



It has been my pleasure over the past few weeks to be in contact with Dee Allen and put this online interview together. Dee has been very gracious to answer many questions about himself, his career, and of course, his relation to The Oak Ridge Boys. You enjoy every word of this interview and I want to thank Dee for participating!

What was it like growing up the "son" of an "Oak Ridge Boy?"

Mostly great. Got to go to lots of fun places, got to meet famous people, and often got to skip the lines at amusement parks. Had to deal with my share of petty, jealous kids in school who decided you were stuck-up before they even talked to you, but people like that will always find something to complain about.

Tell us about your father in your own words

Deserves as much respect for his business sense as his musical talent. Values loyalty and reputation, which is a big part of the reason the Boys are still successful, with or without hit records. Has a knack for hearing a song's potential, even in its most raw form. He's the Magic Johnson of the group- can sing any part that's needed, and is just as happy passing the ball as

making the big shot himself.

Tell us about your mother in your own words

A lovely, kind person. Most people who meet her are usually amazed by her young looks, but they remember her for her thoughtfulness and generosity. Very talented singer, and also has a flair for design and decoration. Both of my parents are motivated by Christian values, which they passed on to my sister and I.

Where did you get your musical training? Was it natural due to your father's talents?

Very little formal training. Inherited good ears from my parents. Briefly took guitar lessons at 8, but got frustrated and put it down until 15, when I started teaching myself from listening to records. Learned to pick out harmonies from singing gospel tunes at the piano with my mother. Initially wanted to be a guitar hero, but was always more interested in putting songs together, which I learned from re-creating my favorite artists' songs in my studio.

What instruments, if any, do you play?

Guitar and bass fairly well. I can play keyboards and drums well enough to get a part down on tape, but usually forget the part after that. :D

Tell us about the night you were called into "emergency duty" for the Oaks.

Very exciting. Thought I would be waiting tables that night- got the call from my mother before the shift started. My boss was very cooperative- he knew that the music was more important to me than any restaurant. I had about 4 hours to pack, get to the airport, and get to the stage. We had no time to rehearse- we just ran over the choruses as we changed clothes on the bus.

Did you have to learn any of the songs, or were you already familiar with them?

Knew them all, and could pick out most of the harmonies. There are a few, like "Y'all Come Back Saloon", where the harmonies move around more than you'd think. Those took a few shows to get tight.

Did you ever think your time with the Oak Ridge Boys might turn into a permanent thing?

No. Before they were talking to Golden again, my dad said he'd love to have me, but he understood that it was important for me to get my own music out there. I love filling in whenever I'm needed, but my passion is rock 'n roll.

Did you know Steve Sanders very well? If so, any memories of Steve you could share?

My memories of Steve affirm what we all knew- that he loved to sing more than anything. I saw him perform while deathly ill, running to the bathroom to be sick between songs, but finishing the show. He made a special trip to the studio to sing harmonies on my sister's demo. Probably the image I'll always remember is him putting his heart into "Building Bridges" with the Oaks Band.

What was it like being a part of the "Oak Ridge Boys Live from Las Vegas?"

Some of the most fun I've ever had. My mother and I generally had one evening to work out the harmony parts for the next day's guests, and in some cases had to learn 7 or 8 songs at once. But that's the most fun part- hearing it all come together live. We got to work with some true music legends, and they were very complimentary of our work. Hopefully, we'll get to do some more shows eventually.

Are there any particular memories or good stories from being a part of that?

Cramming the whole band in the dressing room to rehearse with Mel Tillis; seeing Dewey jam with Little Richard; singing backup on Chely Wright's "I Already Do"; seeing the Boys sing with the Fairfield Four; trading stupid jokes with the Clark Family; rehearsing Bryan White's material all night, only to have him decide to sing solo. AAAARGH!!

Do you have any favorite Oak Ridge Boys songs?

"But I Do", "Back In Your Arms", "Make My Life With You", "You're The One" (from American Made), "Never Hurts To Hurt Sometimes", "Bridges And Walls", "If I Were You", "Don't Turn Around". All ballads- I must be a softie.

What was it like to actually fill you father's shoes when he was unable to perform?

Not the best circumstances, of course, but always a lot of fun. It totally depends on the crowd. The Kentucky State Fair was one of my favorites- those are some crazy ORB fans up there. His parts are challenging, because they move around so much.

Did you ever think you'd see the day that the "original Oaks" would be reunited?

No. I thought their relationship was shattered beyond repair. Fortunately, the Boys are all Christians, and forgiveness won out over hard feelings.

Tell us about the Oak Ridge Boys from your perspective (possibly some comments on each of the guys, their success, etc).

They have a rare kind of fame- everyone knows their name, even people who have never heard their music (a la Tom Jones, Barry Manilow, etc.). It would be easy to just coast on that name recognition, but the Boys are serious about recording quality material and putting on a great show, and that's why they are as respected today as anyone in the business.

Did you ever sing on stage with the Oaks before being called into "active duty?"

No. I played guitar several times, and once sang the national anthem with them at an NBA exhibition game.

The Oak Ridge Boys have been a symbol of longevity and you have been a part of that step by step your entire life. How long do you see it continuing?

Hard to say. Road life is tiring, and the Boys all have outside interests they could pursue. On the other hand, as long as people are cheering, it's hard to get tired of it. I think they will continue as long as they are still having fun doing it.

What do you think of the "Voices" CD?

A good, solid record. There are others in their catalog that I like better. I think it deserves a lot more radio play than it has gotten, but that's country radio for you. "Baby When Your Heart Breaks Down" is as good as any of their classics.

How often, in light of your schedule and life, do you see the Oak Ridge Boys perform?

Maybe 2 or 3 times a year. They probably have the most talented band now that they've ever had, so I always enjoy seeing the show.

Tell us the current status of "Tall Dark Stranger"

We are currently playing around Nashville about 5 times a month, building a following. We are also trying to promote ourselves on the internet, on popular music sites like MP3.com, Riffage.com, Audiogalaxy.com, and Amp3.com.

In regards to your career and where you are:

a) What are your musical aspirations?

To be a huge pop/rock star. More specifically, to rescue rock radio from the garbage we've

been offered for the last 10 years. I'd be content to have a small fan base who really appreciated what I did, but there's nothing quite like playing to a big crowd.

b) Is trying to break out and get noticed difficult/frustrating?

Terribly. If there was any way to side-step the business side of it entirely, I would. The people in charge are not motivated by a love of music, or a desire to put out quality product. They want the quickest buck they can make, which usually means making catchy, meaningless, disposable records. Sorry, not interesting to me.

Who are your personal musical influences?

Todd Rundgren, KISS, Prince, Stones, Rick Springfield, Hall & Oates, and of course the ORB.

What are your favorites:

a) musicians- listed above

b) actors- Denzel Washington, Alec Baldwin, Jim Carrey, Al Pacino, Ed Norton, Matt Damon, Robert DeNiro, Don Cheadle, John Travolta

c) actresses- Meryl Streep, Angelina Jolie, Annette Bening

d) movies- LA Confidential, The Matrix, Truman Show, Ace Ventura, Heaven's Prisoners, The Crow, The Usual Suspects, Glengarry Glen

Ross, Fletch, Austin Powers, Good Will Hunting

e) TV shows- Late Late Show w/ Craig Kilborn, Dennis Miller Live, Chris Rock Show, Simpsons, X-Files

A funny question - someone has noted that you have a link to a "Kiss" site on your Web page...are you a fan of theirs?

Huge. They were the first band I ever got into. I have all of their records, videos, etc. Truly a band that goes the extra mile for their fans. They put on one of the best shows you will ever see. I took my dad the last time they came to Nashville, and we had a great time.

And a related question - another person has noted that the picture of your "wife" on your Web Site changes often...what's up with that? LOL

Every time I think I've found the most beautiful woman in the world, some new actress or model comes along, and changes everything. I'm just a fan of beauty- it's a Libra thing. ;)

How could we get a hold of the "Feedback" CD's?

Funny you should ask. Those albums were only printed on cassette, but I just recently

transferred them to CD for my archives. I would be willing to put both albums on a CD for \$10. You can order them from me through the Oaks office: 88 New Shackle Island- Hendersonville, TN- 37075. They would only be for the hardcore Deeman fans- my guitar playing was pretty embarrassing!

In an article for "Music City News" - you stated that when you sang the words - "When I was a young boy I would dream about life, and wonder just how sweet it could be...." What do those words mean to you at that moment and then reflect on those very words today.

I've always dreamed big, so career-wise I'm still not where I want to be: the biggest rock star in history! OK, so it may be a tad lofty. Otherwise, I am an extremely fortunate person. I've been blessed with a loving family, good health, friends I can trust, and the chance to play and sing music. If I never reach my goals, I still wouldn't have much to complain about.

Tell us what "you" are doing these days?

"I" am spending most of my time playing, rehearsing, and promoting my band. I still wait tables to pay the bills, so it will be a welcome relief when I'm making enough money to just play music for a living.

This may be a dumb question, but how supportive is your father of your career? In that same respect, how supportive are the Oaks as a whole?

He wants me to make it probably as much as I do. He always offers advice and comments, but also respects my desire to make my own way. We like a lot of the same bands, so I think he digs most of my music. The Oaks as a whole are very supportive. They put in a plug for us whenever possible, and asked us to play at Open House this year, which was a lot of fun.

Anything you would like to say to the fans and any other comments that you would like to make (you can say as much here as you'd like).

Don't give up hope- not all new music is as bad as what's on the radio. You have to hunt a little to find the quality- maybe by searching music sites on the internet, or by going to writers' nights in your town. When you do spot a talented new artist, do everything you can to make your feelings known. Buy their CD, spread the word, and GO TO THEIR SHOWS. Nothing impresses the powers-that-be more than good "buzz" on a new act. With your help, maybe we can bring back the qualities that made bands like the ORB so big- lyrics, melodies, and harmonies. Keep the faith, and support new bands! Oh, and TIP YOUR WAITERS AND WAITRESSES 15-20%!

