friend.*

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Dave Clark *Sixties pop star, theatrical producer and friend.*

Trevor Clarke *Nightclub front man and friend.*

Roger and Kashmira Cooke *Sister and brother-in-law.*

Carolyn Cowan *Make-up artist extraordinaire.*

## **D**

Gordon Dalziel *Chauffeur. Partner to Graham Hamilton.*

Jo Dare *Singer.*

John Deacon *Bass guitarist. One quarter of Queen.*

Derek Deane *Principal dancer at the Royal Ballet.*

Denny *Hairdresser and friend.*

Jim Devenney *Sound engineer in charge of on-stage monitors.*

Richard Dick *Barman and lover.*

Anita Dobson *Actress and friend. Brian May's partner.*

Rudi Dolezal *Video-producer and director and friend.*

## **E**

Wayne Eagling *Principal dancer and friend.*

Ken and Dolly East *EMI Record Company Executive.*

Eduardo the Venezuelan *Lover.*

Gordon Elsbury *Top of the Pops Television Director.*

Kenny Everett *DJ extraordinaire, comic genius and friend.*

## **F**

Joe Fanelli *Chef, lover and friend. Latterly nurse.*

Pam Ferris *Actress.*

Tony Fields *American dancer and actor.*

Michael Fish *Shirt and tie designer. Nightclub front man.*

Leslie Freestone *My father. Funeral director.*

## **G**

Brian Gazzard *Consultant physician.*

David Geffen *Record company executive.*

Bob Geldof *Singer, composer and event organiser.*

Boy George *Singer, composer, performer.*

Terry, Sharon and Luke Giddings *Security, driver and friend.*

Julie Glover *Jim Beach's deputy at Queen Productions.*

Harvey Goldsmith *Concert and event promoter.*

Bruce Gowers *Video film director.*

Richard Gray *Art director.*

## **H**

Tony Hadley *Singer, composer and esteemed peer.*

Graham Hamilton *Chauffeur and friend.*

Gary Hampshire *Chauffeur.*



Sarah Harrison *Fashion consultant and friend.*  
Stephen Hayter *Nightclub proprietor.*

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Peter Hince (Ratty) *Member of Queen road crew.*  
Jennifer Holliday *Singer and actress.*  
George Hurrell *Photographer.*  
Jim Hutton *Barber and lover.*  
Sally Hyatt *Administrative assistant at Queen Productions.*

## **I**

Michael Jackson *Singer, composer and entertainer.*  
Elton John *Singer, composer, performer and friend.*  
Peter Jones *Chauffeur.*

## **K**

Petre van Katze *One-time friend.*  
Trip Khalaf *PA sound engineer.*  
Tony King *Music business executive and friend.*  
Winnie Kirchberger *Restaurateur and lover.*

## **L**

Debbie Leng *Actress and Roger Taylor's partner.*  
Carl Lewis *American athlete.*  
John Libson *Accountant.*  
Sir Joseph Lockwood *Record Company Executive, mentor.*

## **M**

Rheinhold Mack, Ingrid and John Frederick *Record producer and friend.*  
David Mallet *Video director.*  
Fred Mandel *Keyboard player.*  
Diego Maradona *Footballer.*  
Brian May *Guitarist and one quarter of Queen.*  
Donald McKenzie *Household friend.*  
Roxy Meade *Press representative and friend.*  
Bhaskar Menon *Record company executive.*  
Robin Moore-Ede *Interior designer.*  
Mike and Linda Moran *Composer, musician, recording producer and friend.*  
Peter Morgan *Lover.*  
Diana Moseley *Costume designer and friend.*  
Graham Moyle *Case physician at Westminster hospital.*  
Russell Mulcahy *Video director.*  
John Murphy *American Airlines Cabin crew, friend.*  
Nina Myskow *Columnist and friend.*

## **N**

Anna Nicholas *Actress and friend.*  
Lee Nolan *Waiter and friend.*  
Gary Numan *Musician.*

David Nutter *Photographer and friend.*

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## O

Terry O'Neill *Photographer.*

## P

Elaine Page *Singer and friend.*

Rudi Patterson *Artist and friend.*

Christopher Payne *Furniture expert at Sotheby's.*

Yasmin Pettigrew *Actress and friend.*

Mary Pike *Cleaner.*

Tony Pike *Hotelier.*

Paul Prenter *Personal manager and one-time friend.*

Peter Pugson *Wine merchant. Friend of Jim Beach.*

## R

Kurt Raab (Rebecca) *Performer.*

Bill Reid *Lover.*

John Reid *Manager and friend.*

Tim Rice *Lyricist and friend.*

Cliff Richard *Singer, performer.*

Dave Richards *Recording engineer/producer*

Howard Rose *North American concert promoter.*

Hannes Rossacher *Video director.*

## S

Pino Sogliocco *Spanish concert promoter.*

Amin Salih *Accountant.*

Joe Scardilli *American Airlines cabin crew, friend.*

Jane Seymour *Actress.*

Wayne Sleep *Principal dancer and one-time friend.*

Lord Snowdon *Photographer.*

Gladys Spier *Cleaner.*

Billy Squier *Singer, composer, musician and friend.*

Rod Stewart *Singer and peer.*

Gerry and Sylvia Stickells *Tour manager and friends.*

Peter Straker *Singer, actor and friend.*

Phil Symes *Press representative.*

Barbara Szabo *Office accountant.*

## T

Gail Taphouse *Soloist at Royal Ballet.*

Mr Tavener *Builder.*

Chris Taylor (Crystal) *Member of Queen road crew.*

Dominique Taylor *Wife to Roger Taylor and friend.*

Elizabeth Taylor *Great movie star.*

Gavin Taylor *Video director.*

Roger Taylor *Drummer and one quarter of Queen.*

Baroness Francesca von Thyssen *Socialite and friend.*

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Douglas Trout *Hairdresser and one-time friend.*

## **V**

Barbara Valentin *Actress and friend.*

Vince the Barman *Barman and lover.*

Paul Vincent *Guitarist.*

## **W**

Clodagh Wallace *Artists' manager and friend.*

Misa Watanabe *Japanese music publishing executive, friend.*

David Wigg *Journalist and one-time friend.*

Margie Winter *Cleaner.*

Stefan Wissnet *Guitarist and recording engineer.*

Carol Woods *Actress and singer.*

## **Y**

Susannah York *Actress.*

Richard Young *Photographer and friend.*

## **Z**

Brian Zellis (Jobby) *Member of Queen road crew.*

# Chapter One

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In the beginning, it was 1973.

The very first sighting I ever had of Freddie Mercury was in the Rainbow Room restaurant at the shop called Biba in the old Derry and Toms building on Kensington High Street in London. I remember his very being there was a performance.

The Rainbow Room was originally an art deco ballroom with a wonderful layered plaster ceiling, which different lighting effects were used, often giving the colours of the spectrum, hence providing the name the Rainbow Room. Freddie was so struck by this ceiling that it influenced the designs of some of the ceilings in his future home. But that was still a long way away.

I'd gone to the Rainbow Room with my then girlfriend, Pamela Curtis. Pam and I had had a half afternoon's shopping around that wonderful store. Biba was the kind of emporium where you didn't actually have to buy anything but still had to look in every nook and cranny because the stock and its positioning were all changed so often. The displays in every part of the shop were a wonder to themselves. Freddie was there taking afternoon tea with his then girlfriend Mary Austin, who was at this time working at Biba. He still stood out even though at that point I actually had very little knowledge of contemporary music. Queen were not very well-known in 1973 although Freddie, as one of the new rising stars of rock music was unmistakable.

Freddie's charisma took over the space he occupied. The cream seats of the restaurant were shaped like big seashells and so Freddie, ensconced in his seat with his long black hair and dressed in that short fox fur jacket, really turned heads. Of course, we did not meet then and I was not to meet Freddie properly for the first time until late in 1979. In the intervening years, he would become a household name, touring the far reaches of the world, and I would take up employment full-time in the Royal Ballet wardrobe department, with whom I toured more specific parts of the world: Canada, North America, Mexico and Greece, as well as working in the fabled Royal Opera House in Covent Garden.

Before I go into too much more detail about Freddie, I should fill in a few details about my own life which had brought me to this point. Although I had been born in Carshalton, Surrey, I only spent the first six years of my life in England. My elder brother Leslie and I spent the next five years in a boarding school in southern India at a place called Lushington Hall in Ootacamund, a town situated amongst the tea plantations of the Nilgiri Hills. It was one of the often mentioned 'hill-stations' whence the Raj escaped during the summer heat on the plains and the last bastion of the only surviving independent native Indian people, the Todas. Incidentally, it was also in Ootacamund that snooker had been invented many, many years ago. Home was a hotel which was being run by my parents in Calcutta. I call it home although I only spent two months of the year there. Does that already sound familiar? There is an obvious and immediate analogy with Freddie's life, although at least I had the luxury of being able to see my parents for three months of the year because they used to come down and spend the month of May with my brother and I during our Easter holidays.

When I was eleven, we returned to England for what was supposed to be a six month break but those six months, my father was persuaded by his brother not to return to India. While I regretted the decision at the time and for many years, I suppose that should we have returned, this book would never have been written. I completed my education at Isaac Newton Secondary Modern school in North Kensington and, as most children did then, took up weekend employment first assisting the milkman on his rounds, advancing to working in the bargain basement at Whiteley's in Queensway when what is currently a mall was still a department store and where I was the weekend supervisor.

While still a pupil, I progressed from Whiteley's to Selfridges and it was there that I took up full-time employment after GCE while deciding what I was going to do with my life. Selfridges created a catering management scheme with me as the first recruit. This was real nine-to-five employment and I was very bored in the evenings after work until a friend of mine from Selfridges suggested that I join him in doing an occasional evening job at the Royal Opera House. On April 22, 1975, I started dressing the men's opera chorus, a situation which brought about another coincidence: the performance of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, including the aria 'D'Amor Sull' Ali Rosee', featured among its great singers Montserrat Caballe, who will figure so much in this story.

In school days at Isaac Newton, my English composition homework was always done to the sound of Wagner overtures from our stereogram, a gramophone and radio combined which was popular at the time. I didn't have many records but was always drawn to classical rather than pop music although where my love of classical music had come from I really cannot say. Wagner must have been particularly inspirational, full of drama and excitement and spurred me even to attempt my own version of Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* tales. It was already clear that my life needed that little extra spice.

It wasn't long before the tug of the Opera House overcame my already weakened ambition to be a Selfridges caterer and at the beginning of the new season in 1977, I joined the wardrobe department of the Royal Ballet full time. On Sunday, October 7, Derek Deane and Wayne Eagling of the Royal Ballet were organising an evening charity gala at the London Coliseum in St. Martin's Lane in aid of the Citizens of Westminster Society for Mentally Handicapped Children. Freddie, then at the height of his early career, had been asked by Wayne Eagling if he would be the special guest star at the end of the show. Sir Joseph Lockwood, the chairman of EMI records, Queen's record company, had been the catalyst. Sir Joseph was on the board of directors of the Royal Ballet and had effected Freddie's introduction to Wayne Eagling.

Thus it was that I was first properly introduced to Freddie Mercury in the Royal Ballet's running wardrobe at the Royal Opera House, the department responsible for all costumes that were in use during the performances. Prior to the show, the new costumes would be the responsibility of the Production Wardrobe. My job was to effect the running repairs and the sequences of changes during the performances. Hence, 'running' wardrobe.

Freddie came into our department with Paul Prenter in order that the wardrobe people involved in the gala could see what he would be wearing because his appearance involved a quick change actualised on stage. There was no room for error. He had rehearsed with the members of the ballet company with whom he would be performing for some time beforehand at the Royal Ballet school and rehearsal studios at Barons Court but this was the first time he had made an appearance upstairs at the Opera House itself.

Freddie's appearance in the show was not going to be announced until he actually came onto the stage, dressed in his leather biker's cap and jacket to give the first public performance of 'Crazy Little Thing Called Love'. As the song finished, the dancers then masked him from the public and with some assistance from them, he changed into a silver-sequined leotard in which he reappeared before the audience carrying out fairly intricate choreography which included him being man-handled and thrown into the air while singing 'Bohemian Rhapsody'!

This was the first of many times that I was to hear these songs but never again in such a spectacular way because when he performed them live with Queen he was always playing an instrument, either guitar or piano respectively.

Because of my association with the ballet company, I was invited to Legends nightclub for the party afterwards. It was here that I actually spoke to Freddie for the first time, a conversation that lasted no longer than five words. I also got into a longer talk with Paul Prenter who was Freddie's and Queen's

personal manager at the time. I must have made some impression.

~~Paul Prenter was an easygoing Ulsterman, although like many of his compatriots he had a~~ fierce and quick temper. I well remember a few occasions on which people got on the wrong side of Mr Prenter and came off the worst. However, I only ever personally experienced this wrong side once or twice.

Two weeks later, Paul rang up Michael Brown, the wardrobe master of the Royal Ballet enquiring to the availability of anyone who could carry out a six-week British tour with Queen and when offered my services, Paul remembered me and took me on. This was Queen's 'getting back to basics' tour – the Crazy Tour. They wanted to revisit smaller venues, few of which held more than two thousand seats, culminating in their show for relief in wartorn Kampuchea on Boxing Day at the Hammersmith Odeon, as the Labatt's Apollo was then called.

Having made the decision to volunteer and having been accepted, I panicked. I had no idea of even how many musicians were in the band called Queen, never mind what each of them looked like. I knew they had sung 'Seven Seas Of Rye', 'Killer Queen' and 'Bohemian Rhapsody' but that was the extent of my knowledge of their repertoire. I had two weeks before the tour began to find out about my new employers.

On the first day I went to a rehearsal – I was driven there by one of Queen's office staff – Paul Prenter met me and took me into one of the sound stages at Shepperton Film Studios in which Queen was rehearsing. This was one of the few spaces large enough for them to set up their full stage. I was stunned.

Not being an avid Queen fan, I never knew the extremes they went to in putting on their show. The band hadn't arrived yet but just to see the amazing amount of equipment and lights set up on the rehearsal stage was awe-inspiring. The technicians were practising with the 'pizza oven' lights and the effects were staggering. This set-up was so-called because the colors, red, green and orange, brought to mind a Mediterranean flag, I believe, and as it was one massive bank of these colours, it wouldn't have looked out of place in an infra-red bakers' oven. Paul ushered me over to the vast, wheeled wardrobe trunks and told me to sort through them and make sense of them and said he would introduce me to the band when they had all arrived.

You have to realise that in the trunks at this point was an array of Zandra Rhodes originals screwed up carelessly into crumpled balls as nothing had been sorted out since the end of Queen's last tour. There was also an assortment of make-up strewn here, there and everywhere, as well as a special French make-up remover by Rene Guinot, a pink gloop which Freddie used exclusively, cotton wool balls, hairspray, all the things you would expect to find in every gentleman's going-away luggage. There was a special dry shampoo – basically talc-in-a-tube which soaks up grease instead of washing under a shower – for the rock star in a hurry. There was a whole array of boots and shoes, trainers and the special Brian May clogs in various colours. And hairbrushes. Hairbrushes galore!

Someone had thoughtfully opened the trunks before my arrival so most of the mildew smell had evaporated. The trunks had been packed hurriedly at the end of their last show with no thought as to what the state of the unwashed, unlaundered contents would be when next opened. There were also several costumes in both black and white PVC with all sorts of holographic pictures including the Statue of Liberty, The Stars and Stripes and the Empire State Building. These had been designed by an American and Freddie had worn the outfits on the last tour but was rarely, if ever, to wear them again. I think he wore the black jacket once or twice.

I had noticed a large number of people coming and going and bustling about but the only person who actually stood out in all this activity was the figure of – I was soon to learn – Jim Beach, the Queen's business manager, who was walking around wearing a full-length wolf coat, presumably as protection from the cold. Paul called me over to a small group of people and I was finally introduced

to the band who had up until then been indistinguishable amongst the hurly burly. Freddie made me feel immediately at home just by saying, "Well, of course I remember you, dear."

On that first day at Shepperton, Queen soon got down to the real business of the day. In the four or five hours that followed, I was introduced to Queen's music in all its glory. There, for the first time and live, were all those songs that I'd heard over the years and never known who'd sung them. 'You're My Best Friend', 'Somebody To Love', 'We Are The Champions' and many, many more. One thing that remained the same throughout the years I knew Queen was the effort and amount of work that they put into rehearsals. Practice makes perfect, which is what Queen shows were always intended to be.

They started each song and played it until one of them was unhappy with something. Then they would practise and practise until they were all satisfied. They would do this with each of the songs in their set. They might be able to get through five songs in about twenty minutes but then one problem with one song could quite easily take them half-an-hour to correct to their collective satisfaction. At the end of the two-week rehearsal period, they would try to play through the set complete, without stopping, although, even after so much work, this didn't necessarily happen each time.

However, for that, my first day, I merely collected the costumes which needed to be laundered or cleaned and when an available car was going back to London, I was in it with Gerry Stickells, the tour manager. Two days later I went back to the studios laden with clean, ready-to-wear stage clothes and that was the first day each of the band told me what their requirements would be for the coming tour. For John I had to get a pair of black Kickers, size 43, and two white T-shirts with round necks. For Roger, I needed half-a-dozen white wrist sweatbands and assorted black and white socks. Brian's requirements were two T-shirts with a low neckline, one black and one white. He also asked me to look for a western-style shirt in black with white piping which I managed to get.

After having had all his clothes cleaned, Freddie then decided he was going for a new look. I had to buy three pairs of red PVC trousers, a couple of ties in red, one in leather and one in a shiny fabric as well as some thin black ties to act as belts. He also insisted on having skate-boarding knee pads and really lightweight white boots with black stripes, the sort that boxers wear. He'd decided to start the show wearing a leather jacket which he would then take off and perform in a T-shirt until that took came off and he would be left in just his trousers and boots at the end. Unfortunately, I couldn't immediately get hold of the wrestling boots which he specified, although the assorted colours of T-shirts weren't a problem and the braces in white and other colours, I found easily.

After two or three days hunting around the shops of London – Kensington Market and the nearby Slick Willy's were two of them – I was prepared, or so I thought, for the first of the Queen shows which was to be in Cork, Ireland. Unlike the theatre, where all my previous experience had been, I found that Queen did not have a dress rehearsal. In the theatre, during the course of the dress rehearsal, you're able to find the best times and places for changes and I would be able to plan my time during the show. Not knowing the band, I didn't feel I could ask them when the dress rehearsal would be.

I was of course stunned when at the end of the final rehearsal I was told that, "That's it. Next time will be the show!" However, I discovered that there was a general rule of thumb as far as Queen costumes were concerned which was: "If the gig is small, wear black. If it's big, wear white." Having now seen a lot of different shows, this was obviously a general rule with few exceptions.

The tour was to have begun by taking in Cork City Hall and then the Royal Dublin Showground as a venue at Simmons Court in Ireland. Although, the Cork concert was ultimately cancelled, the one in Dublin went ahead. I think I was dreading this, the first working concert with Queen, having had no trial run. I really hadn't any idea what I should be doing. In the end, everything flowed fairly smoothly.

The routine with which I was to become so familiar ran something like this: I would arrive at the venue with the band for their sound check. While they carried on checking on their various pieces of equipment and the volume in the on-stage monitors, I got started in the dressing room. The band would go back to their hotel after the soundcheck, leaving me to carry on. I had brought with me the list of essentials which were: one powerful hair dryer, one iron, boxes of tissues, cotton wool balls, real sponges, body splash which I seem to remember for some reason was a herbal one by Claire's, dressing gowns, the indispensable electric torches, setting gel for hair.

An hour and a half before the band were due to arrive, I began to sort out what I thought they might want to wear. The crew had put the huge, hanging costume trunks in the band's dressing room and after opening them, I removed an assortment of shirts which could possibly be worn by Brian, Roger and John and quickly gave these an iron so that each Queenie could have a choice from a range of two or three shirts, and I hung these at four points about the dressing room. Although Freddie had been more specific, the T-shirt selection was still in several colours and so I laid all these out for him to choose. Each of them only had one pair of shoes for the shows so the footwear department was easily served.

On a table with a mirror, I laid out the make-up which all of them used in varying amounts, the technique they had developed to suit each one of them over their nine years of performing together. Stage lights bleach colours from just about everything including performers' faces. To accentuate features which would otherwise disappear, you have to highlight them. Freddie especially made use of eye-liner pencil so that the people in the back of the hall could see his eyes. Some people might say that this instinctive use of eye make-up was a throwback to his days in both Zanzibar and India where kohl is used by all women throughout society to accentuate their eyes, the mirror of the soul. The standard list of make-up I always needed was two Max Factor Number 25 pancake, Lancôme Maquimat three-and-a-half mascara, Revlon all-weather Ivory number three, Clinique continuous coverage Vital beige ...Well, call them the Slap Kings of the rock world!

As far as underwear was concerned, the rest of the band took care of their own, although Freddie always required a dry pair to wear after the show and these were my responsibility to provide as part of wardrobe.

I was more often than not in the dressing room when they arrived. The door would open and in they came, generally just to drop their bags before they went off again to the crew catering area to have tea or coffee or just a little snack to keep them going before showtime. Freddie generally remained in the dressing room and had a cup of Earl Grey tea with milk and two sugars or hot lemon and honey depending on how he felt his throat was holding up.

I suppose it was only natural but as soon as the band all returned to the dressing room, they immediately began comparing it to the last. Which feature was better, which one was worse. "There are more seats here than they had in the last one..."; "This room's a lot bigger..."; "That toilet was disgusting!"

They usually started to get ready about an hour before the show. There were, after all, four of them and so even a five minute burst at the make-up table required twenty clear minutes. Freddie always put on his make-up first, having removed his clothes and applied his eyeliner bare-chested. Each of them had their own robes. Freddie would often, if the room wasn't tropical temperature, wear his make-up. While the others generally dressed themselves – sorting out shoelaces or ties empirically – Freddie required assistance. Two processes which took time were putting on his boxing boots and lacing them and getting whatever he was wearing on his torso over his head without spoiling the make-up; and back then he would have the hair dryer out making sure that every single hair was exactly in place. Although Paul Prenter, Jim Beach, the band's partners and wives would be allowed access to the dressing room, when the final getting ready began, most of these left to find their seats.



and to allow the band a short and important time to prepare themselves.

The band would spend the pre-show hour sensibly discussing any failings conceded in the last show or sections which they all or individually thought could have gone better. Post-show discussions of course were the opposite. These were the times for shouting and screaming and acrimonious accusations in the heat of the moment. Pre-show, they might decide on a change in the running order and half-an-hour before the start of the show, the road crew – Ratty, Crystal and Jobby – would come to the dressing room to see if there were to be any such changes. The band would get to talk to the sound people – Trip Khalaf, Jim Devenney – to discuss any last minute requirements like putting the drums up or bringing the vocals down in the monitors. To Trip, the instruction was always, “Make it louder!” I don’t know that Queen were happy with the volume of the sound at any of their shows. Always louder, louder, louder...

Tour manager Gerry Stickells, who had overall responsibility for the show and would have been in and out of the dressing room, would arrive to lead the band on stage surrounded by their security. Venue security personnel always guarded the door of the empty dressing room which was kept unlocked to cater for the eventuality of Freddie storming off stage and the person with the dressing room key being unavailable.

We would certainly not have been amused.

At the rear of the stage, we were all ushered into the ‘dolls’ house’. This was a small room made up of scaffolding and thick black fabric material which was positioned always – bar twice – in the same place upstage right at the very back of the stage area. This R and R station was used by every member of the band throughout the show as in it were drinks, anything from hot lemon and honey, through beers to vodka tonics. It was a place for the band to come and sit through Brian’s guitar solos and the playing of the ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ tape and where I had spare clothes that they could change into if they felt the need. This was also the place, particularly for the first tour I was on, where I would start with a hairdryer and hairbrush to give Freddie his immaculately coiffed look for the last part of the show after he’d ripped off his sodden T-shirt and any other part of his costume which was uncomfortably soaked in sweat. He would sit down in front of the mirror and I’d give him a blow-dry in two minutes or whatever length of time Brian had chosen for his solo.

There were always five chairs in the dolls’ house and always a full-length mirror. I purchased one early on because of the number of times the promoters failed to provide one. The band got really upset at not being able to see themselves as the audience would see them before going on stage. There was always at least one light giving a warm glow and also an electric fan, as whatever the temperature outside, things could get very hot under all those lights on stage.

Going into the dolls’ house was where I first noticed the tangible excitement which had developed in hearing the crowd who are almost psychically aware that the band are just about to emerge on stage. The PA system would stop playing the pre-concert tapes and the band’s intro tape would start. The crowd roared. This was the point of no return. There was no going back.

Jobby would be outside the entrance with Brian’s guitar and Brian, Roger and John would then go on stage which was of course smokebound. For some reason, Queen and excess stage smoke seemed to go together. At this point, Freddie’s perfect sense of timing came into play. The split second that the tape ends and Brian thrashes out his first chord, Freddie runs on stage and is picked out immediately by the spotlight.

So. Showtime.

This next is the hardest part for me to recount for it is impossible to find sufficiently accurate words to describe the feeling that everyone concerned with the band experienced at this moment when all the work – the lights, sound, all the backstage effort as well as the musicianship – come together. It was indeed the proof of the pudding.

For most of the duration of the show, I would remain on stage. Just in case. Just maybe a sea might rip and I'd have to dash to find another pair of trousers but this never happened once to me. When any of them came off stage for a while – like in the guitar solo – Roger would often change his shirt at the same time Freddie was changing and drying his hair. Brian would change his costume during Roger's drum solo. As soon as these changes had happened, I knew I had to go back to the dressing room to pick up the four different coloured luxury towelling dressing gowns for each of the band to put on at the end of the show. Freddie's was always yellow, although the others had no colour preference and these dressing gowns would be taken home at the end of each tour as new ones were purchased by wardrobe for each Queen outing.

The encores never changed, so stage security always knew when the band were about to leave the stage. As soon as the 'God Save The Queen' tape started, the four of us would take up our positions by the dolls' house ready to throw the dressing gowns around our specific charges. Each of us held a torch in one hand and our band member in the other as they came off stage blinded by the lighting rig into what was pitch black.

The dressing room was as close to the stage as was practicable in any of the venues and the only people in the dressing room for at least the first half-hour after the show were the four band members, Paul Prenter and myself. Band security remained outside the door refusing anyone access until permission was given, which was usually by me putting my head round the door and tipping the wing. Paul and I would generally know what to expect of the band's post-show behaviour by the progress of the show itself. Only rarely did matters become so fraught that any of the band members smashed either dressing room mirrors or furniture but I cannot say that it never happened. It was occasionally the only way they could relieve their intense frustration at something not having gone quite right.

While they were 'discussing' their performance, I would be struggling to unlace Freddie's boots as quickly as possible and generally assisting in undressing the band while Paul would be pouring out the champagne and the drinks. If there had been a technical hitch not necessarily within the control of any of the technical crew, Gerry Stickells would come round as soon as possible to explain what had happened. Post mortems were absolutely necessary though not always helpful because the next show would be in a different venue where another, entirely different set of problems would have to be overcome.

Those costumes which could just be hung back in the wardrobe trunk I collected and sorted for delivery to the next venue. Socks and shirts which would have to be laundered I collected and took back to the hotel with me. I had already checked out the hotel facilities to ensure that they could provide the cleaning services in the time I required. I did have enough clothes to keep the band happy should we be scheduled to do three shows back to back where cleaning facilities were unavailable. It was quite a job, although I had been trained well at the Royal Ballet where tights were handwashed after each performance, sometimes having to be dry once again for an evening show.

So. Show over. Back to the hotel.

The hotel where we stayed in Dublin went to great pains to keep Freddie happy. As per usual, the request had been put in for him to have the best suite which on this occasion was on a long-term booking for the celebrated British actor Peter Bowles who was filming a series in the city. He obliged the hotel upon its, presumably, unrefusable request and vacated the suite for the neighbouring one. I believe Mr Bowles was *not* amused.

The other reason that Mr Bowles was not impressed was that we managed to keep him up most of the night with an impromptu party organised by Queen's very Irish everyday manager, Paul Prenter, and Dublin was the nearest he and the band were getting to his home town of Belfast. There was much coming and going and I must admit quite a lot of noise.

The tour returned to the mainland and played the very new NEC in Birmingham, then the Apollo

Manchester and also in Glasgow. It was the first time I'd ever been to Glasgow and I loved the city. ~~suppose I was prepared for the worst because of the reputation the city had acquired.~~ Remember, it was 1979, still a year or two before it became the European City of Culture. But the feeling of friendliness and warmth in the city was wonderful. On to Newcastle City Hall and then to the famous Empire in Liverpool and the Bristol Hippodrome – where coincidentally I had already worked with the Royal Ballet – before finally getting to Brighton.

A limousine was sent to pick me up at my flat in the Lisson Green Estate for this memorable concert. I didn't know quite what to think as I saw the car pull up. Paul had just told me that a hire car would come to collect me to bring me to a restaurant to meet him and Freddie and take us down to Brighton. The car turned out to be a stretch Mercedes, blue. Back then, it was *the* limousine to have and it drew quite a few surprised glances from neighbours. It took me down to the Meridian restaurant on the Fulham Road in Chelsea. As I walked in I heard boisterous laughter from one corner and there was Freddie, Paul Prenter and Peter Straker.

Peter had been very close to Freddie since 1975 and for many years to come was one of Freddie's closest friends. That day, his hair had been fashioned by their hairdresser friend Douglas Trout into golden ringlets, as many people will remember. He really did look rather extraordinary. One of the things that has never changed since I have known Peter is his general extrovert joie de vivre which was more than in evidence at the luncheon table. Peter always had the knack of making Freddie laugh when Freddie needed to.

The trip down to Brighton was one long laugh from beginning to end. Between Peter and Paul there was a never-ending stream of banter and even though Freddie had a gig coming up, he appeared very relaxed. It was in Brighton that I acquired my nickname. Following the long theatrical tradition which I was aware anyway from the opera house, everybody had been given a name by Freddie. If you didn't like it and made it known, that was even more reason for it to stick. It was on the trip back from Brighton that I first heard the name Phoebe. He said that he'd decided that I looked like a Phoebe and it fitted nicely with my surname. I decided not to object. Who knows what I could have been called?

It was on this night of the Crazy Tour in Brighton that Freddie met Tony Bastin. Tony was about five foot eleven with fair hair. Of average build, he had a very winning smile. I have to say that with hindsight, Freddie was not Tony's type at all, although he was to be the first person with whom Freddie had a long-term relationship while I was working for him. They met at one of Brighton's nightspots of which there are many and which constituted the reason for staying down there after the show.

The partying continued back in Freddie's suite at the Grand Hotel on the seafront until the small hours with a group of people rounded up by Paul Prenter. It was hardly anyone's idea of a rock'n'roll party, just a group of about ten people drinking and laughing. It had been an experience for me to see what Freddie went through during the show and how hyped up he became on the exchange of adrenaline with his audience.

As I was to find out, Freddie needed these three or four hours after the show to go out and let himself wind down because while the performance he gave always looked spontaneous and wild, I knew he had to control himself up to a point so that he appeared as fresh at the end of the show as he had been at the beginning. The nights out in the bars and the parties in hotels which were to follow were a necessary part of his life. For me, it was still part of my work. Although I was only free to go to bed after Freddie was in bed, I still had to be up to do mundane organisational things in the morning while he remained asleep, as indeed he had to do in order to be fresh enough to perform again the next night.

But at this early stage, I was still working for all four members of the band. The twenty-hour days were still to come and we had as yet not heeded the call of America's wild frontier.

The Crazy Tour ended up with six London gigs, The Lyceum in the Strand, The Rainbow in Finsbury Park, which was where the extra day's booking provided was needed to film the sequence with the dove in the 'Save Me' video and also where the director, David Mallet, fell backwards off the stage into the orchestra pit, happily not suffering too much damage.

Damage? Heavens above! Inconceivable! It might have even delayed some filming...

Then Tiffany's nightclub in Purley. Tiffany's in Purley! I think at this point, the only Tiffany Freddie knew about was on Fifth Avenue in New York. Due to a slight reduction in size, even from the previous somewhat smaller venues, Queen's lighting rig would not fit. The crew ended by putting up a few lights around the support for the huge gong that Roger was using at this point and, I believe, the mirror ball was also in use. I do remember Freddie had fun on this gig. I think the most difficult thing for him was trying to scale down his own performance for a venue of that size. The little black outfit was worn that night, true to the Queen costume credo.

Then on to the Mayfair in Tottenham, the Odeon, Lewisham and, finally Alexandra Palace in Hornsey, North London, three days before Christmas, where the other bits of live footage used in 'Save Me' were filmed.

And that was it.

Well, not quite. On Boxing Day, December 26, Queen played the Odeon Hammersmith in a benefit concert for Kampuchea which Harvey Goldsmith, the tour's promoter, arranged as an add-on date.

Then that really was it. At the end of the Crazy Tour of England, my six weeks' stint with Queen was up. What was I to do now? Strange, I hadn't thought that far ahead when I'd accepted the work with Queen although I now had a taste of the spice that my life needed. Also, leaving the tour felt quite a wrench, because in those six weeks I had got on with all four of the band very well.

Looking back at this early point in our relationship, I realise that I had learned two essential important aspects about Freddie. The first was that although he needed the emotional stability to record, it seemed that Freddie needed conflict and confrontation as a vital catalyst to performing. The second revelation was his perfectionism.

Freddie knew in his mind exactly what he wanted and was prepared to throw a tantrum to make sure everything went the way he desired, and this underlying trait of character was to appear throughout my association with him.

Freddie knew the value of the tantrum. To throw one to greatest effect, it had to be done to either the band or business associates.

Freddie realised that if he could make people worried that he was going to walk out on a project, then it probably wouldn't get off the ground. He also knew that the other people involved knew that he knew that *he* was indispensable.

He was actually quite modest concerning his knowledge and understanding of many things but people who knew him found that he would never enter into something where he wasn't one hundred per cent sure of the end result. He had this almost uncanny knack of foreseeing events and on many occasions he even went as far as saying, "I told you so". The tantrum was always the signal that the discussion had to stop and it was time for action.

One other marked trait that everybody who knew Freddie observed was his extreme generosity. One of the greatest thrills of his life was to buy a present for someone just to see the look on their face when they opened up the wrapping. He was in a position to buy anything for anyone and it really gave him a great deal of joy. My own first experience of this was my first Christmas present from him. When he had known me for only four weeks, Santa turned up with what was to become, for me, a familiarly wrapped parcel, the scarlet leather trademark box containing, on this occasion, a beautiful desk clock from the Bond Street jeweller, Cartier.

Christmas time in the Mercury house was for all of Freddie's friends who were told that as they had

nowhere else to go then they were to come over, make themselves at home and be fed and boozed over the festive season, although I'll save the description of a typical Mercury Christmas for a later part of the story.

It had been quite reasonably explained to me that my first stint with Queen would have a beginning and an end. However, it was also made clear that when future work came up, I would be asked to do it if I was free and also if the band wanted me.

Meanwhile, money still had to be found to pay my bills. I 'signed on' at the Job Centre (Social Security Office) and in those days we had the luxury of earnings-related unemployment benefit which meant you had the basic allowance plus a percentage of what you had earned in your last main job. However, I've never been one to sit around doing nothing even on such comparatively generous terms. And what would I have been waiting for? I had no idea and no guarantee of when Queen would need to require my services. If ever.

Thus, a friend of mine who had started work for the GPO telephone service recommended that I should apply. I therefore applied for a job and had an interview and was finally accepted as a telephone operator.

"Operator services. Can I help you?"

As I mentioned earlier, on the night I first saw Freddie at the Coliseum, it was at the party afterwards that I first really spoke to Paul Preter. He had the ability to get on with anybody, more often than not, total strangers. He was Queen's personal manager, coordinating the day-to-day activities of the band – arranging interviews, transport, being in attendance as the band went about their business. But Paul had a closer affinity to Freddie than the others because they were both gay. I was soon to find out that although they were never lovers, they spent most nights together out in the clubs and the bars. I'd never been a club person as my working hours, often fourteen a day, had precluded this. I had never realised how many bars and clubs there were in the world!

Paul was always the centre of attention in any room, being naturally vivacious and the eternal Clown Prince. I suppose that was part of his job to keep Freddie and his guests entertained and those guests were people like Sarah Harrison from Browns, Peter Straker, Kenny Everett, Annie Challis and her travelling dog and Trevor Clarke.

Paul Preter remained in touch throughout the time I was answering telephones, be that contact on a call from Paul maybe once or twice a week. I started with the GPO on Monday, May 5, and continued with the telephone operating for six weeks before I received that call from Paul, the one I had been waiting for: "Peter? Would you be able to go on the American tour?"

Would I? No contest.

I had been to America before, twice with the Royal Ballet, but I knew even from my comparative short experience with the band that this tour would be something else. I jumped at the chance, said, "Yes!"

Only then did I think about handing in my notice to the GPO. I left on Saturday, June 14.

I think for Freddie the United States was his Mount Everest. It was something that he had to climb to the peak of and conquer. By the time I started in late 1979, early 1980, he had just about completed that task. On the British Crazy Tour I had seen Freddie playing to two and three thousand people at a time. I don't think I was really prepared to see 15,000 screaming and cheering fans in the arena venues Queen were playing in America. Only a handful of British bands – the Stones, The Who and Led Zeppelin among them – could play that size of venue in those days with no support act.

Freddie loved the warmth and outgoing personality traits that seemed to be the trademark of most Americans. He felt so much less on show when he was in public in America because in America there are so many stars on the streets of Los Angeles and New York that one more doesn't make that much difference. In those days, London wasn't the cosmopolitan city it has now become. Pubs closed

eleven and clubs at two whereas in America, with a little advance planning, a person could keep themselves entertained twenty-four hours a day and Freddie was always one for entertainment.

America in those days lived up to the old adage, "Everything there is bigger and better" and Freddie genuinely believed that. You only had to look around at the cars, at the buildings, the cities and the vastness of the country itself when compared to Great Britain. He liked the music which was coming out of America at that time. It was the disco-diva variety which he loved and which was so influential in the recording of Queen's *Hot Space* album. He did, after all, spend a great deal of time in discos and bars ... merely researching the music, of course.

On Sunday, June 22, 1980, we arrived in Los Angeles. The American tour itinerary had begun...

### *June 22-26: Los Angeles*

Freddie, Paul Prenter and I were staying at L'Ermitage on Burton Way, just south of Santa Monica Boulevard in Beverly Hills. It was a luxury hotel apartment building with the ubiquitous swimming pool, this time situated on the roof. Freddie had his own duplex suite while I was in a smaller one on the lower floor.

We'd flown first-class from London. The band party in those days always flew first-class while the crew went economy and usually on a different plane – on this occasion directly to Vancouver – not unlike the Royal Family! It had been arranged that the band would all meet up in Los Angeles before flying to Canada, as they were much more familiar with Los Angeles and the nightlife suited them better. It was the first time I'd seen anything of Los Angeles other than the area around the USC campus which is the location of the Shrine Auditorium where the Royal Ballet had performed. LA is such a huge sprawling metropolis that I had no idea even where Hollywood was, although I obviously knew it existed.

The only place Freddie was ever a classic tourist was Japan. Things Japanese were an all-consuming passion for him, whereas wherever else he stayed in the world was merely a bed for the night. Hence he didn't really get to see any more of LA during that visit. Due to Freddie's nocturnal habits, he tended to get up very late but I still had to be up and about during normal shopping hours to gather anything he or the others in the band had specifically requested the night before, anything from a pair of jeans which he'd seen someone wearing or to stock his fridge with a drink someone had introduced him to. I have to emphasise once again, that at this point I was still working for Queen as a whole rather than specifically for Freddie. So there were other calls on my time.

Because Freddie had been to LA before, he knew of specific items which were more easily available there and by the time we arrived he had made a list of purchases I was to make. The boots, of the boxing variety, he used to wear on stage and white Levi jeans were just two examples. The jeans available in London tended only to be cream.

Howard Rose was the tour's North American promoter and agent who worked out of Los Angeles. Apart from management, all bands have arrangements with independent agents and promoters such as Howard who negotiate times, dates and schedules with the owners of the individual concert venues. The requirements of such a huge institution like Queen were vast. It wasn't merely a question of the four people standing on stage, it was a logistical problem involving upwards of a hundred personnel: the Queen crew plus the crew hired specifically for the day, the stage builders, the lighting riggers, the electricians. The band's requirements were set out in what was known as a rider, a set of conditions attached to the contract between them and the venue's promoter. Queen's rider included the following: a dressing room with sufficient comfortable seats; a full-length mirror; and at least twenty hand towels.

The food requirements were that before the show a selection of cold meats and salads were to be available and for after the show, a quantity of hot food was to be provided, which generally consisted

of savoury finger buffet food to be kept hot by small paraffin heaters beneath the metal serving dishes. ~~The drinks section of the rider included four bottles of champagne, two bottles of vodka, a bottle of Jack Daniels and a couple of other types of spirits, two dozen beers and an assortment of soft drinks including tonic water and mixer drinks, bottled mineral water and fruit juices – and this list was just for the use of the band.~~

So, fully victualled, crewed and equipped, the tour was due to kick off in Canada.

*June 27-30: Vancouver, The PNE Coliseum*

The band rehearsed on 27th, 28th and 29th and did the show on the 30th. Suffice to say that a great deal of very hard work goes into making any successful tour and it was no different with Queen. Work by the crew before and after a show and obviously by the band during the show. As you will see from the following itinerary, there were a lot of back-to-back shows. If you take into account the amount of travelling involved between venues, more often than not journeys which began immediately after a show, the band walking off stage into a limousine and on to the airport, only to be able to change one of their stage clothes on the plane, you can understand how tired everybody was by the time they got to bed in a new hotel, often in a different state. This might also explain why Freddie had no touring tendencies. There was just no time.

I'm not going to bore you with a fully detailed breakdown of everything that happened over the next five months on this massive tour but there will be points in the itinerary when I'll enlarge on anything which I think will open up further insights into how Freddie worked as a man and also how his mind worked. There are many books detailing the Queen tours. I am not going to attempt to match them, although at the end of this personal memoir of this great world tour, I'll fill you in on some of the more pertinent highlights of other tours in so far as they relate to Freddie.

*July 1: Seattle, Washington. Show Day*

*2: Portland, Oregon. Show Day*

*3-4: Los Angeles, California. Days Off*

Whenever you read Day Off, it usually meant that we were for once able to spend the night in the same city in which the band had just played instead of taking the money and running, as Freddie loved to say.

*July 5: San Diego, California. Show Day*

*6: Phoenix, Arizona. Show Day*

*7-13: Los Angeles. Two Show Days. The Forum*

Freddie hated performing in the big cities of any country because the reception which the crowd accorded Queen was usually so much more blasé and muted than in smaller cities. Every band and entertainer in the world goes to the major cities, thus contributing to a glut of big shows which means audiences are spoiled for choice. Also, it is in cities like LA, New York and London where a band feels they are under even more intense pressure than usual to do a great show because they will also be entertaining their peers, all of whom will have come along basically to check out the competition. As I've already emphasised, one of the maxims Freddie lived by was, "You're only as good as your last performance."

He felt he only had to bungle a high note and rumours started spreading that he was losing his voice and not performing like he used to. Although no one was ever allowed back stage before a show, it was common knowledge who would be out front that night because a star's staff would have booked tickets either, in our case, via GLS Productions (Gerry Stickells, our Tour Manager's company) or

through the aegis of the local promoter. Saying this, in all the time I knew Freddie, he always relished a challenge and it was a very rare occasion that he didn't come out on top.

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*July 14-15: Oakland, California. Two Show Days*

*16-20: Los Angeles. Days Off*

*21-August 4: Houston, Texas*

At this point there was a two-week break in the tour and I went off to visit friends in Houston before flying back to LA when the tour resumed.

Basically the band's set – the sequence of songs to be performed that night – was the same on successive shows. Where the tour played more than one date in a city, then the set would change slightly. If anything, Freddie would give a better show out of the big cities because he was more relaxed. His dialogue with the audience, counting the audience as one party and he as the other, was always spontaneous at every show. Freddie followed no script, unlike some performers such as Michael Jackson or Barbra Streisand. Queen shows were always different. Freddie loved singing 'Love Of My Life' because of the feeling he got when the audience joined in. And seeing the flames from all the waving lighters in the audience during the ballads gave him a huge buzz.

*August 5: Memphis, Tennessee. Show Day*

*6: Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Show Day*

*7: New Orleans, Louisiana. Day Off*

Freddie loved New Orleans. It wasn't only because you could drink twenty-four hours a day, it was a lot to do with the music and overall feeling he got from the city. He always stayed in the same hotel, the Royal Orleans in the middle of the old French quarter, and was thus surrounded by New Orleans jazz all day long. It's a city that truly never sleeps and we loved exploring all-night bars. One thing I learned almost immediately from Paul Prenter was that an essential component of Freddie's touring requisites was the *Spartacus Guide* to places of gay interest. This international publication would list all the bars in all the cities in all the countries in the world. There is a separate guide for the United States and Freddie always set time aside for this essential reading. If truth be known, I think these were the only two books he ever read from cover to cover in all the time I knew him.

*August 8: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Show Day*

*9: Dallas, Texas. Show Day*

*10-11: Houston, Texas. Show Days*

*12: Atlanta, Georgia*

I really thought I'd lost my job in Atlanta, Georgia. We were there two nights, the day before the show and show day itself. On the first night, as usual, Freddie, Paul and I went with our car and driver out to the bars. Paul got lucky early on in the evening and Freddie waved him and his date off for the evening. For the first time I was left with Freddie as alone on the streets as any two people can be with a limo and a driver in tow! I was quite aware of the responsibility with which I had been implicitly entrusted.

Up until this point, Paul had never gone home leaving Freddie behind. Paul had given me complete instructions of where else there was to go and the telephone number of the hotel if it was absolutely necessary to get in touch with him. Freddie decided that we were going to stay in the bar where Paul had left us and then started drinking with a vengeance. He was the boss so I didn't feel I could tell him to slow down. At about four o'clock in the morning after many spearmint schnapps, Freddie decided it was time to go home. I think it was more in gestures than in words that he communicated, because I



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