We Built This S**tty’
The worst song of all time? Les Garland begs to differ

Recently, Blender magazine got a lot of media attention when it released its list of the “Top 50 Worst Songs of All Time.” Topping Blender’s very subjective (in my humble opinion) list was Starship’s 1985 No. 1 hit, “We Built This City.” As you may recall, radio icon Les Garland provided the voice of the disc jockey heard over the song’s bridge.

After the list was released, I reached out to Garland to get his reaction to the song’s ignoble ranking. “Like many others, I was taken aback by the Blender selection,” he says. “Not only about the Starship selection, but also Simon & Garfunkel — even The Beatles. What a joke, actually.”

Garland took the time to share the back story of how his involvement with the song came about. He says, “Back in 1985, I stopped by a Sausalito, CA recording studio with manager — and dear bud — Bill Thompson to say hello to Starship members Grace Slick, Paul Kantner, Mickey Thomas and Craig Chaquico.

“While we were there, Peter Wolf — the producer, not the J. Geils singer — played a few tracks for me. As ‘We Built This City’ blasted out of the system, Wolf casually commented that a DJ voiceover would sound cool over the musical bridge in the song. ‘The band looked at me like I was the chosen one, so into the studio I went to make up whatever it was I was going to blab. Wolf asked if I wanted to hear the bridge again for familiarization, to which I replied, ‘ Nah, that might ruin the magic. Just put it in the red.’”

“Right at the exact appropriate moment, right on cue, I started rattling off some bullshit about ‘driving across the Golden Gate Bridge on another sunny Sunday in the city that rocks, the city that never stops,’ hitting the musical post-spot-on. I left that day never knowing that this record would one day be released as a single. Singles — remember those?”

Straight To No. 1

“Several months later I received a call from an RCA attorney asking me how much I’d want for my voice to appear on the album when it was released,” Garland continues. “I turned down any monetary offer and opted instead to have whatever my proceeds might be go to the Ty Martel Foundation for cancer research. A few months later the album was released, and ‘We Built This City’ was the first single.”

“I’m looking out over that Golden Gate Bridge on another gorgeous sunny Saturday, and I’m seeing bumper-to-bumper traffic....

“Here’s your favorite radio station, in your favorite radio city, the city by the Bay, the city that rocks, the city that never sleeps!”

The Words That Made Him Infamous

Below is the bit that Les Garland improvised over the bridge of Starship’s “We Built This City.”

“It’s funny, because in the video you can spot this animated van going across the Golden Gate Bridge with the word ‘Garman’ spray-painted, graffiti-like, on it. Six weeks later I was walking the main drag in Montreux, Switzerland with some friends, and a carload of teens cruises by. Booming across the Golden Gate Bridge with the word ‘Garman’ spray-painted, graffiti-like, on it. Six weeks later I was walking the main drag in Montreux, Switzerland with some friends, and a carload of teens cruises by. Booming across the Golden Gate Bridge with the word ‘Garman’ spray-painted, graffiti-like, on it. Six weeks later I was walking the main drag in Montreux, Switzerland with some friends, and a carload of teens cruises by. Booming across the Golden Gate Bridge with the word ‘Garman’ spray-painted, graffiti-like, on it. Six weeks later I was walking the main drag in Montreux, Switzerland with some friends, and a carload of teens cruises by. Booming

What’s On....

WXSS/Milwaukee

Our good friends at Mediabase hooked us up with the top 10 airing on WXSS from April 26-May 1, 2004. See what Brian Kelly is subjecting Milwaukee to!

What CD's are in your car player as we speak? Usher, D12, Maroon 5, Outkast, John Mayer, Barenaked Ladies, Robbie Williams, the Scrubs soundtrack and The Polyphonic Spree.

Hobbies: Watching and performing stand-up comedy, traveling, watching movies and doing things I've never done before.

Guilty-pleasure (off-duty) music: The Have a Nice Day collection, Alice Cooper's Greatest Hits, movie soundtracks, early Thin John and Everclear.

Secret passion? Puh-leeze — I have no secrets. I would totally suck at poker. Name one the gadget you can't live without? ReplayTV (kind of like TiVo) has changed my life.

Wheels: Chrysler Concorde.

Favorite food: Lou Manelli's pizza out of Chicago. I have them shipped in.

Favorite local restaurant: Mr. B's.

Favorite cereal: Shredded Wheat.

Favorite junk food: Chocolate-covered almonds from the freezer.

Favorite city in the world: A three-way tie, in alphabetical order: Chicago, Los Angeles and Milwaukee.

Favorite vacation destination: Always L.A.

Favorite TV show: Scrubs.

What's the last movie you saw? There hasn't been a good one since Elf. It's an instant classic.

Last movie you rented? The X-Files Revolutions: What a snooze-fest.

Favorite nonradio publication: Entertainment Weekly. I read it to cover to cover every Saturday afternoon.

What current radio stations, other than your own, do you admire, and why? Well, I've had a chance to listen to all of our Entercom CHR stations, and they are all terrific. I've been sampling our latest acquisition, WZPA/Indianapolis, and Scott Sands has got it all going on, with great stuff between the music and a killer morning show.

Favorite word or phrase? “Let's play the tape all the way through on that idea.”

Last person you went out to dinner with? Josh Kelley and Donna Passantino from Hollywood Records. We had a blast.

Most annoying thing people ask you: “Why do you play the same songs over and over?”