

Everyone's a winner...with the Stone Cold Boners

By Justine Copley, Debbi Oliver and Jo de Fina

On a cold, windy Melbourne Friday night, your committed Young Lawyers' Journal reporters trekked up to the east end of town and braving the door bitch, dived into the questionably legendary establishment that is known as Bobby McGee's. While the Boners were completing their final sashays and gyrations, we, (hereafter to be referred to simply as YLJ) surveyed the audience opinion:

Mr VB: I love the Boners because they bring back a renaissance of the 70s that you just can't beat. They're just (pause for effect) magnificent. They are just class all the way.

Ms Bourbon: I think they're funky. That's it - I love their style. And they always look to mock the 70s but they're great. They act as if they're stoned but they're not.

Ms Finlandia: I've never heard of them before but they are very good.

Most young lawyers would have at some stage in their halcyon days have come across the Stone Cold Boners, known affectionately as "the Boners", in one way or another. Law Balls, Chocky Balls, the Espy or the Palace - they've done it. A few drinks under your belt, your dancing shoes on and you *are* funk personified. Yeah baby, he's singing to you, and we're all beautiful aren't we? The Boners know how to work a University crowd like no-one we've ever seen. YLJ caught up with their manager and bass player, Captain Randy Bags, in a little Chinese restaurant to find out where it's at.

YLJ: You started in 1991. Who constitute the Boners now?

SCB: Eugene is the lead singer, Mr Barry is the shoulders, Mr Lubes, who is Martin Starlight Da Prix, Baron Von Burg, Video David.

YLJ: Video David? We have to ask why? Anything to do with Mimi McPherson?

SCB: Was he the one doing the video?

YLJ: No names were mentioned, but we'd know it if we saw his...face again.

SCB: There's Brother Larry and Anton, our new recruit. We're still working out a name for him. I'm Captain Randy Bags.

YLJ: Where did the name Stone Cold Boners come from? Let me guess, you were all stoned at the time and you were really cold and you were.... de-boning chickens?

SCB: There's plenty of hypotheticals I can assure you. The gist of it was that we needed a name and I was normally responsible for coming up with the names. We'd all played in bands with each other prior and so I was just looking around one day and then I sort of put one album with another. It was a variation of James Brown's - "Stone Cold Sweat" and "Cold Cold Sweat" and then ah,...I had always loved boners, one of my mates is a boner. I'm actually a pastry chef by trade. He was a butcher and actually went on to be a boner. I just loved the name "Boner" and I thought would call the band "Stone Cold Boners". So that's it. Then it all came together. Basically the only original members left now are the singer, the drummer and myself.

It was very hard to find guys that were into what we were doing. Originally what happened was Eugene, the lead singer and myself were in another band called "Stiff"

YLJ: Is there a theme happening here?

SCB: Yeah. It was very inspiring. We started at the Chevron on Sunday nights, about eight years ago. Eugene said that we were going to wear outrageous clothes because he just didn't want to treat it too seriously at all. And so he wore completely off-the-wall stuff which, you know, there's no real direction to what he was wearing and I ended up wearing the 70s stuff. Then that band split and we started this band and just kept on wearing the 70s stuff. We started to get a bit more outrageous with some of the clothes here and there, but the 70s scene is basically what we do.

YLJ: Is that the music you were doing at the time?

SCB: Yeah, pretty much, 60s and 70s - but you know it wasn't as disco or dance as it is now. We were doing a

lot more current stuff like Aerosmith and Nirvana and stuff like that which is not what we're doing now obviously because now we're concentrating on purely disco orientated music. Basically because that is what works. My whole theory has always been that if you have got the women there and dancing, you've got a gig. That's what we try and work from. Without sounding sexist or anything like that, we love women.

YLJ: *So the chicks get up there dancing and attract the guys.*

SCB: Without a doubt. It's a chain reaction.

YLJ: *So what's your perception when you look down into a crowd and, let's be fair, two attractive looking women are on the dance floor giving it loads. Do you look at that and go – "she's a super freak", do you go "she's a groupie" or do you go "good on you, you are having a bloody good time"?*

SCB: I don't know. To be honest, brutally honest - I see it as business. When we used to go out, the guys I used to hang around with wouldn't sort of get on the dance floor and I like dancing as well so you know the girls were always great for that, they just get up and dance. That's what I love, you know, they're not as inhibited as the guys. It's sort of a conscious/unconscious thing about doing the dancing because you always see what the chicks are into. If they're into something that's good. They love the music. We are there to please. We are just lucky we have a bit of an angle on it as well, so the guys get into it too. But it's one of those things. It's follow the leader. If the girls get into it, the guys will get into it too. The last thing that we wanted to do was do the flannelette jumpers and shirts and all that sort of crap, you know.



YLJ: *The ripped jeans and black t-shirts?*

SCB: Yeah, the grunge scene, I hate that scene. With all due respect, I mean I love Nirvana and bands like that but I hate that thick bogan mentality to just jump up and down and nothing's happening. At least there's a bit of articulation or something out here.

YLJ: *It's all about sex isn't it?*

SCB: Yeah it is, sex without a doubt.

YLJ: *At the recent Daffodil Ball (where the Boners performed in July) we couldn't help but notice that the girls were very keen. They were virtually clawing the stage. We love the way your main man, Eugene, works the crowd. He's so full of...panache. You've got it sussed out.*

SCB: Oh, we take no prisoners.

YLJ: *We don't want to know about it. It's purely professional isn't it?*

SCB: It seriously is. That's just the way we respond to the situation. I mean, it's a give and take thing, you know. You know, it's doing a performance as opposed to doing a gig. I like reaching out and make sure everyone is participating.

YLJ: *Do you remember the best gig you have ever done?*

SCB: Without a doubt, it was down at Southgate, Southbank, whatever it's called. The one that's closer to Flinders Street or Swanston Street. We actually did the opening of the Melbourne Festival on a float one year. It was huge. They had actually given us licence to get extra members and all sort of stuff. I had a lot of friends that I wanted to put in the band so we had a big brass band, bugles, extra guitarists, singers and dancers. You know "Taxi" the DJ? A friend of mine was up dancing with us, doing the cha-cha. So there was probably fifteen of us on stage all up.

YLJ: *So where are you playing at the moment?*

SCB: We're doing functions and the residencies at Bobby McGee's and the Mercury Lounge.

YLJ: *Where do you get your 70s gear?*

SCB: Well the clothes, you know, these are trade secrets.

YLJ: *We won't tell anyone.*

SCB: Well this is what happened. The first outfit that I had was from Crystal's. Mr Crystal is a tailor. A lovely old guy you know, he's still hanging around now. He's probably the best part of 74, 75. He's in ah, Richmond, shall we say. It's an anagram of another suburb. Anyway, I had this outfit. It was literally one of those types that you see sitting on Elvis's coat hanger. It is the first Boners outfit. I just found this guy. I used to go to him in Bentleigh when I was a kid and then he resurfaced about eight or nine years ago through this other friend of mine that I was telling you about - Taxi the DJ, and he was modelling for him. I saw this fantastic shot of him wearing this outrageous jumper and little platforms with flares. I asked him where he got the clothes from. He said "well don't tell anybody". We've all made this allegiance to each other that you can't tell people where it is.

So Mr Crystal in essence is an old tailor, a very famous sort of tailor in the secondhand department of Melbourne. The best thing about it is that all the clothes are new.

YLJ: *So they don't smell?*

SCB: You really have to know what you want, to get to Mr Crystal.

YLJ: *(Hmm...we're not sure how to respond to that one. Is this like a Jedi knight/Yoda thing?)*

SCB: You have to know where you are going.

YLJ: *What happens when Mr Crystal dies, because he's getting old now?*

SCB: He's got a girlfriend.

YLJ: *Does she do some sewing as well?*

SCB: She's great, she's fantastic. She looks after us, she is really nice. A good old girl. Of course, he goes over to New Zealand to get treatment for his arthritis. So when he nicks off we get discounts. So that's when we try and nick in.

YLJ: *Was she the woman at the gig earlier on?*

SCB: Oh yeah. She's great. So that's basically how we source the clothes. We also go to secondhand shops. Basically we buy a lot of women's stuff to be honest.

YLJ: *So that's a women's shirt you are wearing now?*

SCB: Yeah. They have a much better cut. If it feels comfortable, wear it. It was very hard in the beginning to get the guys to believe in the dress up thing because a lot of people criticise you when you first do it. It took the band quite a few months to get into it. One by one they followed. Eugene followed, then the drummer followed, then the guitarist, you know. It wasn't like "oh yeh, we are going to dress up and wear these clothes". They didn't say it was a great idea. That was definitely not the case.

YLJ: *You've actually started a trend. We've got friends from Uni*

who have been big fans over the years. You played at quite a few law balls or chocky balls or other fraternity balls. Guys are now walking around wishing that they were the Stone Cold Boners.

SCB: I love playing dress ups. I just love it. Its just great. I love hearing people doing it too, you know.

YLJ: *So do you work as a pastry chef in the day?*

SCB: Oh no, I pretty much manage. I have a couple of other bands as well. I have a Village People band, I've



got another funk band, I have a little kids band.

YLJ: *What, the teletubbies?*

SCB: It's called Bubble and Squeak.

YLJ: *What do you do with them?*

SCB: Oh, we do functions, birthday parties.

YLJ: *So what do the rest of the guys do? After the Daffodil Ball I spoke to Eugene and asked him where you were heading. He said that you were a cover band and that you all just surf.*

SCB: He's actually got a clothing label called "Goa". It was quite successful for a while. He collects old newspaper clippings you know.

YLJ: *He what?*

SCBL: He collects old newspaper clippings. You know, speckies. He likes to collect old pictures of speckies. You know, people taking marks. What am I into? I'm just into eating. I just like buying good food as much as possible.

YLJ: *So what do you cook?*

SCB: Everything from chicken involtini to gnocchi to apple strudels. All sorts of things, lemon tarts, profiteroles. All sorts of pastas, cannelloni, lasagnes, raviolis, all that sort of stuff. My latest creation is chilli crayfish linguini. Yeah that one's pretty happening. I'm pretty happy with that one.

YLJ: *Do you write your own stuff?*

SCB: No, I'm not really a songwriter. I write music like

the dance, funk, disco orientated stuff but I'm not really a songwriter as such. Dave's not a bad songwriter. He can write a few good tunes

YLJ: *What are your thoughts on the Melbourne music industry?*

SCB: If you know what you are doing and you know what you want, you can get anything. You have to network, you have to make the effort. Nothing comes easy. The music scene here is very diverse and basically the whole music industry has its eyes and ears fixed on Melbourne because this is where most of the talent is being exposed and developed, you know.

YLJ: *Who do you think the best band is to come out of Melbourne?*

SCB: Its hard to say, but basically I think AC/DC, with Bon Scott in it.

YLJ: *What are the ages of the band members?*

SCB: I'm 35, Eugene is about 35, the Baron is a bit older.

YLJ: *And the Tony Bartuccio dancer?*

SCB: Mr Barry? He's about 34. He's the lead singer in the Village People band.

YLJ: *So you're all in your mid thirties then?*

SCB: Yeah, the average age is about 34 I think.

YLJ: *So who are you in the Village People band?*

SCB: Randy.

YLJ: *You have the hair for it. So how do you select your repertoire?*

SCB: We'll hang on to a repertoire of 30 songs which would be two sets, for six to eight months. Then we'll incorporate new songs, maybe put a few of them out to pasture, to rest, but you'll always have songs like "Everyone's a winner", "Kung Fu Fighting", "Disco Inferno", that we have to continually play because the punters want to hear them, so that's cool.

YLJ: *You don't get sick of playing them over and over again?*

SCB: Not really. You just re-invent yourself. There's a thousand and one ways to play a song. That keeps you stimulated. The thing you have to understand with music is, does Mick Jagger ever get sick of singing Satisfaction?

YLJ: *Do you see a day when the Boners will go – "we're not going to end up like Mick Jagger and Keith Richards"? Wheeling out your wheelchairs onto the stage. Or is it a matter of "you're only as young as...the music you're*

playing".

SCB: It's true. I know of harder jobs.

YLJ: *So what about us? Can we make a career out of banging a tambourine with you guys, dancing in a cage to the right of the stage wearing knee high boots and an afro?*

SCB: Now we're talking. The afro is a must. Seriously though, we have to be careful that what we do doesn't offend people. A load of white guys dancing around doing funk music isn't exactly authentic. We admire the music and like to do it well. Therefore we try and do it pretty much by the book, within reason.

The Boners are currently playing Bobby McGee's on a Friday night and the Mercury Lounge on a Saturday night. We've been told that they're always available for functions if the price is right. For bookings, contact either venue and they'll put you in touch with Captain Randy Bags. Highly recommended entertainment for your office Christmas Party.

