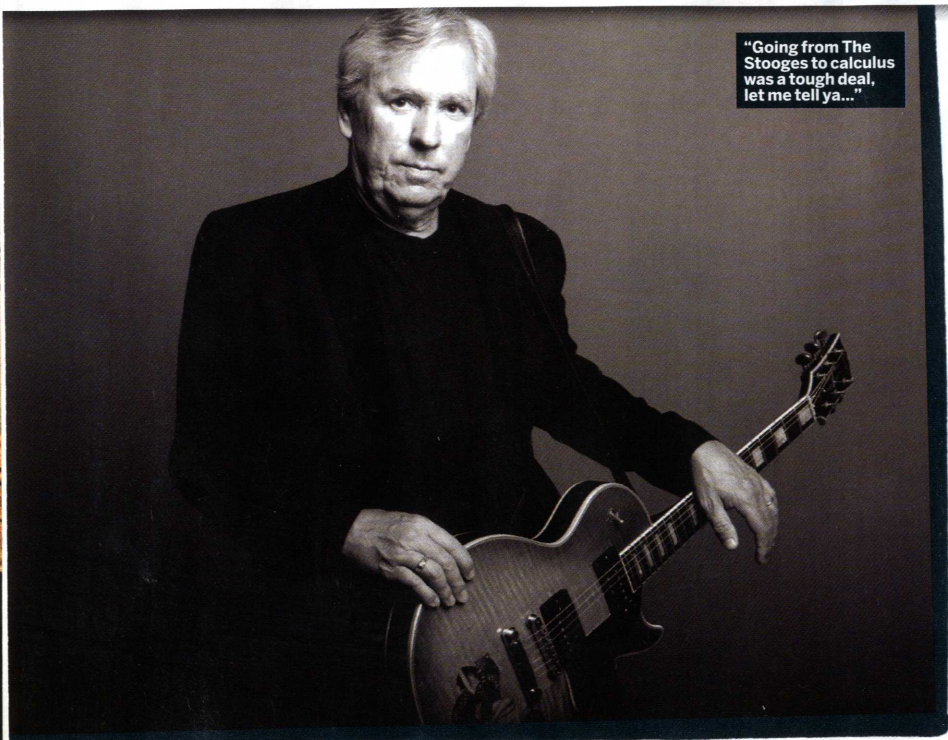


FIRST CUTS

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO UNCUT



"Going from The Stooges to calculus was a tough deal, let me tell ya..."

"BEING A STOOGIE IS MY RETIREMENT JOB..."

The strange story of James Williamson: from The Stooges, to Raw Powerpoint Presentations – and back again!

THEY LOOK LIKE THE epitome of rock 'n' roll dissolution in the picture on the right. With the bass guitar foisted upon him, there's the late Ron Asheton. At the front, in some interesting trousers, Iggy Pop and Scott Asheton. And behind them, who else but the Vice President Of Technology Standards with Sony Electronics (retired)? James Williamson's journey from The Stooges, to the corporate moshpit of Silicon Valley, and back again, is one of the weirder rock stories of recent years. Iggy's decision to reconvene the 1972 *Raw Power*-era Stooges, in the wake of Ron Asheton's death, meant dragging Williamson back from a very different life.

"The Stooges couldn't really go out without me because they wouldn't be The Stooges," says Williamson. "You had one Stooge left and Iggy, so they kind of needed

me. I said, 'What the hell!' I'm not doing anything, this is my retirement job. Actually I am doing something, consulting for Sony and other people."

Williamson originally split from Iggy in 1976, returning to collaborate with him on the *New Values* and, abortively, *Soldier* solo albums. After '76's *Metallic KO*, Williamson remembers, "Iggy and I decided we'd try to get another record deal, and we wrote some more songs. We never did get a record deal 'til much later when I sold the recordings to Bomp, and they released it as *Kill City* [1977]. Anyway, Iggy was in bad shape, and essentially we couldn't go on. He eventually went over to Berlin with Bowie, and I started working as an audio engineer.

"But very quickly, I started seeing around me the beginnings of the computer wave. I started getting more and more interested in that. It grabbed me as being more exciting

than rock 'n' roll had become. I decided to go back to school. Coming from being a Stooge to doing differential equations and calculus was a tough deal, let me tell ya, but I did it."

Williamson soon became immersed in the revolutionary business world of Silicon Valley, "The most exciting thing. I've never regretted it at all. It's been a great ride. These guys are by and large nerds and geeks, they don't listen to The Stooges much. In the last dozen years, when people started finding out about that, I always got the question from them, 'Why didn't you tell us all this stuff?' 'Well, it never came up.'"

Williamson and Iggy didn't talk at all for 20 years after the *Soldier* sessions. "Then we started talking mostly about business things. We really haven't been talking regularly until this year."

According to Williamson, the reactivated band are now getting along just fine. "We're all strong personalities in our own right, but I think we're also cautious. Let's just say we're more mature, and trying not to pick any fights with each other." There have also been "discussions" about new songs. "I've

got some new riffs that are good," he says. "I believe something will come of it."

In the meantime, the live setlist is focused on *Raw Power*, *Kill City* and other unreleased songs from that period, which seems to be going down pretty well.

"The fans so far have been just incredible," he says. "It's really kind of embarrassing, because I'm not into the rock

star thing too much. About six or seven songs into the set in São Paulo [on November 7], this kid tried to rush the stage and some security guys just grabbed him, beat the crap out of him. That pissed Iggy off, and he decided, OK, we're gonna do the stage invasion. So on "Shake Appeal", he called 'em all up. I've got guys kissing my boots, all this shit is going on!"

Iggy And The Stooges arrive in the UK in May, but there's also *Raw Power: The Masters Edition* due in April, featuring the return of Bowie's original mix. "The Bowie mix has been off the market for a number of years because of Iggy's [1997] mix. Bowie's mix is 'unique', I guess is the best way of putting it. We recorded it poorly. It's quite possible there are no decent tapes, and Bowie did the best he could. Gotta give the Devil his due, you know?"

"Iggy didn't know what he was doing, but he always thought he did. It came out fine. It has a special sound, a special place, and I like the songs. But I was astonished when I realised how this whole new generation really loves that music. In my era, my own peer group didn't want to know about it." ●