

University of Washington

Women Who Rock Oral History Project

Transcript

Rachel Flotard

Narrator: Rachel Flotard of Visqueen and Local 638 Records

Interviewed by: Nancy Nguyen, Laura Putkivaara, and Shuxuan Zhou

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Nancy Nguyen (NN): Okay, first of all, do you consent to this interview?

Rachel Flotard (RF): Yes, I consent to this interview.

NN: Okay, can you please introduce yourself?

RF: My name is Rachel Flotard and, uh, I'm a thirty-eight-year-old female that lives in Seattle, WA.

NN: How would you describe the music community you are a part of?

RF: How long is your tape? [laughter] Um, how would I describe the music community as a very healthy and good one here in Seattle.

NN: Can you talk a bit about where you were born and, um, how that connects to your musical experience?

RF: I was born in 1972 in Englewood, New Jersey and I grew up in a little town called Closter, which is about twenty-five minutes from midtown Manhattan. And I grew up there for twenty-five years before I moved to Seattle, but New Jersey and the east coast plays, I think, a big part of who I am. Uh... [laughter] Seemingly my, uh, my love of New Jersey accents. Um, my love of New York City, my love of, um- [pause] I don't know I have to say the accent's pretty much first and foremost [laugh].

Um, how-how growing up in New Jersey affected any music... Um, all of my formative musical, uh, moments happened whether in the car with my mother and father, um, or at a birthday party or at a jukebox, I mean that's where I started to, you know, for whatever reason like a lot of kids just really gravitate towards songs and at that time, I mean, by the time I could really, you know, go and buy my own cassette tape, which is what was available to me other than vinyl which I was too young to handle. But I remember, you

know, I would go to a babysitter and she had – I mean it was vinyl everywhere and Pink Floyd, The Wall, and Grease and all of these, you know, you see album covers before you really realize what's behind them. I remember being a little kid and seeing a Grateful Dead poster like a skeleton with roses weaved – woven through it and uh, and I was scared to death. You know, not knowing why I was scared of this and at the same time not know why my friend's older brother had it in his basement room. Like there was something about it all that was like scary and cool and, you know, just as you start to get a little older and grow up and you realize what all these kinda threads do and I don't know, I mean, that's where New Jersey and that part is where I just learned everything. That music correlates with a feeling. I would often talk about, um, cartoons. We would get out of school at three o'clock. A lot of times just come home, make something to eat, and park it in front of a TV for a while until one of our parents got home. Back in the day kids could kind of do anything they wanted, um, in some respects. Uh, and my first real love affair with, um, orchestrated music and symphony came from Bugs Bunny and Tom and Jerry; all of that stuff tells a story and all of those scores are absolutely incredible and they're, I think, it's basically a different score for each cartoon so you think about how many, you know, there are and how much music was created to show emotion, like someone is coming after you with a mallet and that is, you know, giant kettle drums and violins and like [makes sound effect noise] like a little hair being pulled out is a, you know, kind of a cello movement. I don't know, I think maybe thinking back on as I get older, thinking back on those times like it really explains a lot of why, you know, music moves me so much I think.

NN: Were your parents supportive of you becoming a musician?

RF: No. [laughter] No. Well, I mean my parents were – are – incredibly supportive of me. I have – I was thinking about this this morning just getting ready to come here and all I could think about was how lucky I am and how lucky I – I was to have such a terrific family, you know, and both my mother and father, very hard-working people, very pragmatic, you know, dreamers but they didn't have a lot of time to do that. They pretty much got to work, so my sister and I were raised in this follow your dreams and follow your heart, but get your stuff done, you know, kind of atmosphere, but they, you know, their – they- they were and are my number one fans in anything that I have done, but they're also been like any other parent that worries about you, that freaks out when you're not home, or if you're getting a, um, lower grade, or any of those things. And they don't want to see you hurt. And that, when you enter, uh, whether consciously or unconsciously, you know, a road that is gonna lead you down a lot of uncertainty, financially, emotionally, all of these things, and something that there is no real rule book for, any parent, I will be that way, you know, if- with my kids, with my nieces and nephews, it's just you know, a nature, but yes, long story short, they were supportive.

[mic pack falls] [unintelligible] [laughter]

RF: Technical difficulties. Technical difficulties. Oh I'm a pro, so I can handle that. [laughter] what just happened? Go on.

NN: How did you learn how to play and write music, was it through formal training?

RF: Oh, no. Um, I feel like I'm still learning how to play and still learning how to write

music and I think I will be doing those things for the duration that I am on this earth. I hope. Um, when I first – the first instrument I ever picked up was a violin through, uh, school. And I started using the bow as a sword and hated my violin teacher for no other reason than she was probably making me do something that was uncomfortable. And [pause] uh, I did not stick with it. I – and it was grating to the ear. Growing up, uh, I think guitar was the first thing I really picked up and I – it wasn't until I was nineteen or twenty so it was much much later in my life that I tried to- to tackle an instrument and I have to say, you know, a lot of the boys in my life and in my town, and you know, I was kind of the girl that was really friends with everybody. But I was like chunky and funny and awkward and weird and sensitive and all of those things and I never really had a boyfriend so I was kind of like the dude that I was like the buddy. And so [pause] but I could hang with men and I could hang with boys and so that made me feel like I could do what they did. And there was one group of friends in particular what had a band when I was in my late late teens that I was just kind of enamored with and that-that – at that time music videos were really just kind of starting. I mean, I watched MTV like come on air, which sounds so old I think I'm gonna die. [laugh] but for, you know, for all [pause] all of the fanfare, it was a big deal, you know, there was – music video changed the way everything looked. And you could, you know – and – and I didn't look the video vixens that were on at the time. I wasn't – I couldn't achieve feathered hair, I couldn't you know, so I kind of gravitated toward the actual act of music itself. And you weren't seeing like Aretha Franklin on a music video and we're only getting this like, at least I was, this hairmetal like sex thing [laughter] and I was, you know, fifteen-sixteen at the time so it's all like: what?

Anyway, it all leads up to where guitar just played a major role. I felt like it was [pause] I didn't know any girls that played guitar at all. And I didn't, uh, there were no female musicians and bands in my town at all and not that I even – I didn't even think about it so much, it wasn't like a conscious thing I just thought it was like a way to control, you know, whether it was a guy who was like calling me back or some like inner awkward thing that I was like – I'll show them – like – and I dated this guy for a really long time when I got a little bit older. And it was a really tough relationship, really fun, and I was so in love with him, but it was one of those things where you're, you're kind of a puppy for someone. And you love them so much and you are out of your mind and they're kind of like, eh. And he was an amazing guitar player, and an amazing person, by the way. Um, but it was my first like big love and heartbreak.

And so he was an amazing guitar player and I would go over to his house and he'd be in his basement like [makes guitar sounds] like, just like going off and I would be sitting there thinking like, okay, my thighs are too big, uh, like all the things that girls do that are just – what are so sick and so lame, and uh, I realized what the attention was being focused on there for a second and I already like could carry a tune, I could already, you know, I – music was definitely, I – there was something there, but I think the catalyst to be like well let me try it you big jerk and then I learned a chord and was like, huh, and then that chord turned into another chord and my, you know, like I don't know how to make my fingers go that way. And then he started to kind of like melt away a bit and then I just focused on this like, addiction to trying to figure this out. The first time in my life that I was like I'm gonna figure this out and that's really – that's really how that started and I hate to say it was because I was like, I could do that. There was no one forcing – no one like oppressing me like, girls can't do this, you know, there was none of – my mom, everybody, you could do whatever you set your mind to. You are exactly the same as a man, as a boy, as any – you could do anything you want to do if you set your mind to it. So

there was none of that oppression, it was all this like, alright, I'm gonna try and you know, a hundred years later here I am.
[laughter]

NN: Um, where did you go to school and did that at all affect your interest in music?

RF: No. My [laugh] my interest in, uh, I went to school in, well high school I was in Demoras, New Jersey at Northern Valley Regional High School. I think that affected music listening, not so much – I wasn't playing music at the time but I was absorbing everything. I spent every dollar I made at flipside records [unintelligible] and I bought tapes and tapes and tapes. My – my wall was just filled and I couldn't get enough of it, I couldn't get enough of the album cover or opening it or, I mean at that time –it's so funny when you think about cassettes because it just like comes in a little wallet and I would read everything and just get so into music itself and it seemed to be, I mean it was a soundtrack to everything that was going on in my life. It could conjure up a smell or a feeling or any of those things, and so school definitely, I mean, even when I went to the college briefly, uh, in Bristol, Rhode Island and even what was coming out at that time that was 1990 those songs will instantly transport me to how I felt in Rhode Island and you know, what I was going through and the conflicts of like, I'm not ready for school and all – all of the things that were going on, so I mean, music and school is really actually a nice connection whether, you know, whether I knew it or not.

NN: Please talk a bit about your band and how Visqueen came to be.

RF: [laughs] Um, so yeah, I have a rock 'n' roll band called Visqueen and I – I guess I can't explain Visqueen without explaining – do you want me to go back to like literally how it start – I mean, I was in a couple bands before that were hilar – like it – when you think of like the worst, um most awkward, scary experiences of having to step out and do something in front of someone where they're gonna be like, oh my god. Those feelings? Okay.

Well the first band I was ever in in Seattle was called Skookumchuck. I know, you're all freaking out. I can sign whatever you want later [laughter]. Um, and I answered an ad in a paper called the Rock It, which was a music magazine here and uh, the ad and it said we're not scary, like that was one of the lines in there like, second guitar player needed, must like blah blah blah, you know, zeppelin to blondie to all this stuff, but we're not scary. And I was like, whew, that's good 'cause I'm like so scared right now. And I answered the ad and Amy Malick, a friend of mine to this day, who lives in Chicago, Illinois, called back and her and her husband has this band Skookumchuck and I showed up with a PV solid state amp which is one of the crappier things you can show up with and my first electric guitar which I think cost a hundred and twenty five dollars and in New Jersey they'll [unintelligible] lion series with a wammy bar, it was hilarious. And I think I wore some kind of business suit, not business suit, but like a dress – it was the weirdest try out.

I was so scared I think I wore, I wore my guitar around, like under my chin. I basically should have had a chin strap for it. And, um, they taught me some songs that I, you know, just chugged along to then I was like alright. You think you're like, I mean the fact that I was standing up and playing and not in my room and in front of people was a complete miracle. And you know, I have my first show with them, you know, which was, I remember the first time I ever played live like that. Before I left my house I ran up and

down Greenwood Avenue as fast as I could and it was on Valentine's Day actually, in the u-district, I don't know why this is coming back to me, but I ran up and down the hill outside of my house about twenty times to try and like get out every like bit of anxiety I was about to have. And still, you know, and my friends came to the show and they were like, okay. You know, like we, the music was what we thought was great 'cause we were like actually not you know, falling over. But it wasn't you know, it wasn't, it wasn't a classic is what I'm trying to tell you people. Um, and uh, I, that was my first experience with having to leave a band and knowing that this wasn't for me. I wanted to try something different and I mean, being a part of a band is leaving a band too and having hard decision making. And you're balancing friends and relationships and all of this other stuff and it's so huge at the time and so frightening at the time, but I remember writing like an eight page letter, like dear you guys, I can no longer be... it was you know, I put my all into the letter and into the band.

So then I went to a, I had just moved to Seattle probably a year before and at the end of my street was a store that sold vintage amps and pedals and guitars and kind of like Trading Musicians in Roosevelt, but it was called Loud Music. And my friend Rob Skinner owned that store and I would walk down there and kind of walk past it and walk past it again and scared and kind of like nervous to go in there because it was like big boys stuff. I was like, hmmm. But I went in there and I ultimately ended up becoming friends with Rob. And he let me tune all of his guitars and taught me some fundamentals like I came in this little chick wanting to know about everything that had to do with music and, and he was, um, he was a big part of that for me as far as, he had been in some grunge bands. He knew everything about electronics or at least faked it and could fix it. And he was just, you know, he was just cool. And so he, he taught me at some point, he lowered the guitar on me, is a really good, I have to say to credit him for that. Um, and just started encouraging me and I would go home and I would, I, up the street, and I would start to four track things on my stereo. I didn't have a four track recorder so I would take two cassettes and bounce tracks from one cassette over to the other constantly and make these horrendous tapes. Which I just found two days ago, piles of them. And uh, and so I got four track, started recording different pieces of songs and Rob was there all the while just like, okay.

And one day he's like a friend of mine, his wife is looking for maybe another guitar player, they, they're a band called Half a Cat and they're from Bremerton. And I was like, where, where's Bremerton? And um, he explained to me it was a ferry ride away and he was like, just come down to the Color Box, which was just a club in Pioneer Square which is no longer available, I'm sorry. Um he said come down and see this band play and I was like, oh man, okay. And he also went up the street to Sonic Boom which had just opened their first store in Fremont and he picked up their Half Cats first record which had a picture of a cat's, um, butt, on it, classy. And he handed it to me and I was like, what are you doing. What was happening was that he and Mandy's husband, were having like a conference like my girlfriend wants to be in a band and my wife needs another guitar player, so it was kinda like an arranged marriage a little bit, even though they both knew we would hit it off.

And I went to see this band play, went down to Pioneer Square, the first thing I walk in and they're about to play and Renee is almost six feet tall, this blonde bombshell, Mandy Reid who, guitar player, just fierce, Heather Madden this bass player, just tiny little pixie and Ben Hooker, drummer, just like, he looked like a greaser, just like this, like this fifties like, he had like a duck tail hair, I don't know, he had grease in his hair, I don't know what he was doing. Um, but I watched them play and they were fast and they were loud and I

was like, I will never ever know how to play like that. That was just nuts. And they were terrible and great, I mean I thought they were amazing at the time. When I think about it all now, we were all so kind of rusty but it was, it was amazing what they were doing. And I was so like, in like love and in awe that I was like oh my god, I want to do that. And they knew I was coming and after their set, everyone kind of went outside to smoke, which I don't smoke and I highly recommend that no one does 'cause I did just for the record, and um, that's where I, I looked, Ben's really tall and the first thing I saw was that he had a huge belt buckle that said Boston, like the band. And I was like [pause] and I just looked up and I met my soul mate in music. He was the funniest and is, I'm gonna cry just talking about it, he's the funniest person I've ever met in my life. And I love him to death and I would not even remotely be sitting here talking to you and telling you this story if it wasn't for him. But I ended up joining that band.

Ben went home to Bremerton and like cleaned up the practice space and carved out a little spot for me like hoping I'd audition and the girls were like okay, come on over. And I, I learned their album in my apartment with Rob like, kinda coming up at me like what are you doing and I'm like, I'm busy! I'm trying to learn this, I have to, I have to audition in front of these girls and I'm terrified. And so I learn the record, you know, partially, as much as I could understand and then I went to their practice with this huge guitar, it was an RD Artist, it was a Gibson and it's shaped like, it's just massive and I just walked in and I'm like, hi, I'm really scared but I'm gonna try this. And then I played their songs and Ben was like, oh my god! Like just new blood, there was something just in the room and then we finished the pass, they're like okay we're gonna give a conference, I'm like, okay I'll just stand over here and they're like, do you wanna be in our band kind of thing and I was like, yeah.

And that began about four years of me taking the ferry over to Bremerton to practice after work and learning about women, learning about men, learning about how to argue, how to make up, how to find your own voice, how to write a song, how to get along and what everyone, you know, finding a collective dream as a band and aiming it somewhere. And I had stepped into a band that was, that existed, was, you know, amazing before I got there, as songwriters and what they were. And so, lots of changes happened, we lost Renee and then Mandy and I were forced to step up as the singers and I've never sung in a band before. I had always loved to sing but it was in the shower, to myself, in the car, I knew I could do it, but I, it's one thing to know that you're - you probably don't suck, but to do it in front of another person and seriously, is a whole other thing. And that's where I learned to do that and that's where I learned to play guitar and sing and have people not throw like tomatoes at your face. Um, so that band was invaluable to me as far as information and how to just kind of surf through difficult and happy experiences. And when that band dissolved, in the studio we had just finished making our first record, or, with me, the first album with me and by the end of the studio session, there were fights, there were hurt feelings, there were you know, there was excitement, it sounded so good, it was, I mean it was just, it was an amazing time. I learned so much about myself, I learned, we were all just jerks. And it was so intense at the time I thought I was going to die. I was so nervous and upset and it just wasn't a band. And Mandy and Heather went on to, they went to Hells Bells and there was like, Hells Bells was, is an ACDC cover band in Seattle, a tribute band that are amazing. And you know, there was all this stuff going on at the time that was lots of change and the band decided to break up and it was, and rightly so. But it's just like a death and you don't know what you're going to do. And Ben and I just went to our practice space, you know, he was, we were just kind of left together and we wrote a song and it was called Sailor and that was the first Visqueen

song and we just knew that we were supposed to be together and supposed to continue whatever kind of song writing was coming out of me at the time. And that was, uh, that was how Visqueen was started and then we just kinda brought in Kim Warnick randomly, um, who I'd always looked at, I don't know if you guys know fa – there's a lot, I can only speak about myself and my experience. There's so many people and so many fragments to what makes a band, especially one in Seattle, Kim Warnick of the Fastbacks, in a band for twenty three years. No small feat. But she was always, she was a figure that I had seen and known of, but she was now in my band, you know, we were now calling each other on the phone talking about rock 'n' roll and she was, she was my University of Washington, for all, you know, for all of that, for all that, I can't, it makes me cry. Anyway, um, yeah, that's the long winded version of how Visqueen started. If you need me to tone these answers down to like, I feel like I'm just talking for hours.

NN: No, that was really great.

RF: Okay.

Laura Putkivaara (LP): I wanted to ask, so you never played in a band before coming to Seattle?

RF: No, but I did pick up a guitar before coming to Seattle. At home, I would play in my room and learn, you know, that's where the boyfriend was at the time and that's where this all kind of started and where I would buy song books and try and translate what the song I knew, like a Billy Joel song, I mean I tried to pick something that was so ingrained in my head pop music wise that I knew how it went that I could figure it out and sing it as I played. But, yeah, I was never in a band until I moved to Seattle. Seattle is where it came out of the doors for me a little bit.

NN: What are your favorite genres of music?

RF: Boy, I mean, I love, I have got to say I love all music, I mean and that's, I know kind of a broad and kind of sappy statement. But I just feel like anyone that expresses themselves through that medium has my complete and undying respect and admiration. What I listen to at home right now I mean, what I was listening to in 1985 is a lot different than what I'm listening to today. Right now I've been going through a Billy Holiday anthology, like, I'm burning a hole through it. And she's just; I'm just falling in love with her. I'm right now going through my own like, you know, history lesson whereas, you know, when I was growing up it was Human League and then at work, Blondie, you know, I remember there's a show called Solid Gold and, I know, you guys are going to laugh your heads off when you look this up, and Dance Fever. And Blondie went on Dance Fever and I remember putting like a tape recorder, like I don't know if you've seen these, they're that big, and you press the button and it records and I put it up to the TV to record the tide is high. You know, things, um, I love hip hop, you know, when I was in you know, when I was eighteen or nineteen A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, MC Lyte, you know, there was just a lot of rock and then rap happening at the time too. Watching Aerosmith and Run DMC come together was like, it sounds so silly to say, but it was just, I remember being like, are you kidding? This is amazing! And, you know, being in a suburb of New York City as a white kid and as like a white female who knows nothing of like intercity toil and turmoil yet I'm the on the banks of it all. And my father goes in there every day and deals

with it first hand on a construction site. You know, you feel like this, I don't know, it's hard to even, I feel connected to a lot of different types of music i think because where I grew up and because of New York City. You know Jim Croce, I love, you know, James Taylor, Aretha Franklin, the Blues Brothers; like all this stuff from older movies, you know, I can't tell you a genre of music that I think I just hate. There are some stuff that, you know, I'm obviously like, I'm not like the biggest fan of if it comes on the radio I'll turn it. I'm trying to think on one that is but I'll usually know because I'm like [makes face]. I'll make some face, for whatever reason I'll just, I don't know. Something that's in genuine. There's a band called The Shags which just like basically these women, sisters, like grew up in the Appalachian mountains of upstate New York, I mean no school, no outside influence, maybe probably school, but no outside influences of any kind! It was like, it was like cave people essentially. And their father recorded them playing this music that they wrote themselves without ever having heard music, I believe, and someone gave me that record and it's like, I would listen to The Shags which is essentially noise, but like the most purest, experimental noise than some like over processed like country station like just not pigeon-holding country but there is some stuff that seems so glossy and overproduced that I'm like this just doesn't translate for me today, it just feels too, it feels like easy cheese. It feels like a block of cheddar and I, I can't listen to it today. I hope that's not too mean. [laughter] Because that's what some other person is saying about my stuff, so... What are you gonna do.

NN: What's your process of composing music?

RF: Uhm, again, just finding these patterns out about one self and I'm in the process of this right now. Umh. I usually start with - a - a phrase, something that someone'll say or I'll hear, umh, you know, I'll hear someone walk by on the phone 'I don't love you anymore' it's a, it's just like, you just have to sit still and what it hit you almost, and then - I'll either go, I'll probably go to an acoustic guitar, even though that's not really my medium, I'm not really good at that - yet. Umh. And I'll start trying to like sing that - sing those words, you know, sometimes it happens that way. Sometimes I'll just start to play a guitar riff and start singing to that and I will just like, I, it's almost like you un, unhinge your brain and I'll just say words, like I got over feeling stupid a long time ago, not that long, but I can now just start to sing stuff and make no sense at all and then a melody will arrive and then I can kind of like craft it to how, a, um, this movement and just feels like okay, now it's okay, but it never quite feels done, like, some songs end themselves, and other songs, I mean there have been things that I have been listening to and going back to for since I started and I'm like dai[??] I can't get rid of this thing in my head, but it's never quite, become something. A lot of, the way to compose something is to not think about it at all which is the trick, that's when you're like I'm a lightning rod. For whatever it is. I'm, I spent, aa umh, there are songs that come out in fifteen minutes. And then you're like ooh I wish that would happen again and it doesn't. So.

NN: What kinds of ideas or feelings do you like to communicate through your music?

RF: Umh. I don't know whether it's what I like it's just kind of what happens, I think that, I always liked. The tears of a clown kind of aspect like, of things, that song in particular, Smoky Robinson is. It's more of like, your heart can be breaking, but, the music you are playing is so buoyant and uplifting and fast and, it's almost like a disguise for how, crushed you are about something, the thing that's really driving you, so I think. I I don't

know, that, that juxtaposition of happy and sad I think is. I is how it comes across for me, there, I don't sit, I I can't write a song it's like 'I am super great today, this is the best day I've ever have', you know, it just for what, I would love if it did did come out that way, but it just seemingly doesn't.

NN: Who are some of the performers and artists that have influenced you?

RF: Umh, the Beasties Boys, I can't believe I am saying that first. Simply because I um that was one the first concerts I ever saw, when they just came out and they were disgusting frat boys and I was, like. Look at all these bo what is going on here. Umh. Influence as far as like wanting realizing the amount of the change and movement you could have, and like, people. You know that was my first like people were massing around this one thing and I was in the audience like oh, man. Umh, musically, Led Zeppelin for sure, that was, that's just a big band for me and, there's so many places to fide, and, look into their songs, and it's so again, it's hard to romanticize these things now because you've just when you grow up you realize that they are just people and they are just sounds and that but the way you get wrapped up in to it as a kid and you're like I don't know how they are doing this they must be magic. And, same, with AC/DC at the time, like, a, g, and d are chords that I can play, but when they do it, it's like, the heavens open. Umh, you know, I think large rock bands at when I was a kid a like Fleetfood Mac. It it changes all the time, like the Everly Brothers, you know my new found love for people like Joe Stafford and Billie Holiday, the Andrews Sisters. Umh, but as far as I the rock influence goes I would have to say the Go-Gos were the, I mean, they were big influence as far as like, seeing, yourself, or atleast seeing a female, you know, and they look like they're having a grand old time jumping around in a fountain. I guarantee you that's not what was going on behind the scenes. Umh. Heart. Umh. Again, trying, to just connect women's voice to rock, probably the two toppers are Chrissie Heind[??] and Debbie Harry. I mean, just as like, okay. You beat that, I mean. It's a pretty, it's a pretty. It's a pretty cool thing to look at when you're a little girl and, they're equally part scary and tense and gorgeous and powerful, so I guess that was. You know. Hopefully a a flake of what they have done has like landed on me somewhere but I can't, I can't really go there.

NN: What is your best or favorite experience of music so far?

RF: My best or favorite experience of music so far. Ummh. It's i. - This is a though question. Thanks, jerks. Umh. So far like I can okay, so today, I'm just gonna start with today's best experience. Is. Realizing, to be, the realization that you need to be happy, no matter what it is that you're doing no matter what is going on that you are luckier, that you have your health, that you have your friends, that you have your family. That is what music shows you because it is the most unsteady unreliable business that people try to get into, then it it it has never become more clear to me, that music itself and the connection you have with people that you play at is the most important part, and. That has been the most the coolest thing that music has given me is like the knowledge and realization of what's truly important. And that's. You know. That's been a long time coming I wouldn't have given you that answer, maybe ten fifteen years ago, but today I can, because, with the way the you know the state of the world today and the things that we really need to be mindful of, and the people that do rock, are are, you know, not just playing music, I feel like lot of the inspiration and a lot of the things that are important come from people that don't. Play music, that are changing the world and letting, you

know, jerks like me write songs about it and live in it.

NN: Please talk about your connection to the city of Seattle and umh other women in the music scene.

RF: I love Seattle. That's first and foremost. I love New Jersey, but when I came out to visit, umh Washington state for the first time, I was just, so, exited and blown away, umh, not only by it's physical beauty but that, again, said this I feel so many times that it was just an affordable cool place to live at the time. You know my my rent in Fremont for my studio that I first moved in to was three hundred dollars a month. You know, it's it's really funny it's just. Seattle to me felt like an approachable beautiful home where music was just basically shooting out of, you know. Umh. It was kind of the post grunge, umh. Moment when I got here in two thousand and, umh, no 199... 4 or 5, so things were just kind of calmed down Kurt had passed and, you know. We were all watching that in New Jersey and like 'what's going on with Seattle' there was Singles the movie there was all this, you know, I, when I was a little kid, I always thought Seattle was where grandmas lived, like where everybody's grandma lived and like, you always hear like 'the little lady from Seattle', it's like, I never, I never really thought about the upper left, you know I was always on like kind of the higher right side of the country, so that was I was like 'what is it all just like lumberjacks out there and grizzly bear', I don't, you know, but then. Obviously you figure a little bit more about the United States, and umh. And yeah, Seattle just became, ummh. You know. A friend of mine moved here from high school and I came to her wedding, her name is Vanessa and she's, the best, and she was married on Samoan[??] islands and I came out here like. What!? They don't have this in New Jersey this is gorgeous. And umh. I was I was looking for a change, I was looking for something, I was about to be 25 years old and I, I needed to shift, and this was the shift and so. Ummh. It's been my home ever since, and I've traveled, far and wide, and I hope to travel. So much further, and so much wider, in the time I have, but coming back here is always a relief and always just a sigh of good, for me, and playing music in here it was the perfect spot for me, it felt. Patted. It felt, umh, warm. At the time, that everything was possible. And, you know, here, er, you know, very prominent figures in music just walk down the street. And, they go in to your local coffee shop and they, are very real, it's not, you know, you're not like watching Steven Tyler walk down the street with like a thousand scarves like, it's not fan, it's just like regular people. Umh, so I think that also does something, umh. To, to fostering and fortifying a healthy, community and a healthy music scene certainly, and, ummh. I don't know it's it's almost like, it's a nest, this was my nest, and, there's so many bands here, and the history of Seattle is so great in as far as it's, you know, musical contribution, EMP, hello, it's like they build museums about it here. And, it's just got it's own, it's own, force, and that was, umh, very attainable and a, and very approachable when I first started, you know you could be crappy, you could, you could, suck and get a show and like work it out and people were, training band members, and figuring out, their own voices and. You know, making incredible music. And I just kind of rolled in to that and I still fell like I'm always on the edge of it all. You know. Like there's no place, in, within a scene that you just get to and then you're like lord of the scene i it just, it doesn't really work like that. Ummh. It just kind of feels. I don't know. Seattle, I mean as far as Seattle women we've got, am we've got a ton of them, do you do you want to know some, is that. I mean. Amm. I... Kim Warnick. I have to say her again, she just is, a, a fantastic, she's like a statue, she they should she should be like the Rocky statue, umh, of Seattle. Umh. Obviously, Ann and Nancy Wilson. They, kind of punch the hole in the

clouds here for sure. Ummh, Mia Zapata, of The Gits. I know, the remaining Gits, I never met, Mia. Umh. But. You know, those kinds of figures, those kinds of, people and then, present day, umh Carrie Akre who is in Hammerbox and, amazing performer and, her own rights still, ummh. Leslie Wood, there's ummh. My friend Leslie Baitie who, is, the tag team partner, ummh, with Kurt Block who's also in the Fastbacks there's just, there's people that you wouldn't, you know you're not gonna like, you're not gonna instantly recognize their name but they're here and they're getting out every weekend and every night of the week, and making it funnier and sound better, for the entire town, because they love it, and they don't get paid for it. You know, and it's. You know, that's what's kinda cool about Seattle is, you just, you can't help it, you do it anyway, you're not getting paid. It's not an easy road but you, you have a wealth of people that are like. 'I'll come watch you'.

LP: Supporting you.

RF: Yeah. Yeah.

NN: What made you decide that umh. You wanted to create your own label?

RF: Uhm, well mostly it was it was out of necessity at first. Umh, because, I. I guess when you, I always thought that you needed a label, to, legitimate your band or not legitimate, that you have the right to do this, but just, you know. To the outside world, you're a part of a gang, and a label seemed to be a gang. And I just never got I was never, I was never approached, ummh. Anything that I was a part of was created around what we were doing, umh my good friend Pete Hilgendorf started a label called Blue Disguise Records, over the first Visqueen album, and that was, you know he was a senior designer, in a major corporation here. And, a huge music fan, he was, so instrumental in what we did and putting a sticker to it putting a button to it, putting the art, and music together and his he was he is continues to be just such a pure force, and, just that kind of he's a one man, one, it's just one person deciding this is awesome and I want the world to know it, and I have so marketing skills and I have some design skills and I, I'm gonna help, you know I wanna be a part of what these people are doing, it's like, it's just assembling these team mates. And so, I kind of, grew up in that. Musically grew up. On the business side, in that kind of environment where I was, constantly, you know Pete and I were back and forth on, trying to look at what other labels were doing and remain competitive and as far as just like getting our music out, but doing it by our selves, you know. Which is, you don't have a, a team, and you don't have a giant bank account to hire a publicists and get all these things engaged. And this is over, this is then, over ten years ago now. So. Umh. I did another record Sunset on Dateland and that was also on Blue Disguise, and the same thing, I was I book every show that the band plays, every tour that we've done, shive[??] one and a, a we had a booking agent out of Minneapolis help us, and I drove nine and a half hours, through a blizzard, to get to a a a coffee shop in Philadelphia for Visqueen to play and I was like. And we got half of of discounted soup as our payment. And I was like. Dude. I mean there was a bakery case, and I'm like. [sigh] I'm all for it, I'm all for playing, but, like. C'mon. Like, there's gotta be something better than this, we almost died getting here, and, we parked in like a crack alley and I hope we have a van and stuff when we get back, there's just lots of situations like that where you're like. I could do this better standing on my head. And if it takes me twenty years longer. I don't care. And so, went back to booking the band, and it's just like I've always been, very, honest and straight

forward with what I need I'm trying to rock out with these nice people, we're not that bad can we come play, like, having to be able to. [cough] Having to be able to tell people what you do. Umh. Promote it. But, walking that fine line of being a jerk that's like a pushy sell yourself kind of person which I hate, and at the same time like, I'm proud of what I'm doing. And, that, I think it's it's a definitely a certain kind of person who can ride that line. I don't wanna ever push music down peoples' throats, I don't wanna ever push myself down peoples' throats but I also have to sur I also have to like, let people know it's happening, and I I think it's funny. Like, I think, doing it in a certain way that has humor in it, works. So I could never really find an outfit that was funny enough, for me to be a part of. And. At the time where, I was deciding on, umh, the faith of Message to Garcia which is the last record. So many things were playing into that, umh. I'd just finished a nice tour of duty, taking care of my dad, for a long time, and I was so involved in cancer and his illness and all these other things that, I wasn't, I wasn't playing, I wasn't a viable commodity to anyone's record label, I was a girl who'd put out a couple of independent records [cough] who could sing, and who people liked to go see, but I wasn't I I I to I'm imagining to someone else I am totally unproven I'm just, coming out of like one of the hardest experiences of for anybody, and, I have a record, and I might not have, any fans, like , who knows what these people are thinking and a lot of it is probably my own, paranoia. But it's the paranoia that like, lit the fire under me, I asked, I was like. I've got a new record coming out like, the whole time through my dad's illness I would send people stuff, and. This is coming out, we're gonna do this and no one, no one bid. And I couldn't, I can't blame them, why should they. You know. And, I was looking for the person that was just supportive and in love with what we were doing, not the person who wanted to see, how many fans we had, not the person who wanted to base, umh our success on how many shows we played that year. You know, booking agents and all this, you know, they rightly so have to think about, the business side of it, but the person that was gonna, see the, the future in me, wasn't really gonna pay attention to numbers. And I never found that person. And I realized that I'd been doing all that stuff the whole time. And that, I just had to step up and and take it very seriously, and at the same time, laugh about the entire thing, and realize I had a support system and that was my father, that was my band, that was everyone that was like 'you're already doing it idiot'. And then, I was like. Alright city of Seattle, I'd like a business license. I'd like a business license. I'd like to call my record label Local 638 Records, after my father's steamfitters' unions. All of these things just like, started to, again to do this like click. And that's when I started the label and it was purely, as a, a statement for myself, as a statement for my band, to say, we're still here, and we're doing this and, I can call every shot like I feel like it and I can make a thousand mistakes, and I can fall on my face, but, you know. For better or for worse this is what it is. And that, and not putting into, not. I'm glad that I it wasn't an instantly like let's sing you to this, I want you to be on this this roster or, give you this booking agent 'cos I never would have had to go through the self-doubt, the learning curve, the process of. You know, of rejection, of all of those things that everyone goes through, and now, I just like, kind of turned it around. And, and it's a fight every day. You know, still to be like, should I be doing this. Am I, high. Like, you know, but, I can't help it. And so. Now it's a bands are asking me to sign them, and asking me to manage their bands, and be their booking agent and, help them, and I wanna help everyone of them, regardless of whether I think their band stinks or not I'm like, so my biggest advice is go do it. You know, find a way, be approachable. Like, be genuine and, smile and be excited about what you are doing and. The rest kind of will fall, in line a little bit, but that was like, that was the genesis, for the label, I needed to.

[changing the tape of the camcorder, a pause in interviewing]

RF: [talking to perplexed Laura] Do you hear some crazy noises?

LP: It's it's coming from the room.

RF: Yeah.

Shuxuan Zhou (SZ): And I think the time over.

LP: The tape, is running out?

NN: Do you want to switch it, we have like a couple of more questions?

RF: Yeah, totally, I'll take a sip of tea

Someone: Sure

RF: [to Shuxuan, who's changing the tape of the camcorder] Doing an excellent job over there I can feel it.

SZ: Thanks. --- I think [???] is just one hours.

NN: Yeah. Well we, in the beginning with a couple of minutes. We just a, just ask like, like two more questions.

SZ: Okay, so...

RF: We'll make it fast. I can speed it up, just tell me to hurry it up, I keep feeling like I'm being a big blabber.

LP: No it's that's the best part, when, you tell, what you feel is important.

RF: I hope so. What's gonna happen with this, what is this for?

LP: It goes, to the library and, ahum.

RF: And it's there for one thousand years.

LP: Yeah.

NN: They're gonna, I guess keep moving it to the newest like, ahum, what do you call it, media, there or something.

LP: And then, uhm, because we are taking this class which is called Making a Scene, so I guess there's someone who's gonna do some research on how women have made scenes.

RF: That's so crazy.

SZ: So if you know anyone else you should you think we should include her into this project you can...

LP: I think, you have, some ideas of people that we should include...

RF: I do. [laughter] Where so is anyone gonna see the tape like or is it just like research material

NN: Yeah I mean..

LP: I think it's mostly research material, although there is also this Women Who Rock Conference. But, I mean, that's mostly for research people as well I suppose so. I don't know. But yeah, it's for academic purposes.

RF: Awesome.

SZ: Can start again.

[back to interviewing]

NN: Okay. -- Umh, okay, what has been the most important or influential collaboration with another artist that you've done?

RF: Umh. Probably Neko Case. Umh, I. I met her years ago, when Visqueen opened up for The New Pornographers at The Crocodile Cafe in Seattle, and we just. [clears throat] We just connected, and. I just, I think the world to that woman, she's equal parts funny and gross and hilarious, and. She's just superb and fragile, and a lot like me and that respect and she's got this trumpet in the throat, and her voice [clears throat] is just amazing. And she. I feel like I learned a lot from her, as far as. Umh, strength, as far as, she kind of. She took me on tour with her, Visqueen opened for her during, amm. An east coast tour. And, she, brought me up on stage during one of her, songs called Train from, umh, Kansas City. Not her song but it's a cover song but, it was so fun, and singing with her was so. It was the first time like another female, that was, in a spotlight. Like, was like, c'mon. And, that feeling of, not a competitive, just to like. Let's do let this is you are great I am great let's do this. That feeling was monumental. And it makes you unafraid, to like, step over and bring someone else into it because it's not about you no matter how much you think it is, it's not, and so she was a great lesson in that, umh, that two powerful people can share one thing, whether it's for ten minutes or umh album and so. We just became friends, and, we both share the same kind of sense of humor. And so that collaboration just turned into recording and she said do you wanna come and sing on a record now and I was like [grasps]. And then, you know, and that's how that started, and that's, I don't know, that collaboration made me understand, studio recording better, it made me, umh, less anxious about other collaborations, like, you know, through her I've got into do some really amazing things and, and step up into like a very high profile, or more high profile that I would have ever gotten on my own, but I've gotten to experience things through her that are just magnificent and, I get to kind of take that back to, to what I'm doing and, translate it, like I'm, I enjoy going into a studio I enjoy, trying to, umh, if someone wants me to sing on something I, I listen to it with my whole heart and I, really am not afraid of sounding like, an idiot on it, I just like, work it out and, you know. And try. Instead of

being like 'I'm too afraid I can't do it'. You know, it's that like, yes you can, and you are you. You're not gonna sound like anybody else you're not supposed to. That's the coolest thing. Umh. You know, not trying to emulate someone else but. You know, being yourself, and that's, that's that collaboration taught me a lot and I've gone onto to do a bunch, you know with several other people, not because I sound like, umh her or I sound like someone else but I because I sound like me for better or, for worse.

NN: Okay, last question. Looking forward umh twenty years from now, based on your experience and your projects, how do you imagine music communities and scenes will be different from today?

RF: Well I'll be sixty years old in twenty years. Oh my god. Umh. I imagine they will be somewhat different. I, hope that they will just, turn back to, umh, people gathering around at their houses, and, still getting in a garage or still getting in a airlock or airhanger or where ever if were traveling in spaceships at that point. Some kind of Star Trek bridge. Rehearsal space [laughs]. Umh. You know, I think it's, I am excited to see what people start to come up with I hope music, since so many people are. You can record and post and do anything, today. Facebook, social media, the Internet has changed the game. Completely. And everyone is trying their hand. At, being a musician, and, following that thread within themselves, and that just, and that's a huge I mean it's a giant congestion of people, trying to be hear musically, and so hopefully we'll figure out a way, where it just kind of like funnels its self out and you can still appreciate and people still take the time to, learn what their, learn their instrument I just. Let's see, okay, so I may be in twenty years I'll come back and watch this tape. Because, two weeks ago I rented a piano from Blind Mike's Piano Tuning on Greenwood, and for 25 dollars a month we'll see what inflation looks like when I'm 62. For 25 dollars a month I have a crappy spinnet [??] piano in my house I've always wanted a piano and I'm teaching myself how to play. And, I hope, that I still have that same curiosity and same desire to learn something new. Then, and I hope that's that definitely stays true with the world at large, I hope the scene is like that, I hope there's still a scene and I hope we're not all in like, profile boxes. That's what I hope.

NN: Thank you so much.

Someone: Thank you.

RF: Of course.