

Excerpt

A lot of times, I didn't know a song was going to happen a certain way until I tried it. Because everything is always like a puzzle, and you start out this way and then all of a sudden the puzzle starts to come together, and sometimes it's good and sometimes it's bad. Sometimes you and your writing partners are smacking each other on the back going, "We're geniuses! It worked!" It's like when the oil gushes through the derrick, and you're like, "It's alive!" Then the next day, or the next week, after you get shot down a little by the powers that be, you're sitting there looking at each other going, "What the hell were we thinking?" But that's how it always is.

I recorded "She Bop" in a room in the back of the studio. It was the big rectangle warehouse room where Kiss rehearsed. I started singing there because it unnerved me to have Rick watching my performances so intently. I was able to convince Bill to run the wires for the microphone and stuff back to the room so I had total privacy.

So that's where I sang "She Bop." I could even take my clothes off and sing and no one would know. So of course that's what I did, and I tickled myself too. That's why you hear me laughing, because it was so ridiculous. I was singing half-naked. I heard Yoko took her clothes off for "Walking on Thin Ice," which I think is cool.

But most people didn't get what "She Bop" was about until much later, when I went on Dr. Ruth's radio show. I was playing along with her, making believe I was in a psychiatrist's office, but then everything I said was blown up later by the press. Suddenly "She Bop" was on the Parents' Music Resource Center's "Filthy Fifteen" list of songs that they said should be banned, like "Let Me Put My Love into You" by AC/DC. I was so mad, because I had made sure that I never mentioned touching myself so that little kids would never know. And then I was found out because of my big mouth. Now every kid knew what it was about, and it wasn't supposed to be that way. Oh, c'est la vie. That's French for "whatever."

I always tried so hard to make music that would not become dated. And then I had this conversation with Dick Clark and he told me that I was making disposable music. That's what pop music was—disposable. I said, "No, I did not work my whole life to make disposable music." After "She Bop," I wanted to write another song, and Dave Wolff kept saying, "Wait, wait—it'll come." But it didn't, and I had to fight tooth and nail, and finally when the record was almost done I started writing with Eric. It was hard, though, because at the time he seemed a little scattered. Once we'd finally get a sound after working on it for hours—or days—he'd change it. His process would make me forget the melodies I was singing after a while.

With Rob, his temperament was different and he was easier to remember melodies with. There was a sweetness about him. I felt I could show him poetry. And we were both going through similar things with our relationships: He was just coming out of one that was long and hard, and Dave and I were having a lot of bumps. So Rob and I started writing together. Sometimes in our conversations he'd say something that struck me, and I'd write it down. Like he referred to a "suitcase of memories." I thought that was a wonderful line so I used it in "Time After Time." Other lines came from my life. "Lying in my bed I hear the clock tick"—that came from the really loud clock that I mentioned Dave and I had in our apartment. And the part about "the second hand unwinds" was from Rick's watch. For some reason, it was going backward instead of forward. He kept saying, "Look at this, the second hand is unwinding." I just looked at him and I'm like, "Oh my God, the second hand unwinding?" and wrote it down. I try all the time to take stuff from conversations. I always look for words that chew well and sing well.

When we started writing the song, I needed a fake title as a placeholder for the time being. So I was looking in the TV Guide and saw a couple of movie titles. There was this movie starring Malcolm McDowell and Mary Steenburgen called *Time After Time*, and I said, "Okay, that sounds like a good fake title for right now; it'll change." And did I mention I am a huge fan of Mary Steenburgen? She is so funny and a terrific actress. Anyway, when we started writing it, it was like the song title lodged itself into the song. I kept thinking it would be thrown away, but no matter how I tried to remove the freakin' title, I couldn't take it out without the song falling apart.

When Rick heard the song, he became very protective of it. If he thought people could kind of hear the song outside the door, he'd shut all the music off because he worried that somebody would copy us. Pretty early on, he felt it was really something extraordinary. The record company loved that song, too, and I kept saying, "Why did you make me do all this other stuff? I could have been writing more songs all along."