

SOON TO BE A MAJOR

A CULT FOLLOWING . . . A REUNION TOUR . . . MIDDLE-AGED INVESTMENT BANKERS CRAWLING ON THEIR BELLIES LIKE REPTILES . . . FOR WASHINGTON LAWYER TONY THOMPSON AND THE REST OF THE MOST FAMOUS UTTERLY OBSCURE ROCK BAND IN AMERICA, MIDLIFE DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS • BY PETER CARLSON



The dude in the death's head T-shirt stared through the glass door at the band with the gastroenterologist guitarist. He pushed the door open and yelled: "Bob Cohan!"

But Bob Cohan, one of the band's two lawyer guitarists, didn't hear him. Neither did the rest of the Rising Storm. They were rehearsing at full throttle, thumping away on "Don't Look Back," an obscure '60s song

The Rising Storm in 1967, above. From left: Rich Weinberg, Todd Cohen, Tony Thompson, Tom Scheft, Charlie Rockwell and Bob Cohan. Right, the band in 1992. From left: Cohen, Cohan, Thompson, Scheft, Weinberg, Rockwell.



MOTION PICTURE



'OUR GUITARIST HAS GONE TO SUE SOMEONE,' DR. RICHARD WEINBERG SAID INTO HIS MICROPHONE, PRETENDING TO ADDRESS A CROWD OF SCREAMING FANS, 'SO WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A SHORT BREAK NOW.'

by the Remains. So the dude in the death's head T-shirt, who manages this old Boston warehouse where rock bands rent rehearsal space, bellowed louder: "BOB COHAN! TELEPHONE CALL!"

Oh no. Not again. All day yesterday, while the band was trying to practice, Cohan—who says, "I sue people, that's what I like to do"—kept getting phone calls about some cockamamie case involving two American Indians battling over sales commissions. And now it was starting again. Cohan put down his guitar and limped toward the pay phone, favoring the knee he'd recently fractured tripping over one of his kids.

"Our guitarist has gone to sue someone," Dr. Richard Weinberg, the gastroenterologist guitarist, said into his microphone, pretending to address a crowd of screaming fans, "so we're going to take a short break now."

Things were not going well for the Rising Storm. It wasn't just the constant interruptions for legal consultations. Or the squabbles over who was playing too loud or who was hitting the wrong chords. Or the fact that the engineer who was supposed to record the band had just been arrested. Or the fact that its entire performing repertoire consisted of songs written before the Nixon administration. Or the fact that the guys were all 43 years old now and looked it. Or the fact that they hadn't really played together much in the past 25 years. Those were merely minor annoyances. The real problem was the fact that it was now less than 12 hours before the first gig on their long-awaited comeback tour, and their lead singer, Tony Thompson, who is a partner in the Washington law firm of Zuckerman Spaeder Goldstein Taylor & Kolker, had blown out his voice. It happened at last night's rehearsal, while he was belting out the band's butt-kicking version of "Hang On Sloopy." Now his voice was shot. You could practically see smoke rising from his vocal cords. He couldn't sing. He could barely even talk.

Poor Tony. He'd worked for six months to get his voice in shape, singing for hours in the basement of his house in Northwest Washington or driving around the Beltway, bellowing along with his Rising Storm tapes. And now—on the morning of the Boston gig of their Ain't Dead Yet tour, on the very day that the Lawrence (Mass.) Eagle-Tribune called them "Rock Cult Heroes" and the Boston Herald called their first album "one of the most collectible discs ever released" and the Boston Phoenix ran a 25-year-old picture of the band with a caption identifying them as "The Rising Storm, that late '60s rock sensation"—now, as the guys began their final rehearsal, Tony Thompson's voice was a smoldering ruin. He figured he'd better do the rehearsal without singing.

"You can use my mike," Thompson told Charlie Rockwell, the keyboard player. "I'm not gonna sing."

"You're not going to sing *at all*?" asked Dr. Weinberg.

"I'm gonna try not to," Thompson croaked.

"Why don't you *talk* the words?" Dr. Weinberg suggested.

"No, don't use your voice at all," said Cohan. "Pantomime it."

So he did. The band kicked into its opening number, "Slow Down," and Thompson stood at an empty mike stand, silently mouthing the words.

No, things were not going well for the Rising Storm, a rock band in the midst of a midlife crisis.

THE RISING STORM IS THE MOST FAMOUS UTTERLY OBSCURE rock band in America.

The Storm arose in the mid-'60s at, of all places, Phillips Academy in Andover, Mass., the same blue-blooded prep school that produced Oliver Wendell Holmes and Frederick Law Olmsted and Edgar Rice Burroughs and George Herbert Walker Bush and other prominent Protestants with three or four names. In the mid-'60s, Andover, as the place is usually called, was still very much an "old school" boarding school where the boys—it was all boys then—wore suits and ties and went to chapel every morning and called their teachers "sir" and were groomed to take their rightful place among America's ruling elite. The boys were also groomed to meet—and later mate with—similarly blue-blooded females, thus producing the next generation of the ruling elite. To this end, the girls at nearby prep schools were bused into Andover to attend "mixers"—excruciatingly awkward dances for sweaty-palmed youths who had never before seen each other. In the 1966-67 school year, the entertainment at those mixers was the Rising Storm, a band composed of six Andover seniors led by Tony Thompson and famous for long slow songs that permitted randy preppies to grind their pelvises together for 20 minutes.

During spring break that year, band members pooled their earnings, borrowed money from their parents and raised \$1,000—the cost of five days in a local recording studio and 500 copies of the resultant vanity album. Titled "Calm Before," it consisted of extremely Caucasian versions of such black classics as "In the Midnight Hour" and "Big Boss Man," plus five original songs, including the wonderfully raucous "She Loved Me," a song so greasy you could comb your hair with it, and the incredibly affected "Frozen Laughter," a song so arty it quoted T.S. Eliot. Band members peddled the albums at \$3 apiece to relatives and friends and relative friends. Then they all graduated and went off to



In color-coordinated (sort of) psychedelic splendor, the boys in the band practice their art, circa 1967.

'IT'S ONLY BEEN IN RECENT YEARS,' TONY THOMPSON SAID, 'THAT I'VE BEGUN TO THINK, "HELL, I'VE MADE IT. I'M A PARTNER IN A PROMINENT WASHINGTON LAW FIRM. SO WHAT?'"

colleges and careers and marriages and kids . . . and the Rising Storm sank without a trace.

Until 1981.

In 1981, an article in the Boston Phoenix revealed that "Calm Before" had become a cult album, fetching \$200 or \$350 or even \$500 a copy. Collectors were touting it as a seminal work! As the ultimate '60s garage band album! As the precursor of punk rock! The guys were stunned when they heard that. Stunned and flattered and willing to be lured out of retirement for a three-gig Boston reunion that summer. They were genuine adults by then—two lawyers, a newspaper editor, a gastroenterologist, a college professor and a civil engineer/officer in the Vermont National Guard—and they were truly amazed when they saw their fans: black-clad, slam-dancing young punk rockers who actually knew the words to Rising Storm songs! At one gig, a sweet young thing insisted that she wipe the sweat off Dr. Richard Weinberg's neck! And another young babe asked Bob Cohan to autograph her T-shirt. On the chest. While she was wearing it. Whew! Heady stuff for aging preppies!

And it got weirder. Boston Magazine and the Boston Globe did stories on the Rising Storm. Eva, a French record company, released a bootleg edition of "Calm Before," complete with French liner notes. Psycho Records, a British company, included three Rising Storm songs on an anthology album with a cover that showed a hypodermic needle speeding through the cosmos like a rocket. And Arf! Arf!, a small Boston label, recorded the Rising Storm performing at the class of '67's 15th reunion in 1982 and released an album called "Alive Again at Andover." And Stanton Park, another small Boston label, re-released "Calm Before." And then Arf! Arf! produced a CD that included both "Calm Before" and "Alive Again"—and it actually started getting airplay on some hip college radio stations.

Meanwhile, Goldmine magazine, the bible of record collecting, named "Calm Before" one of the 100 top collectibles in recording history. And Dr. Weinberg took out an ad in Goldmine offering to sell a sealed copy of "Calm Before" to the highest bidder—no bids under \$750, please—and after much fevered competition, it went to an Italian collector for . . . \$1,300!

Obviously, the public was clamoring for another Rising Storm reunion. So last fall, Erik Lindgren, head of Arf! Arf!, started arranging the Ain't Dead Yet spring tour with club dates in Cambridge and Hoboken, a triumphant performance at the class of '67's 25th reunion in Andover and a genuine recording session in Boston, a session that might yield a new Rising Storm record.

So the band gathered in Washington last January for

four marathon days of rehearsal. Then everybody went back home, communicating for the next five months by faxing lyric sheets and playlists and Fed-Exing practice tapes. And Tony Thompson started cruising the Beltway late at night, singing the Rising Storm's *oeuvre* at the top of his lungs, getting his voice in shape.

"I HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT I'M NOT A SIGNIFICANT LAWYER," Tony Thompson said. "I'm just another lawyer in a town filled with lawyers."

He was sitting on his back-yard patio in Washington on a soft spring night a few weeks before the Ain't Dead Yet tour. At 43, with his hair a little thinner and his gut a little wider, he looked more like a lawyer than a rocker. A couple of hours earlier, he'd barbecued some steaks and ears of corn for his wife, Mady, who is also an attorney, and their three daughters. Now dinner was done and the girls were in bed and he was sipping red wine and talking, as middle-aged men sometimes do, about the strange paths that life takes.

"I look back on my life," he said, "and I say, 'Well, jeez, if I really had it to do again, what would I do?' If I had the choice, I think I'd probably—if money wasn't a factor—I'd be a composer. I would. That's what I'd really like to do with my life. Not just a composer but a performer. I like getting up on stage and performing."

Law never came easy to him, he said. Music did. So did art. His father, Benjamin Thompson, is a prominent architect, and Tony inherited some of that talent too. "I don't even have to try, it just comes. Whereas to become a lawyer, to go to Andover and Harvard and then law school was just a major, major effort to train myself, to discipline myself. Now, I've gotten good at it. It's funny, you spend a huge amount of your life trying to put your square peg into a round hole, and then somehow the stuff that comes natural is the stuff that people remember you for . . . The point is that music is something that comes naturally, and it's something that I really love and feel instinctively.

And yeah, if I had to do it all over again, maybe I'd be smart enough not to fight my nature and do it."

Why did you fight your nature?

"I could answer that right away," Thompson said. "Except my wife is sitting here and she's probably heard 25 different answers to that question." He turned to Mady. "Why don't you answer that?"

"I think the answer is that Tony's father was very successful and very good, and I think Tony didn't want to be in his father's shadow and he wanted to prove he could be his own person," she said. "And his



Shaking their well-upholstered butts, aging preppies do long-forgotten dances as the Rising Storm rocks out.

'THIS ALBUM SHOWED WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE IN HIGH SCHOOL—ALL THE SELF-DOUBT YOU HAVE IN HIGH SCHOOL,' SAID ONE 29-YEAR-OLD STORM FAN. 'THAT INNOCENCE IS CAPTURED FOREVER ON THIS RECORD.'

family life was kind of difficult. His parents were getting divorced. And he wanted to show them that he wasn't just going to tag along after his father. That would be my explanation."

"That was a very, very hard part of my life," Tony said. All through college he'd planned to become an architect. "And in my senior year at Harvard, when my family situation was extremely bitter, I just said, 'Screw it, I'm going to get away from it all.' I think I picked the law because it was the hardest thing."

"It's like people who have lisps going into radio announcing," said Mady. "It didn't come naturally to him."

"I was going to prove to myself that I could do it. Who cared that my father was a famous architect and I had all these connections? I was rejecting those connections and all this privileged stuff and I was going to law school [at Antioch] and I was going to do it on my own in a different city 500 miles away. And that's what I dedicated my life to, starting in 1973. And it's only been in recent years that I've begun to think, 'Hell, I've made it. I'm a partner in a prominent Washington law firm. So what?' " He laughed. "Maybe now's the time to quit and go back to being a musician." He laughed again.

"That's a very good story, Daddy," his 12-year-old daughter yelled from her upstairs bedroom.

"Good night, Hannah. Go to sleep."

"Tell the story about how you had to walk six miles in the snow to school," Hannah yelled.

"With bare feet!" Tony added. "Anyway, I don't find myself on weekends and vacations writing law review articles . . ."

Instead, he found himself spending weekends writing and re-writing a song for the Rising Storm's recording session and getting his voice in shape for the tour.

IN BOSTON, AT THAT LAST REHEARSAL BEFORE THE FIRST gig on the tour, a professional voice teacher urged Tony Thompson to treat his battered vocal cords with hot liquids, specifically herbal tea. Tony listened attentively. Then he went off and treated his vocal cords with a cold liquid, specifically beer, which not only soothed his throat but eased his nerves a bit.

"I'm nervous," he said as he walked toward T.T. the Bear's, the club where the Storm was due to perform in a few hours. "I've been nervous all day."

It was a small club, decorated with posters that showed a scrawny naked man and the words "Caucasian Psychosis," which turned out to be the name of last week's band. Inside, the place was as dank as a cave and redolent of old beer. The ancient wooden floors creaked, and the men's room was garnished with existentialist graffiti ("I know nothing and there is nothing to do but fall prey to desire"). It was the kind of dive, Dr. Richard Weinberg said, half jokingly, that he'd usually cross the street to avoid.

But not tonight. Tonight, it was crowded with a couple of hundred fans who'd paid \$7 each to see these living semi-legends. Several had brought along copies of "Calm Before" and asked for autographs. One of them was Jeff "Mono Man" Connolly, lead singer of the Lyres, who were sharing the bill with the Storm. "In the exotic genre of prep rock," he said as his heroes signed the album, "they were the best ever. Absolutely!" Aram Heller, a 29-year-old professional dry cleaner and amateur guitarist, agreed. "This album showed what it's

like to be in high school—all the self-doubt you have in high school," Heller said. "That innocence is captured forever on this record."

Tony Thompson took the stage looking very preppy in a striped shirt and khaki pants that covered the pads he wore to prevent him from injuring his 43-year-old leg by banging it too hard with his tambourine. He took a sip of his newest vocal-cord medicine—Scotch and water—then put the cup down on an amplifier and started the show. "Well, thank you all for coming," he said.

"Yooooooooooooooooowwwwwww!" somebody replied.

It was an eclectic crowd, ranging from a blonde in a black leather halter to guys with tattoos and greasy black hair to Thompson's mom, who had no visible tattoos and whose gray hair was impeccably clean.

The band kicked into the first song, "Slow Down," and Thompson roared into the vocals: "C'mon, baby, take a walk with me . . . !" His voice was a little raspy but nothing that would bother folks weaned on Tom Waits or Bob Dylan. When the song ended, the crowd cheered and then Thompson said, "Here's a song from our first album," and the band played "Don't Look Back" and Thompson started banging his tambourine on his left hand, which he had prudently protected from injury with a black leather glove.

"Yeah!" somebody in the crowd yelled. There wasn't any dancing going on yet, but there was a fair amount of rhythmic head-nodding.

The band was cooking. Dr. Richard Weinberg, the gastroenterologist guitarist, played a smoking solo on "Baby Please Don't Go," and then the Storm stormed into "In the Midnight Hour" and Thompson, dancing around as he banged on a cowbell, yelled, "We're gettin' warmed up now."

"Yee-ha!" somebody bellowed. Out in the audience, there was no dancing going on yet, but there was quite a bit of rhythmic shoulder-shrugging.

Bob Cohan, who had not received a single legal phone call all night, played a screaming guitar solo on "She Loved Me," and then Thompson safely negotiated the vocals on "Hang On Sloopy," the song that had nuked his vocal cords the previous night.

At the end of the set, the crowd screamed for an encore, and the Rising Storm responded with a steaming rendition of "Time Won't Let Me," and although there wasn't any dancing going on, there was some fairly vigorous rhythmic body-bobbing. And in the back, Aram Heller and a bunch of other guys in their twenties expressed their awe by bowing theatrically toward the bandstand.

After the show, the band gathered in the club dressing room, which looked like a dangerous alley in a bad neighborhood, and rewarded one another with high fives and slaps on the back. "I was possessed!" Dr. Weinberg marveled. "You get up there and you get in the zone! What a high! Your adrenal glands are going like crazy!"

"Your adrenal glands?" somebody asked.

"Yeah. They're what makes adrenaline."

Outside the dressing room, a woman was waiting for Tony Thompson. It was his mom.

"You were a ham out there," she

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told him, "but you were so much more than just a ham."

"I was a little bit of a ham," Thompson admitted sheepishly.

"But you were so much *more* than that," his mom reassured him.

IT WAS DUSK AND THE SETTING SUN threw long, cool shadows over the red brick buildings and the stately old trees and the lush manicured lawns of Phillips Academy, a school that looks as if it were designed to ensure that its students feel at home when they graduate and move on to the Ivy League.

On the manicured lawn, the mother and the wife of Dr. Richard Weinberg, the gastroenterologist guitarist, sat under a huge striped tent with the rest of the class of '67 and its guests, eating strawberries as red as rubies.

Ilene Weinberg, 66, had seen the Rising Storm at T.T.'s the previous night and thought the show was great: "It's like good sex," she said with a naughty grin. "Sometimes technique is not as important as enthusiasm."

Her son's wife, Catherine Rolih, a 32-year-old endocrinologist, thought she detected an ominous change in the band's attitude. "It was pretty much of a lark at first, but now they're getting serious," she said. "They're all pretty obsessive-compulsive people." Of course, it could be worse. "I was talking to the other wives and we decided that if this is all it takes to get them through their midlife crisis, it's better than divorce or affairs."

Meanwhile, in a cavernous field house a few hundred yards away, the Rising Storm was getting nervous. It was already an hour after the band was supposed to begin its gig, but the audience had not yet wandered in from dinner. Drummer/English professor Tom Scheft, looking very anxious, scooted over to the bar, where Tony Thompson, looking very calm, was getting a drink.

"Come on!" Scheft said. "Let's make some noise!"

"There's nobody here," Thompson replied between sips.

"So let's make some noise," Scheft said. "Bring 'em in."

"Timing is everything," Thompson said with the mellow calm of a man who has spent the last couple of hours imbibing with old friends. "In real estate, location is everything. But in rock-and-roll, timing is everything."

Scheft shot him a dirty look, then dashed off to round up the rest of the band.

Ten minutes later, Thompson joined them on the bandstand. They launched

into their opening song, and Thompson immediately started hamming it up, slinging his guitar around and strumming it with wild windmill motions. "Woowoooooooo!" he bellowed, "if you want our luuuuv to laaaaast!"

It was a performance with more enthusiasm than technique, but Ilene Weinberg liked it. She theatrically threw down her metal cane and said, "It's a miracle!" and started to dance.

Unfortunately, not many people joined her. They mostly stood around observing and commenting. "They're better now than they were then," said Allen Prichard, who is, like so many Andover grads, an attorney. "They were all amplifiers back then. I used to play Frisbee with their record. You think I would have done that if I knew it was worth \$1,300?"

The problem with this gig was the hall: Designed for track meets, it was a place with the acoustics of an oil drum and the cozy intimacy of the Astrodome. It did have one advantage, though: a big table stocked with plenty of free booze. As bottles emptied, the dance floor filled, and lawyers, doctors and bankers started shaking their well-upholstered butts, doing dances unseen in decades—the Frug, the Swim, the Watusi.

Aram Heller was amazed. One of several Storm fans who'd crashed the reunion, he was stunned at the enthusiastic dancing. "You'd never see this at a rock club," he said. "Dancing? No way. It's not cool. Maybe moving up and down, but not like this."

A few minutes later, he too was out on the dance floor, doing a sort of modified head-nodding, shoulder-shrugging, body-bobbing thang.

By the time the third set began, it was after midnight and the crowd was extremely well lubricated. So was the lead singer. Tony Thompson still showed plenty of enthusiasm, but his technique was fading. He missed cues, muffed chord changes, forgot lyrics. During "Don't Look Back," he stumbled off the stage and nearly fell down on the dance floor, where several sweating Andover alumni were doing the Gator, a dance that involves crawling across the floor like a reptile. The audience didn't seem to mind Tony's errors—Gator dancers generally are not finicky—but the other band members were fed up. Finally, Tom Scheft, seething with anger, laid down his drumsticks and ran off the bandstand. The rest of the Storm fled too, leaving Thompson alone on stage, muttering into the microphone, "Sorry, folks, we lost our drummer."

Apparently, the show was over. Thompson stepped offstage and somebody slapped him on the back and said, "Hey, great set, guy!" but he was still stunned at Scheft's anger. "He said I

was too loose out there. Some people believe you always have to be tight. Hey, these people were my bleeping *room-mates!*" he said. "Tom doesn't remember 25 years ago—and it is hard to remember, I'll admit it—but we just *played*. We *improvised*."

"It's not like you're trying to be Journey or Yes," Aram Heller reassured him.

"Bands I've never heard of," Thompson replied.

Suddenly, a large, sweat-soaked investment banker, a leader in the Gator dancing movement, gave Thompson a big bear hug and kissed him theatrically on the cheek. "You gotta have soul in this business," he said, "and this guy has it!"

Meanwhile, in the back of the room, Thomas Parry, an Andover alumnus and independent movie producer, perused the display of Rising Storm newspaper clippings and wondered: *Is there a movie in this story?*

DOWNSTAIRS, IN THE BASEMENT OF THE recording studio, the band members were huddled behind closed doors, hashing out the dispute that had ended the Andover gig so abruptly the previous night. Upstairs, Erik Lindgren, the head of Arf! Arf!, sat in the control room, shrugging off the whole incident. The same thing had happened at their 15th reunion, he said: "It was a rewrite of 10 years ago. Instead of Rich walking off, saying, 'I quit,' it was Tom. And they're sensitive artists, so they're talking it out."

The band had five new songs to record today, Lindgren said, and if they turned out to be good, he hoped to put them together with "Calm Before" and sell the package to a French record company. Then maybe he could talk the company into paying for a European tour. "It could happen," he said.

And now, he added, this Hollywood producer, Tom Parry, thought there might be a movie in the Rising Storm saga. Lindgren had met Parry at the reunion, hyped him on the Storm story and watched his eyes light up. "He was so excited," Lindgren said. "It was like, 'I finally found a great plot!' And it is a cool story. It really is. It's a fairy tale."

Slowly, the band members lumbered up the stairs. They all looked very serious, but Tony Thompson seemed particularly solemn. "Tom doesn't drink and neither does Charlie," he said, sounding very contrite. "And they feel very strongly about it, and I was bombed last night. I feel really bad about it. There's a unanimous belief that I screwed up. I forgot the words, I forgot the chord changes . . ."

"It had the energy, though," Lindgren said.

"We've never had a fight like this," Thompson continued. "Twenty-five years

of really close friendship is in jeopardy . . ."

It was a sobering lesson: Even in rock bands, those choirs of Dionysus, a man can't get away from duties and responsibilities.

Thompson walked into the studio. The floor was covered with so many wires it looked like a dock full of eels. He plugged in his guitar and started tuning up. The first song the Storm decided to record was Thompson's "Josephina," and he started to sing:

Josephina, I remember when the world was young;

Little child, I remember when we'd laugh and run.

In the control room, Lindgren was smiling. "This is fun!" he said. "It's good to see the Rising Storm in the studio."

The band did the song once, then again and again and again. Tom Parry, the Hollywood producer, arrived and watched from the control room. After a while, the band took a break and Thompson came over to talk to Parry. "This is a little bit surreal," he said. "What are you thinking of doing?"

He was thinking of doing a movie based on the Rising Storm, he said, a movie about "the path not taken," a movie he described as "The Big Chill' meets 'The Commitments.'"

"When we were all 18," Parry said, "we all made choices about where we were heading. Clearly you were very talented and you chose a different route."

"It never occurred to me that I had a choice to go into music," Thompson said. "It never occurred to me."

"Out of pure serendipity, you're being given another choice," Parry said. "At 18 you had a choice and you made a choice. It's real rare that another juncture comes and you're presented with another choice."

"You know," Thompson said, "I said to my wife, 'Mady, what if I said screw it all and became an artist?' It wouldn't necessarily be the Rising Storm, but I'd like to be a composer. And she said, 'No. You can't do that. You have three kids now.'"

He shrugged and smiled. The band was starting to play again, and he stood up, walked back into the studio and started singing.

Pretty Josie, girl, you know it's been a thrill;

The light is fading, now I guess I'm up and over the hill.

AT THE GIG AT MAXWELL'S IN HOBOKEN the next night, the club was packed with real Rising Storm fans, people who knew the music and yelled out the names of the songs they wanted to hear: "Frozen Laughter." "Signed DC." And there was this beautiful young woman with long

black hair and a sexy black dress who spent the whole gig doing a slithery dance right in front of Tony Thompson, giving him the eye as he sang. And after the show, she came up to him, shot him a sultry glance and said, "Nice set!"

"It's not that often that a 43-year-old man gets semi-approached like that," Thompson said later, laughing. "It used to happen to me. But not anymore."

The Ain't Dead Yet tour was history now, and Thompson was back in his office at Zuckerman Spaeder, sitting in his plump leather chair behind his big wooden desk, wearing a white shirt and a red tie and looking very much like a middle-aged lawyer. Behind him was a map of a piece of property involved in one of his cases. At the top of it, somebody had drawn in where the sewer hookups would go.

The Hoboken gig was great, he said, but the best part of the tour was the recording session. The Storm had laid down the basic tracks for five new songs, and they were good. In a couple of months, everyone would get together at a Washington studio and finish the songs. And then Lindgren would try to release them in Europe and then see about a European tour.

"It's something I'd love to see happen," Thompson said, "but I'm not counting on it."

He wasn't counting on a Rising Storm movie either, although Tom Parry had come down to the Hoboken gig and taken the band out to dinner to discuss it with them. He was talking about buying their story, fictionalizing it and then filming it with professional actors. Thompson was dubious. "I find myself not really able to focus on that," he said. "It's flattering but it's not realistic."

Besides, he wasn't thrilled with the whole premise of the movie. He thought the idea of "the road not taken" was kind of trite. "I don't want to be portrayed as somebody who's struggling with the road not taken, because I'm not," he said. "I enjoy practicing law. I've got a great law firm and great partners who have been very supportive of me about all this Rising Storm stuff. I don't spend time kicking myself because I'm not a composer. I paid my money and I made my choice. I have three great kids and a great wife and I like my life."

And now it was time to get back to that life. On his desk were a pile of mail and a pile of faxes and a pile of pink telephone messages and a row of yellow stickum messages. On his computer there were more messages—78, to be exact.

"I'm gonna get myself back into my cases as fast as I can," he said, staring at all the paper that awaited him. "I've got a lot of work to do and a lot of responsibilities." ■