

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT
The Reopening

**David Fishof and Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy Camp
Masterclass**

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Andrew Schwartz: You're listening to The Reopening. The podcast that asks, "How will America work through the COVID-19 pandemic? How will we innovate, and how will it change our global economy?" Each week we invite top business leaders to share their insights on the road to economic revival here at home, and around the world.

Scott Miller: Today our guest is famed music producer and sports agent David Fishof. In 1997, David launched the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp, a place where people can experience the life of a rock star with rock stars. When Covid-19 put a damper on large gatherings, David reimaged the camp as Master Class, which now delivers the rock experience through streaming. David talks with us about technology, social connection, and the creative power of music.

Andrew Schwartz: I'm Andrew Schwartz.

Scott Miller: And I'm Scott Miller.

Andrew Schwartz: And this is The Reopening.

Andrew Schwartz: David Fishof, it is so great to have you here today. You're truly a renaissance man as a sports agent of course, NFL stars Phil Simms, Mark Bavaro, Vince Ferragamo, Jack Reynolds, as well as baseball's Lou Piniella, Dave Madigan, and you know one of my heroes, one of the greatest all-time relievers, Randy Meyers of the Baltimore Orioles and other teams. And then it comes to your music career. I mean, I could go on and on. One of my amazing things I think you're done is you put together Ringo and Ringo's All Stars, which included of course Levon Helm, Dr. John, we could go on. You've been involved in the entertainment business for a really long time. Some of your films include Dirty Dancing the Concert Tour, American Bandstand Tour. You know, we could do all this for days. But really, we wanted to ask you now, you are the founder of Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. And that's something that people do normally live in the flesh with their rock and roll heroes. Then the pandemic comes. So what do you do to keep the rock and roll fantasy alive? Scott and I want to know. So that's why we brought you on.

David Fishof: Well, thank you. So glad I'm here! And thank you for that amazing introduction, I appreciate that. And you know, basically, I did all those things ADD. So, I get bored with one thing, I gotta go onto the next thing and I got to be creative, you know. So that's why I'm loving these master classes because every day, I'm waking up and saying "Hey, how about get this guy for a master class. How about that person." And today I woke up and I said, "Tom McClean let me hear that story about American Pie." So, what I did was I'm doing the camps – I'm ready to do two camps. I had the Scorpion set up in Vegas. I had Cheap Trick and doing a Beatles Camp in New York, and I had been looking in the last 24 months, how do I get my business online? Because if I'm going to become a big business, I have to find a way to get online. So, I looked at lessons online and looked at so many different ways to do a camp online. And then it just hit me one day, let me – I offer this masterclass at each one of my rock camps. And rock camp is – it's a four-day experience that people come. I put them in a band. They get to be mentored

by a rock star counselor, who's with them for four days. Puts the band together. And they get to jam with legends like Joe Perry or Roger Daltrey or Cheap Trick. And then they play the final night in a legendary venue, like the Whiskey or BB Kings. And then they also get to record it at the famous recording studios with big time producers. I put them through a four -ay boot camp. But one of the highlights of camps is in the evening, I do these master classes where you get to sit around and talk to one of the rock stars and get to shoot the crap for about an hour, hour and a half, and hear what they have to say. You can bring your songs in, you can learn different licks, you can learn slides, and just get the knowledge out of these artists. And they're really been amazing. I sit through them. I said wow, this – they're just great what you're learning from all these people. So I said, you know, I can do this on Zoom. So I reached out to a bunch of artists and I said, hey, how about we do these Zoom classes, Master class. Charge \$100, let them come on the class and they can talk to you, you can talk back to them. And they started one, started to go to two, and three, and four, and it started catching on. And everybody just loved them. And then now they're calling in from Jakarta, they're calling in from Japan. They're calling in from all over the United States and Europe and even the artists. I mean, I did an artist from Japan. I did Ian Paice from Deep Purple. He called in from London. Tonight, I have Tony from the Outfield, he's calling in from London. You know, so it's been a really amazing that these artists and these record producers and people like Shep Gordon, who is a music manager. And he sold out three classes. People really want information today. And they don't have to go far, they can just get on Zoom. So, I transitioned to that in June and we've done over 100 classes. And it's really been catching on. So now starting today I offer a \$25 ticket so you can just watch. And we can do up to 10,000 people. So yes, there are 25 seats where you get to interact with the artist, and then there's unlimited seats for \$25 just to watch. The interaction has been incredible to see, so like Richie Faulkner from Judas Priest have 25 people in front of them. He's looking at his screen and they all brought their guitars. So people bring their guitars.

Scott Miller: Of course, yeah.

David Fishof: So Richie Faulkner says to them, hey this little lick on the song. Then he says to this guy, now it's your turn. So each one we unmute them, they get their opportunity to speak to the artist. He says let me see you play it. No, you're not playing it right do it this way. The knowledge, the passion that's coming out of these artists is – you're never going to get this. You're not going to get it at a meet and greet, where you're going to sit around, get a quick picture and then leave. Walk away with a photo. You're getting so much knowledge from these artists and you know, we advertise 60 minutes. I don't think one class has been less than two hours. Alice Cooper said I got nowhere to go. Let's go. Let me talk. What can I offer to you?

Scott Miller: Well, there's some pieces of genius here. Look, first, the technology has arrived at the right moment for you, where you can stream high quality and you can do this and create that interaction. Couldn't have done it three years ago, maybe not one year ago.

David Fishof: The word Zoom is now becoming the English language.

Scott Miller: It's like Kleenex, or Xerox.

David Fishof: A lot of people still don't know what zooming is in America, believe it or not. I have people, my campers over 55, and they're like how do I – how do I download? And I'm like you don't have to do anything. Just click the link I send you and the guy's going to pop up. [laughs] So, technology.

Scott Miller: The second thing you did is you took all the costs out of this. I mean, Rock and Roll Fantasy camp is a neat project, but it is a high cost operation. You got hotels, and then you got to pay people, and then people's time and energy. And you can run out the margin, real quickly.

David Fishof: Well I like to make the joke, but at every camp I usually open up my opening speeches that every Jackie Mason's line, "every Jew's counting how much money I'm making!" Trust me. This is the hardest business to do. Because you're starting a rehearsal, you know, it's like a band starts a rehearsal. But they can advertise the cost over a hundred shows. I'm over in four days. So I got to pick up all the cost, the gear costs, the crew costs, the food costs, the artists cost of transportation, so it's really not – it's not a huge business.

Scott Miller: No. It's like being in a restaurant for a week.

David Fishof: Exactly, exactly. You hit it. So these classes. You're right. The costs have come down. On the other hand, the artists are making more money because I'm able to do a bigger split with them. And I'm able to create an affiliate program for people to promote them. But more important, I think we're able to convey what Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp is to the world. That it's really not – it's really integrating yourself with these artists and learning the knowledge that they have and sharing it. And what I'm excited most about is I have a film coming out in February that's taken over four years to be produced. And Doug Blush, he won a few Oscars editing 20 feet from Stardom and other films, he brings out what the camp is and what you realize in the film is that while we do change people's lives who come to the camp, we also changed your artists' lives. And it's Roger Daltrey saying, I was one of them. I just got lucky. It's Sammy Hagar saying in the film, he says, you know, I didn't realize how spoiled I am. I didn't get to see people. Nancy Wilson says, we start doing the bit – we start being in the music business. It's about the passion and writing, and then all of a sudden becomes about lawsuits and lawyers and agents, and all the business stuff. This is one thing about the camp, is it's pure music. So I try to keep it pure music.

Andrew Schwartz: There's so many people that want to live out their rock and roll fantasy. And they were doing that with your artists in person, but it sounds to me like taking advantage of the technology now, everybody has this hunger for knowledge. And so many of us can't leave our homes, or leave our homes for too long, and this is a new form of learning it sounds like, with music.

David Fishof: And people taking lessons, you can learn one-on-one. But I think what's really been interesting for me is to see that these artists are at home, there's nowhere to go, and how much they share. Now, I know they have schools like Berklee School of Music, and so many schools that parents get to send their kids, and they get mentored by people who haven't made it. At these classes you're hearing from people who have made it. And you're hearing from Alice Cooper telling you directly it's about the song! And you're hearing from every one of these people on how they made it, what was the key to making them. I mean, Shep Gordon was brilliant. He was like, you got to be above the noise. You got to be above the noise. How do you get above the noise? How do you get your music – you know, some producers have come on my clink, and said hey, I listened to everything. Eddie Kramer send me a FedEx of your music. And a young lady came on and he said, send me your music. So to hear Jack Douglas the other day, told a story. He said, I'm finding songs for new artists. And Jack Douglas, he produced "Imagine" with John Lennon, he did the Aerosmith "Toys in the Attic." So funny, I got an email from Steven Tyler's manager. Steven missed a class. Can you send them Jack's class? And sure, be glad to. So I turn to them all, cause I cut through all the BS. Do you take music? And these songwriters are on, how do they get their song to you? So Jack said, I'm producing this young lady. I said, "Well how did you find her?" He said, "I was sitting in a restaurant, she was studying, and she said to me (I was in Florida) – she said, I'm a songwriter and singer." And he said, "Hey, here's my card. Send me some stuff." And she runs home, and she tells her father that she met this person and looks him up. He's legit and it's Jack Douglas, he lives in Long Island. She lives in national Florida and he says, I'm producing a record and we're doing it. She's in the studio. And that's also amazing to hear producers like Eddie Kramer talk about how he's recording bands all around the world and my clink. You know, today, the technology, you can record a band in four different parts of the world.

Andrew Schwartz: You talked about 25 seats that are interactive for these classes. And the artists are really getting to interact with 25 people? And one of the things that we talk about, and you know at CSIS we're in the events business too. Normally we host over 500 live events a year. And these events are attended in person by anywhere from 50 to 500 people in person. We can't do that anymore so everything we're doing now is via Zoom and it's from home. So our dynamic has changed a little bit. One of the things we worry about a lot is that we're not interacting with our audience the way we used to. Tell me more about the interaction that the artists are having with the 25 people who are in the class who have registered for that interactivity.

David Fishof: Well, I think the great thing is that the artist is seeing face to face these people that they never would see. You know, they're doing a meet and greet before the show. Their focus is already on the show and starting time. When are you gonna get me out of this room and I got a quick picture. Now they're actually sitting back and they're hearing from the people saying, hey, you know, I met you, or this and this, or what were you feeling like when you did that concert? And you know, I was at that show, and it's bringing back all these memories that these people have been holding in.

- Scott Miller: You're more than anything else you're letting the artist make music, which is what they live for, that's how they got into the business in the first place and then they got famous. But all musicians love making music, and you've been able to get them there.
- Andrew Schwartz: But I guess my question is, do the 25 people all feel like being able to participate enough? Is one person dominating the conversation with the artist, and the other 24 feel like they're a potted plant? How does that work?
- David Fishof: What we do is everybody gets one question, and we unmute them. And we unmute one at a time, you raise your hand, and then we call upon you. But always gets to be, it's more than one question. But I have two questions to ask you, and the artist doesn't say no. And they're not going anywhere. So they get that.
- Scott Miller: It's moderated.
- David Fishof: Well yeah, Britt Lightning, she's amazing, she's our moderator. She's the lead guitar player in a band called Vixen. She's also a Northeastern graduate, went to Berkeley. She's very intelligent, she knows music. And so she basically hosted the program and we keep it at a flow. We got many people come back and repeat. But it's been interesting. And then we add more classes. But yes, the interaction, if the artist wants to interact, they can. You know, some people don't have that personality. Sebastian Bach, you know, some lady asked him, "Can we sing a duet together?" And he said of course. You're not going to get that ever with that. Some of the things I've seen in these classes is just incredible. But really, the main thing has been the passion that the artist is giving across the people, the hope. Listen, it's going to end, it's going to be over, it's going to work. And it's all going to be good and you know, while we're all going through this pandemic, there's going to be hope coming afterwards. The other great thing that's been happening at the classes is many artists have been giving their money to charity. So Shep Gordon, he donated his – he donates his money to the Maui Food Bank. We give money to Teenage Cancer America, Roger Daltrey's charity. You know, Alice Cooper, he did it. He gave his money to – he's in a great after school program called Solid Rock where any kid in Phoenix, Arizona can go after school, no matter how much money he has, he can go and he can just participate, learn music, do homework there. And he always does a fundraiser every year and he couldn't do it this year. So he gave his money to charity. We did a thing in honor of Neil Peart. Buddy Rich's daughter, she gave the money to UCLA brain cancer, because it's about Neil Peart and Buddy Rich. So that's been the fun part too. You feel like you're doing good. You're giving off information. They're not available. We don't record them. I mean we do for archival purposes but it's a live event. Each one's an event.
- Andrew Schwartz: So they're not available on demand.
- David Fishof: No. I'm not in that demand business yet. I want to create an event each and every time. But I also – the great thing is I have been able to get artists that I

haven't been able to get to Rock in. For example, when I was putting Ringo's tour together, I remember the first drummer he was – I was putting the band together – he says oh, give me Steve Gadd. So I've always wanted to get Steve Gadd, and Steve was never available. He's all touring with Paul Simon, he's all touring with James Taylor, the guy works nonstop. Well, now he's not working. So I reached out to him and I got a message from Steve Gadd and I think he enjoyed it. So we're doing it again. So I think that's been fun, to meet artists that I haven't been able to get to come to camp, and now are – they've just been busy – and now they're coming into Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp nightly.

Scott Miller: You're a unique guest for us because most of the guest we've talked to are improvising, some are muddling through. You're actually creating something that's new, different, and better as a result of the constraints placed on you. That's really unique.

Andrew Schwartz: And most don't know Ringo Starr.

David Fishof: [laughs] No listen. I changed my life when I got remarried and I have two beautiful little children and I decided I'm not going on the road. And I decided to dedicate my life to changing people's lives in a program called the Hoffman Institute up north. Life changing for me. Katy Perry has gone public saying she's done it. But it's been an incredible program and it just changed my life to giving back. You know, my father was a rabbi, my brother's a rabbi, my son-in-law's a rabbi. All I watched is these people giving back all the time. Here I go, rock and roll, thank god it's been a great business. But I want to find an opportunity to give back, and Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp has probably been the greatest thing I can give people, the opportunity to do this. And what I see most about the camp is yes, people get to meet their celebrities. But that's not what it is for me. For me it's come to me for four days, it's a process and I will change your life. I'll bring back that happiness you had as a child. I'll bring the creativity out of you – back in your life so you can write a song, you can make an album, you can join a band. You know, the exciting thing is you know we talk about sports before, they have baseball fantasy camps. At 35 your career is over. Half the players can't hit the ball out the fence at 35. But you can always be a musician. Ringo's going to be 80, he's going to tour. McCartney's still touring. Mick is going to be there. You can write a song at any age. You can perform at a Bar Mitzvah, you can perform at a bar, you can write a song. You can always be in the music entertainment business. So you can still have that fantasy in your mind. And that's what I love most, people in my camp have come out with CDs, they form bands together. One of the funny stories I love to tell is a guy was in my camp and he was taking guitar lessons at home. And his family says, we're going to send our dad to Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. It's a great gift, they send them. And he comes to camp, never was in a band before, takes guitar lessons on Saturday mornings. Meets a bunch of people at Camp from New York, and they decide they're going to form a band together when they get back out of camp. They leave camp, he shows up to SIR in New York, he walks in there and says, "Hi, my name is so-and-so, I want to rent the rehearsal spot for my band's rehearsal. We want to rehearse one night a

week." The guy looks at him, says, "Hey, have you ever been in a band before?" And that guy says, "Yeah." He pulls out his phone, says, "Hey, that's me and Roger Daltrey on stage last week at the House of Blues in LA." And he's like, "oh okay, okay." [laughs] That guy has a band today!

Andrew Schwartz: My late friend Tony Snow.

David Fishof: Oh! You were friends with Tony?

Andrew Schwartz: Yes, I was Tony's producer.

David Fishof: Well wait, you know the story with Tony? Tony Snow goes on the radio, goes on television one day.

Andrew Schwartz: Yep.

David Fishof: And he talks about Rock and Roll Fantasy camp. So I called Tony up and – everyone told me about it. So I called him up. And oh, I loved that man. And I said to him – we go to talk. And he called me back, he was such a gentleman. We talked about Rock Camp, and he came by the way.

Andrew Schwartz: I know! He loved Ian Anderson. Ian Anderson was his hero. Cause Tony played the flute as a kid.

David Fishof: I'll never forget, I said to him, I said, So I'm going to give you your fantasy, how about you give me mine. He says, "What can I do for you David?" And I said, "well you go to Israel, and I want to go with you." Because – he said, "David, I'm going to take you to Israel with me, and I'm going to go cause I go meet Arafat, to Bibi Netanyahu, I'll take you. You come with me on a trip, but we'll go visit PLL, we're gonna go visit everybody." I thought that would be so cool, if I could just follow him around. I had just gotten married, that was 15 years ago and he was doing the trip. But it was on Yom Kippur, he was leaving on like the Jewish holiday.

Andrew Schwartz: Oh. Oh.

David Fishof: I never went, I always regretted not going with him. But boy, I remember sending him a guitar. He was such a – he did the camp in New York! He came.

Andrew Schwartz: Oh, you know, Tony was the greatest.

David Fishof: Even when he was working for the President of the United States, him and I were in touch!

Andrew Schwartz: I know, you know Tony wanted to form a band and he wanted to call it "Nine Inch Nose Hairs." [laughs] And, one of the things, Tony just loved music so much.

David Fishof: He was such a mensch.

Andrew Schwartz: Oh, such a mensch. He was such a mensch. And he used to talk about your camp. And it really was such an inspiration to him. Such an inspiration to him! And I think that was the first time I ever heard of Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp, was through Tony, and he knew I was a big music fan and rock fan. And so he got me into it. And I've been following you ever since then and just sort of, seeing the clips and seeing what's going on with you and seeing, you know how happy you make people. Because it's not – you know, it's interesting. It's like you're making people's dreams come true in meeting some of the rock and roll heroes. But I think it's a lot more than that. I think it's something about there's a spirit there in the music and there's a kinship, because the stuff that I've seen and I read, there's a bonding that people get when they bond over this music, and this culture.

David Fishof: So this is what's amazing. The best friends. These rock stars tell me their best friends are the campers. They've met these people and they – listen, rockers always went out the back door. The concert ended with Ringo, and we were in the van and we were gone. By the time the concert ended – cause we've got to get out of the arena to get to the airport, to fly to the next city. So every rock star's always leaving. And any rock star leaves you a backstage pass, and after the show, most of the time they're leaving it to you cause you're gone. Just a little secret, unless they tell you they're going to stay. So what happens is you never get to meet rock stars. And unlike country music, so people said, "Oh, why don't you ever do a country fantasy camp?" I said well the problem with the country artists are, I remember going to take my daughter to see Oprah one day because she wanted to meet Oprah, and Keith Urban was on the show. And she said to Keith, "What was your first concert you went to?" And he said, "I went to see Aerosmith." And then the next question, "Did you ever meet your fans?" And he says, "I meet my fans every night. Five o'clock they come out to my bus, we hug them, we love them." You know, and that's what they do, they don't – then they got fan fest in Nashville. He said, "If I could have met Steven Tyler that would have been my dream, but rockers are always leaving, you never get to meet them." So putting them two together, they never got to meet how great these people are and then the rockers, they got to meet. So they make best friends. Every rock star has told me that the front rows of all their shows, now these campers are on the front rows because once they've played a jam with them, they can't sit 14 rows back, they've got to be in the front rows.

Scott Miller: And the artist knows them as individuals, they're people to them, they're not a crowd.

David Fishof: Right, and they've stayed in touch. And I'll tell you, one of my fabulous stories, I mean, so many great stories, but one of the ones I really enjoy telling is I had a rocker. He was Mark Foreigner from Grand Funk and he was at my early camps, and he was going through some IRS issues from years ago, Grand Funk. Anyways a camper said to me, I love that Mark Foreigner. I said, you love him? I said you're a lawyer, go help him out. They're best friends today. He pulled him out, he helped them out with the IRS. Anyways, the bottom line is that these campers are really fabulous people and they make great relationships. Everyone's told me that their best friends are from

Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. So, we've created a great thing. What's the problem with that? People are like David, why aren't you making zillions of dollars in this business? Why has it been so hard? So, here's the truth. The problem has been that people are scared. You know, it's not even the money, it's cheaper – it's the same price to go on a cruise than to jam with these people. I've had Jeff Beck, and you know, I figured, okay, I'll get 40 guitar players, put them in 12, 14, 15 bands. People called up the week before and said, Oh I'm sorry I can't make it David. My husband can't make it. His mother-in-law has cancer, his brother has cancer, his guitar has cancer! I hate to say it – I know they're lying. They're scared. There's that fear factor.

Andrew Schwartz: Well sure, cause like you're going to step on stage and going to strap on a fender with Jeff Beck. That's like saying you're going to take batting practice with Babe Ruth.

David Fishof: So I get it. I totally understand. I never forget a dear friend of mine invited me to go to Michael Jordan basketball camp, and he had a fantasy camp for a while. I said I'm not going, I'm not going for a bunch of guys – they all think they can beat Michael Jordan. And I'm not even going to try to make an attempt. So I don't want to make a fool out of myself. You know that was the biggest mistake I made. They came back, they had a great time. It's not about that. It's a really – the rockers are so generous in their time, and they want to show you tips. And they put their pants on the same way that everybody else does. When they come to camp, everyone – the masks go away, they leave their egos at the door. And I tell that to everybody. I tell it to all the rockers. I said, "listen, this is about these people. We're going to give them their dreams, their fantasies, and leave your egos at the door." And I gotta tell you, they do, they come in. And it reminds them of what it was like when they first started.

Andrew Schwartz: You know, it's so true. I mean, the late, great Dr. John Mac Rebennack from New Orleans, so he was the greatest ever. And I got to know him a little bit. Everybody who listens to this show knows I went to Tulane and the Neville Brothers are like my second family and all that. But Dr. John was really one of my heroes and I got to meet him. And a lot of people were always really scared of Mac because he was this intimidating looking guy, but you would meet him. And man, he was the most incredible soul and so thoughtful, and so nice, and so kind. And one of the things that people don't realize about musicians of this caliber is they've been all over the world, many, many times over, and they know things and they've seen things that most of us have never seen and never experienced so they have this knowledge. And so, I would get on the phone with Mac, Dr. John, and I could never get off the phone with them because we would be talking about politics, we'd be talking about global affairs, we'd be talking about competition with China, we'd be talking about – and then he would say something like, you know, Andrew a good day is when I get up in the morning and I could find my shoes and I can put them on. He was just like everybody else.

David Fishof: So that's what made me create the camp. I was on the Ringo tour, and I was putting it together and everyone kept telling me it's not gonna work, it's not

gonna work. You can't put all these people in from all different bands at one thing. Yeah it works, you can do it one night, and do a benefit, but to tour all these egos, and all these artists, have one plane and you know go out and Joe Walsh and everybody, how are you going to do this David, how are you going to do this? So I said to myself, I'm going to take a chance. I mortgaged my house. I literally mortgaged my house. I got excited. I got Ringo. I said, you know, I'm a promoter. I'm going to take a shot. I got a Beatle. And I'm at the fourth show at the Garden State Arts Center. And people can YouTube this, under David Fishof Ringo Starr, they can look up our names. And there's a scene in there about, what happened was, Ringo had mentioned to me I want to play at Radio City. He wanted to do it for the band. Ringo always did everything for the band. So I'm sitting with the president of Radio City and all of a sudden Nils Lofgren walks by my table. And he says David I'm out of there, I'm not doing this anymore. I said, well what are you talking about. He says, these guys are fighting over songs, it's not going to work. Clarence Clemmons walks by and he says I'm out of here too Fishof. I said what's going on? And he says Joe Walsh and Levon Helm are having a fight. It's never going to work. So, I said well let me try to find Ringo. I go to try to fight Ringo to break up this fight and I can't find him. And all of a sudden, the security guard says you better go in there. And I walk into a room and I see Levon Helm with a knife and blood on his hand. Joe Walsh has a glass bottle and blood all over him. And they're fighting. And they're calling each other four letter words, and you ruin my song, and then all of a sudden, I walk in there and I'm scared. And I walk in, are you guys a bunch of babies? What are you doing? And they both turned around, they pushed me. They threw blood at me, and then they both turned around and stuck their tongue out. They had set me up for the greatest joke, you know.

Scott Miller: What a prank.

David Fishof: I mean Joe Walsh, he's good with pranks. So is Levon Helm. So they set me up on this prank, Dr. John's in the room. That's why I created the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. I got to travel with Dr. John, Clarence Clemmons, Levon Helm. I got to see how amazing these people are and what they have to offer. And everybody called, every day. President of the CAA music department, all these people in the industry – "what's this guy like? What's that guy like? How are they all getting along? I can't believe Joe Walsh – how are they not fighting? What's going on?" And I said I don't know what you know, but I never met Dr. John before, I never met Levon Helm before, I never met any of these people really, and watching all these people get along, and to be friends. So I built a great friendship with Mac, he was amazing. What a guy he was. And, well first of all what a gentleman. He came to Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. We invited him early on. He came. Levon Helm. Wouldn't show up to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, showed up to Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. These guys – you said a great line earlier: these guys traveled the world, they know. They know so much, they've met, they know the line between bullshit and not bullshit. They are so sharp. Remember what The Turtles once said, we're going to write a book. Start the deposition without us. I mean, these people know the artists. Ringo – he's been through the

Beatles, the Stones, you know these people that they're smarter than anybody because they actually go through all this all the time.

Andrew Schwartz: And how good does Ringo look by the way?

David Fishof: Eighty years old. Amazing.

Andrew Schwartz: Amazing, yeah.

David Fishof: Well, he takes great care of himself you know. What we're learning is the smart ones are going to take care of themselves. They're going to be with us for many years. And the ones who abused themselves, you know. But I'll never forget Dr. Johnny's Rock – he's pacing back and forth at backstage of the Greek Theater. And I went over to him, "Mac are you okay? Big show tonight at the Greek Theater. Sold out." And he said, "Oh. I got three wives out there trying to beat me up for money after the show." [laughs] Yeah, I loved him.

Andrew Schwartz: So that's the Greek Theater in Berkeley, you're talking about?

David Fishof: No, no. This is the big theater in LA.

Andrew Schwartz: In LA. Okay, okay. Oh man.

David Fishof: They all had fun. They all had fun goofing on me. I was ten years younger than them, twelve years. You know. I was really the naïve one. I was naïve. I came from the world with the Monkeys, with the Turtles, and the Village People. So, I had to change my whole life overnight and I'm so glad I did.

Andrew Schwartz: Hey, I've got those Ringo Starr albums sitting right here. I mean, those are, they're amazing. And you know in what they did for Levon too.

David Fishof: Hold on, let me tell you how many lives Ringo, Ringo saved for these musicians. Number one, they all had to take health – you had to get insured to go on a show like this. Dave Edmunds we say, his life was saved. I can't tell you what an influence Ringo had on all these musicians and becoming sober. Yeah, he's amazing but Levon and I got very close afterwards. And there's a great book that just came out, a lady wrote a book on Levon just now. And he was interesting you know. And I mean, I'm glad the book really tells the story. She really gets down and dirty and who Levon Helm was in a great way. And Robbie Robertson made that a great film the other day. It wasn't the truth. It's probably his guilt, to get rid of his guilt. But I'm not here to judge whether he's right or wrong. Levon did not like him. And all those guys in the band were penniless. And I think they felt unfair that, they felt taken advantage of.

Andrew Schwartz: I mean I interviewed Levon several times. I've talked to Garth, Garth Hudson several times. I had the great honor of talking to the great Ronnie Hawkins several times. And, Levon was a broken man over it. Yeah.

David Fishof: Broken man, yeah. I got him to do the book. I managed him for a little while. I learned so much from Levon Helm. When I wrote my last book *Rock Your Business*, I dedicated to Levon Helm and Davy Jones.

Andrew Schwartz: Amazing.

David Fishof: But they both have really taught me a lot. The new book came out, this lady wrote a book on Levon, just came out. It's really good. It's about the later years, and the barn, and tells the story. And he was such a – I enjoyed it. I learned a lot from him. I didn't agree with him many times. I didn't agree. But, you know, Levon wouldn't do the song "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" because he didn't want – he thought the royalties were going to rob him. But the fans wanted it. So, he was definitely conflicted. Definitely conflicted. But he was such a – if he loved you, he was a dear friend. I remember when he got cancer, he couldn't sing, couldn't talk. And I called him up one day I said I'm taking you to a Yankee game, I'm coming up to Woodstock. He loved the Yankees. And we went to a game. I'd go up to visit him and sit on his fields and he'd say to me, I'm going to make a venue here. This is his dream. His dream is that barn. And he does those performances. And I'll tell you my favorite story with Levon. After that tour ended with Ringo, after the final show, we're at the bar together, cause they do that goof on me. And we're at the Bar at the Aladdin Hotel, and Levon and Joe turn to me and say, you know, wow, we should build a rock and roll hotel here in Vegas. This is pre-Hard Rock. These guys called it. Geniuses. It's amazing. If you think of all these rock stars, what you can learn from them. And Lita Ford, we were doing this team-building – I do these team-building exercises once in a while for companies where we go in, we write songs. And she turns to me and we're doing one for McKinsey and Company, and she says to me, David can you imagine these people thought we were bums forty years ago? Now they're hiring us to teach a team building. But if you look at Kiss, if you look at Aerosmith, if you look at the Who. You look at the Rolling Stones. You can learn so much about business, and about team building and what it is to be in a band. I mean, to be in a band is ultimate team-building. And Warren Haynes says it's to listen. You've got to learn to listen. And so there's really a lot you can learn from our industry that people don't realize that you know, they hear the music but they don't get to know these people personally and to realize how smart they are and the knowledge that they have. I'm loving the master classes nightly.

Andrew Schwartz: One of my favorite classes I ever took in college, which I assistant taught for, was a class about how rock and roll shaped society and our most incredible guest speaker was Aerosmith manager Steve Lieber. And Steve's my friend Jill's dad. And so, Steve came in and spoke to the class. And I'll never forget that speech about how he managed Aerosmith, and it stuck with me. This is now, 30 years later, and I think about it in my business life and what I do.

David Fishof: Steve did the business before anybody. He outsmarted everybody. Yeah no, I like Steve. What's Jill doing now?

Andrew Schwartz: She's a mom. She's got family, she's doing great.

David Fishof: Where's she living in?

Andrew Schwartz: New York.

David Fishof: Yeah Steve's in Florida. He reaches out to me all the time.

Andrew Schwartz: Great people, great people.

Scott Miller: David you're giving people such a window into the music world that you can't get otherwise. And every night you do this, and I can't believe the master class agenda that you got, it's truly impressive.

David Fishof: I feel privileged. And you know, I was a sports fan. I'm really a people person. And what do I mean by that? I can't name you the fourth album and the sixth lick on that album, but getting to know these people and seeing who they are. I mean, Joe Perry. Another guy who just gives and give and gives and has a beautiful marriage. I mean, you can really learn. Steve the other day – I'm going to leave you with this great – here's a guy who gets on from London, does the master class. And he says, listen just because you're a rock star doesn't mean you don't have to be a husband, a father, you have all those other duties. Yeah, you still have to be that great person, you can't just – and I just thought that was brilliant. Or Alice Cooper saying, hey, you go on the stage and you're one person. When you're off that stage, you gotta be a normal human being. And he's got his wife, he's got his grandkids, he's got his kids. And to me, that's what I admire. That's who I admire, someone who can take, can kind of stand at the family life, but then when they get on stage, they get on stage and they have all that talent.

Andrew Schwartz: It's amazing. David. This has been a master class talking to you.

Scott Miller: Yes indeed. Yes indeed.

Andrew Schwartz: Scott and I are your biggest converts and we can't wait to sign up for a master class so we will be in the audience very soon.

David Fishof: Thank you. Please go to rockcamp.com, and you guys can push those classes. I really appreciate it.

Andrew Schwartz: David we can't thank you enough. We will get the word out.

Scott Miller: Keep doing what you're doing, it's amazing work.

Andrew Schwartz: Thanks for listening to The Reopening. If you liked this episode, please write us a review and subscribe wherever you find your podcasts. You can also find other podcasts from the Center for Strategic and International Studies at csis.org/podcasts.