

Rock and roll fans know all about what was happening on the concert stage.

What was going on backstage was an entirely different story.



ROCK THIS TOWN!

Backstage in Cleveland: Stories you never heard & swag you never saw by Fran Belkin

Release Date: October 23, 2018

ISBN-13: 978-1-7326933-0-2
Retail: \$18.95
Binding: Soft cover with flaps, varnished
Imprint: Fran Projects
Dimensions: 8" x 8" x .5"
Specs: 144 pages, full color, 465 images
Printing: USA by Worzalla
Author Contact: fran@rockthistownbook.com

rockthistownbook.com



«DIRECT FULFILLMENT
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ROCK THIS TOWN!

Fran Belkin's collection of t-shirts wound up in boxes in the attic, until one day she realized these mementos—chronicling over thirty years of Cleveland (and Ohio) rock and roll history—could illustrate the incredible story of a most unusual family business: Belkin Productions.

The shirts and swag paint a picture of the times, the music, the bands and the concert promotion company her husband Jules and his brother Mike built from the back room of their father's clothing store into a powerhouse on the national music scene. And unlike the concert tees the rest of us wore, these shirts were designed and produced in very small numbers as "swag" for the bands and crew, rarely seen beyond backstage.

In *Rock This Town!*, Fran's collection is artfully woven together with vintage snapshots, concert photography, and intimate stories—shared by the Belkin Productions crew who lived them.

This book is for those of us who were out front, standing drenched in a World Series of Rock downpour, singing along to every word of our favorite song, Bic lighters in the air, screaming for another encore. It's a love letter to every fan of rock and roll.

MARKETING PLAN: Interest is strong, and interviews are already confirmed for launch week on regional TV and radio stations including:

Fox 8 News	New Day Cleveland	WMJI
WKYC TV3	Live on Lakeside	WKYC.com
WTAM	WONE	Print media

Launch party and on-stage interview (including media) will be held at the historic Allen Theatre on October 29th, followed by a members' event at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on November 1. Fran and Jules Belkin are available for interviews, events and book signings.

AUTHOR: Fran Belkin grew up in LA, attended UCLA, and moved to Cleveland for love—and fell in love with Cleveland along the way. In the mid '60s, her husband Jules was a pioneer in the rock and roll music industry. Fran worked along side him as Belkin Productions grew to become one of the largest regional concert promoters in the nation. Fran produced *Tripped Up*, a 2018 feature-length documentary film chronicling *Competitours*, an 11-day travel competition, (in which she's participated five times). The film premiered at Cleveland International Film Festival. *Rock This Town!* is her first book.

DESIGNER/EDITOR: Christopher Hixson is a designer of books & magazines that celebrate the alchemy of merging ink with paper. Chris designed *The Tanglewood Picnic* (Muddy Puppy Media), which won an American Graphic Design Award, a Gourmand World Cookbook Award for USA printing, and was a USA Best Book Award finalist. His work has been honored by Print Magazine and Graphic Design USA.

FOREWORD: Barry Gabel has worked in the entertainment industry with Belkin Productions and Live Nation for more than 38 years. He has been instrumental in developing marketing strategies for the grand opening concert for The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Moscow Circus, Lord Of The Dance, Rocktopia on Broadway, and Cirque Du Soleil.



Backstage at the World Series of Rock

Building the stage and preparing the stadium for the show was the first priority. But what about backstage where the bands would be hanging out? When Jules realized there were no dressing rooms near the ramp to the stage, a plan had to be devised. What was there? Concrete floors and walls, damp, dark corridors, and old, ugly bathrooms.

The Hippie Picnic with The Who

The Who had played Cleveland in the late '60s, and returned in June 1970 as the headliner. Mike booked the show and added the James Gang, a band he managed, as the opening act. Opening for The Who was huge, and the James Gang didn't disappoint. The audience was on their feet when they left the stage. Then, James Taylor came out with his acoustic guitar, and the energy was sucked out of the room. When The Who finally took the stage, the crowd exploded in cheers. This show is recognized in the annals of rock and roll as one of the worst concert lineups in history.

The Who had the day off after the show, and Mike wanted to host a picnic for them. Mike and Jules had small yards, so James Gang drummer Jimmy Fox suggested his fiancée Diane ask her father to...



Top: Steve Belkin, age 7, wears the first Belkin t-shirt and hangs out with John Entwistle and Pete Townshend. Bottom: Steve sits in the rowboat while James Belkin, age 5, decides whether to join him.



The Who, December 9, 1975 ©Janet Macoska

"The band is freezing! Turn up the heat!"

Who's people kept demanding it, but that wasn't even a possibility right the band played the Pontiac Silverdome. The new stadium was really an outdoor venue, but with a huge Teflon fabric cover to protect it from the severe elements. It wasn't possible for it to be heated like an arena. A December concert was an iffy proposition.

g the first big rock show at the Silverdome was a major compliment. Belkin Productions Detroit (see page 69). The paint was still fresh on 76,000 people attended the inaugural concert in 1975.

In the summer of '72, all hell broke loose ...and we had the time of our lives!

Belkin Productions started producing outdoor concerts at the Akron Rubber Bowl, which held 32,000 people. Jules and the staff had to learn hands-on, and quickly, the logistics of securing large venues, the impact of weather, and all the unexpected problems associated with shows of this magnitude.

Concert the first show, Chicago, was for selling out. Just before show time, the sky opened up and...

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Fran Belkin



Jules

Alex Van Halen and Michael Anthony were betting \$1,000 a game. They were pretty drunk and kept us all entertained with their antics.



Top: Jules after bowling a strike, or maybe a gutter ball. Bottom: The band and crew

and no one sat down Jules Belkin



Richie Sambora and Jon Bon Jovi at WMMS, c. 1984 ©Janet Macoska

Oh, can you pay us in c

It was July 4th, 1989 weekend, and the bands were waiting for payment in cash for the shows at Buckeye Akron Rubber Bowl. So on Friday before the show, Jules' assistant, and Denny Young, went to the bank to get \$300,000. They stuffed the money in bags. Denny put the bulging sacks in the trunk of his car and sat in the car sitting in the garage. When he picked Jules up Saturday morning, Jules was relieved to see the money was still there!

Jules with Cher at the Rubber Bowl. At the time, she was the lead singer of opening act Winger a few years earlier. Jules was happy to cross paths again.

