

Bo knows best

After nearly 50 years in the music business, Bo Diddley is still going strong

By Thomas Phillips
THE BATTALION

Bo knows music. Bo knows life. Bo is Bo Diddley. What he did not know was how big star he would become and how much influence he would have on other musicians.

"I thought I was just a little Chicago thing, you know," Bo Diddley said. "I had no idea I was going to be known all over the world." In 1955, Bo Diddley cut his first record on the Chess Records subsidiary label Checkers. His works have influenced The Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Run DMC and a hall of

fame full of other performers. They have all grown familiar with his "Bo Diddley beat." "The people told me I was pretty good," Bo Diddley said. And did he believe them? "Yeah, I'm still here," he said. Growing up in rural Mississippi and Chicago's south side, Bo Diddley

wandered his way through violin and drums before settling on the guitar as his instrument. He now plays an odd, square-shaped electric guitar that has been customized and tweaked.

As for instruction in how to be a star, he had little help along the way. "Nobody gave me any advice, except my mother told me to try to be the best that I could be," he said. "You can only try, try to be as good as your brain will carry you."

Bo Diddley has loads of advice. At the age of 73, some might call it wisdom.

"Stay away from drugs, get a good education and play your instrument," he said. "Make people like you; don't make people dislike you. I try to make people like what I do, and it's easy to write good songs. You don't have to write dirty lyrics and all that kind of stuff."

In March, Bo Diddley received the National Association of Black-Owned Broadcaster's Pioneer in Entertainment award for his innovative musical and performance styles. The ceremony, held in Washington D.C., also honored performers Janet Jackson and the Isley Brothers.

"It means a lot to me," Bo Diddley said. "It was a long time coming, but good things come to those who wait."

As a black musician with staggering popularity during the civil rights era, Bo Diddley said music played a "good role" in the fragile relationship between the races.

"The hippie generation movement, or whatever you want to

call it, it brought people together," he said. "People stopped looking at who was considered the black man and the white man and the yellow man or the Chinese or the Japanese or the Germans or the Puerto Ricans and all this. I didn't see any of that old racial crap. All I saw was people loving one another, and that's the way it should be."

Bo Diddley said love is one of the most important parts of getting along with people, and those who do not agree are part of the problem.

"If you got a lot of people that frown on people that get along, that's what I call the habit gene, the gene that causes nothing but crap," Bo Diddley said. "It's a lot of them still running loose, and they need to be corralled and start thinking about love and not hate."

When questioned about the future and any end to the long road he is traveling, Bo Diddley gets a little uncomfortable. He said he hopes to be remembered for his talent, but does not want to be just a memory any time soon.

"I ain't going nowhere. I have no plans to go anywhere," he said. "But we all got to leave here, though. That's a trip you're going to take."

But he is still here and still touring in his eighth decade on this rock 'n' roll planet. But just what should young impressionable college students know about Bo Diddley?

"Well, I tell you what. When you see me, you will know that I am the mighty Bo Diddley. Okay?"

Bo Diddley will be performing Saturday, April 27, at Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater. Gates open at 6:30 p.m.

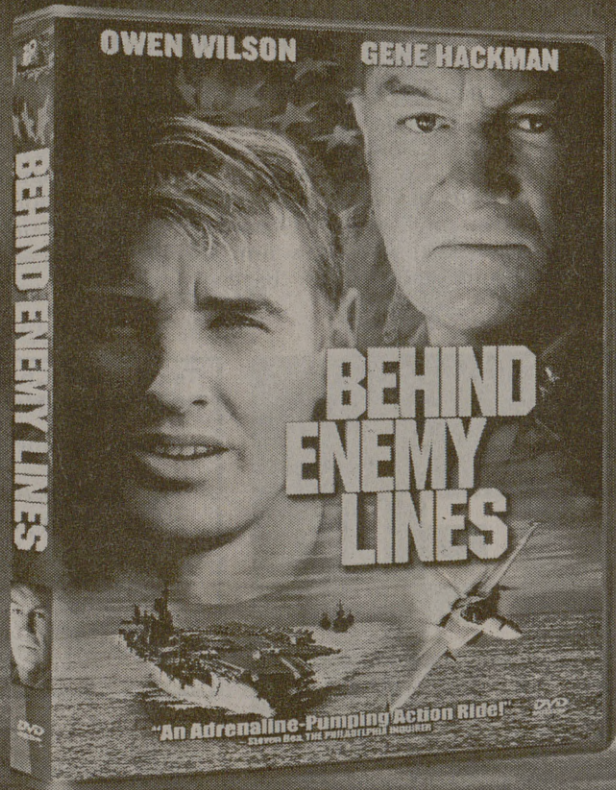
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— Bo Diddley



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