

50 MPH: EPISODE 32

“GIVE ME WHAT I NEED!”

Transcript (00:40:43)



KRIS TAPLEY

This is *50 MPH*!

[INTRO MUSIC]

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

Pop quiz, hotshot!

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

There’s a bomb on a bus.

JEFF DANIELS (as “Harry Temple”)

You’re deeply nuts, you know that?

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

Once the bus goes fifty miles an hour, the bomb is armed.

SANDRA BULLOCK (as “Annie”)

Stay on or get off?

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

If it drops below fifty...

SANDRA BULLOCK (as “Annie”)

Stay on or get off?!

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

...it blows up.

ALAN RUCK (as “Stephens”)

Oh, darn.

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

What do you do?

KEANU REEVES (as “Jack Traven”)

You have a hair trigger aimed at your head. What do you do?

DENNIS HOPPER (as “Howard Payne”)

What do you do?!

KEANU REEVES (as “Jack Traven”)

What do you do?

KRIS TAPLEY

I’m your host, Kris Tapley, and you’re listening to an oral history of director Jan de Bont’s 1994 summer blockbuster, *Speed*, straight from the people who made it happen. Now, don’t forget to fasten your seatbelts. Let’s hit the road!

KRIS TAPLEY

Alright, folks, we are rockin’ and rollin’ to the finish line on the creation of *Speed*. That’s right, for several months now we have charted a most exhaustive course through the making of this movie. Today we’re going to cover the final ingredient. The bow that ties it all together. The cherry on top. You hear a little bit of it every single week at the end of each episode of *50 MPH*. That’s right, it’s British rock superstar Billy Idol’s contribution to *Speed*: “Speed”! It’s the title track of the film’s original motion picture soundtrack. You remember, the high-octane jam that closed out the movie and sent you out of the theater banging your head.

KRIS TAPLEY

Now, we’re not only going to talk about the song today. Like I said, it was part of a soundtrack with some songs from the movie and others that were just along for the ride. Because *Speed*’s original motion picture soundtrack was something of a concept album full of songs that kind of, sort of related to the movie and the premise. Here’s the track listing. See if you can spot the theme: “Speed” by Billy Idol; “A Million Miles Away,” by The Plimsouls; “Soul Deep” by Gin Blossoms; “Let’s Go for a Ride” by Cracker; “Go Outside and Drive” by Blues Traveler; “Crash” by Rick Ocasek; “Rescue Me” by Pat Benatar; “Hard Road” by Rod Stewart; “Cot” by Carnival Strippers; “Cars (’93 Spring)” by Gary Numan; “Like a Motorway” by Saint Etienne; and “Mr. Speed” by Kiss.

KRIS TAPLEY

Now, whose job was it to pull all these songs together? That would be *Speed*’s executive record producer, Ralph Sall. Ralph has had an interesting trajectory. He was actually a Fox executive in the ‘80s when he was just a baby, 22 years old. He was on sets like *Die Hard* reporting back to the suits upstairs and, I mean, nobody his age was doing that job at the time. Even the assistants were older than him. Here’s Ralph himself giving you a little more on his backstory.

RALPH SALL

While I was there, one of the movies I was the executive in charge of was a movie called *Less Than Zero*, and I had the idea of getting Rick Rubin involved to do the

music, and at the time, License to Ill was brand new and the executives at the studio didn't really believe in my idea, but the head of production kind of was supportive. It was Elliot Lurie, who was very gracious, I have to say. If I was in his position and had some 22-year-old kid, like, spouting off about what they should be doing when he's the head of music, I'm not sure I would have been as gracious about it as he was. But I remember going to New York and getting Rick Rubin and he came to LA and never left. I was always a big music fan, so, when I transitioned out of being an executive, there was a couple people who were producers on the lot that asked me to work on their movies, Gale Anne Hurd being a big supporter of mine and helped me transition out into that realm.

KRIS TAPLEY

Ralph mentioned a guy named Elliot Lurie there. Lurie and another gentleman, Matt Walden, were running the Fox music department in the early '90s. Ralph had done a couple of movies for them, wrangling the soundtracks for things like *Buddy the Vampire Slayer* and *PCU*. Killer cover of "Pump It Up" from Mudhoney on that, by the way. They gave Ralph a call to do something with "Speed," pull together some songs for a soundtrack album, and look, this is back in the day where this ancillary element of your film's release could make money and draw eyes to the movie in the process. We're in a different world now, but in the '90s, all I can tell you is it was boom time for this sort of thing.

RALPH SALL

I mean, people don't buy CDs anymore, and so, the idea of making a record that will exist in the marketplace and get on MTV and help market the movie, none of those things exist as they used to, you know? MTV doesn't show videos and people don't buy CDs, but at the time, I mean, it was a big driver of what music supervision was. I mean, obviously, the first job, always, as a music supervisor, is to enhance the movie, the moments in the movie. In a normal situation, I'm usually involved before production and you have a script and then you go over it with the filmmakers and sometimes there's on-camera songs that you need to do before production takes place. Something like, I wrote and produced the song "Rolling with the Homies," which has endured as a signature part of the movie *Clueless*, but we did that, you know, before the movie started shooting. Then, most of the time, you're in post-production and looking for songs or creating songs for moments in a movie, and usually I was involved in movies that were usually heavily musical. That's when people would call me. I was also always kind of, like, a fireman, which was, like, something they tried didn't work out and then you needed somebody to put something together quickly and efficiently. I did a lot of that.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, before we get to the Billy Idol of it all, let's talk about some of these songs. "A Million Miles Away" by The Plimsouls, for instance.

[SONG: "A MILLION MILES AWAY"]

KRIS TAPLEY

This was actually first released in 1982 but Ralph wanted to dust it off because he was a big power pop guy and he saw an opportunity to reunite the group for this one-off re-recording.

RALPH SALL

I remember Peter Case was game for redoing it and I went so deep on that, specifically, I even got – like, I think it was the Williams brothers, who did the backgrounds on the original, came back to do them on this version as well. I think the idea of redoing it was to give it sort of a more of a '90s edge of the time, but also to potentially have something else that could be worked from the record or the movie that a licensed song, you wouldn't have that opportunity. I don't think they ended up doing anything like that with it, but that was the idea at the time.

KRIS TAPLEY

I'm a big fan of this song, by the way. The Goo Goo Dolls had also covered it four years prior on their 1990 album *Hold Me Up*, way before they blew up in the mainstream. It just has a certain '90s vibe to it, certainly the re-recording, anyway. And that's Ralph's wheelhouse. He also produced a record during this period called *Saturday Morning: Cartoons' Greatest Hits*, which features alternative artists like Liz Phair, Sponge, Matthew Sweet, Collective Soul, Butthole Surfers and Violent Femmes doing covers of cartoon songs. So, that's the head he's going into the *Speed* project with.

RALPH SALL

You know, I was definitely in alternative mode, although if you certainly look, things like Kiss and Rod Stewart are not alternative, but they had appropriately titled songs. If not the subject matter – I don't believe that the Kiss song "Mr. Speed" has anything to actually do with cars.

[SONG: "MR. SPEED]

RALPH SALL

But I remember going down to the recording studio to get that Ric Ocasek song. I think it was otherwise unreleased.

[SONG: "CRASH"]

RALPH SALL

I was a big fan of The Cars and I think I contacted them to see if they had anything that would be appropriate, and obviously, you know, a song called "Crash" fit my concept. I remember going down to the studio where Ric was recording and grabbing it out of the recording studio. So, I don't remember it being otherwise released, but I could be wrong. I'm pretty sure it just appeared on this.

KRIS TAPLEY

Ralph is also, just to add, credited as being the sort of father of the commercially successful tribute album, having produced records like *Deadicated: A Tribute to the*

Grateful Dead, Common Thread: The Songs of the Eagles and *Stoned Immaculate: The Music of The Doors*. Now, the only other song outside of Billy Idol's "Speed" that got a lot of play in the marketing of the film was, of all things, the Pat Benatar cover of the 1965 Fontella Bass mainstay "Rescue Me." It played in a number of TV spots for the film, and frankly, it sort of rubs against the grain of the film and the whole vibe it's trying to put out, as well as the vibe that the soundtrack was trying to put out.

[CLIP: SPEED TV SPOT]

KRIS TAPLEY

Ralph did not produce that one. He chalked it up to Fox executives putting it together with Benatar, and he also notes that the Carnival Strippers song "Cot" was just sort of added to the mix because they were signed to Fox at the time. But the journey of "Rescue Me" is kind of interesting. Let me bring back composer Mark Mancina, who wrote the original score for *Speed*. This was his idea, it appears, and it trickled down into something else.

MARK MANCINA

I said to Jan, "Here's what we're going to do. We're going to get Annie Lennox. I'm going to do the arrangement and she's going to sing 'Rescue Me' from the 60s." "Rescue Me," Annie Lennox's voice and a techno version that's got a *Speed*-type thing to it? Awesome idea. "Um, no, they're going to get Billy Idol and he's going to write 'Speed is what I need' and you need to go over there and meet him," and stuff, and I was like – I don't know, I always have these grand ideas and I always think they're great ideas. Maybe they're terrible ideas.

KRIS TAPLEY

And we come to it at last: "Speed." Four minutes and 22 seconds of blistering pop thunder with Billy Idol on the mic and his longtime collaborator Steve Stevens shredding on guitar.

[SONG: "SPEED"]

KRIS TAPLEY

Here's what Ralph had to say about how the idea initially came together.

RALPH SALL

There was always going to be an end title song. I thought of Billy Idol. I just thought that him and Steve Stevens could come up with something that would be good for the movie. You know, I think it turned out to be his last actual real hit rock track that he's had. So, it was kind of on, I guess, the tail end of his of his massive popularity. I think probably the song might have been even bigger had it been worked by a record label that wasn't so fledgling as Fox Records. I had never worked with Billy before that, but I'm pretty sure – he had the same manager as Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and I had worked with the Heartbreakers a number of times, and I think I just called over there about his availability. I think the window for doing all of this was pretty tight. Like I

said, it all happened in post, and oftentimes, in situations like that, it's just a race to try to get something together, and for the majority of movies I end up working on, the songs usually play a bigger element in the actual movie. I mean, I think that this particular venture crossed the line. You know, it was important to try to get something for people to continue the energy for the end titles, but, you know, obviously, there was a marketing element to the project, which existed apart from the movie itself.

KRIS TAPLEY

Billy Idol probably needs no introduction but let's give him one anyway. Billy – real name William Broad – first broke through at the height of the punk movement as the frontman of the English band Generation X in the late 1970s. He moved to New York in 1981 and paired his punk-like image and attitude with the glam-rock stylings of guitarist Steve Stevens and he soon shot to superstardom as a key figure for the budding MTV generation. His first hits were a new recording of the Generation X song “Dancing with Myself” and a cover of Tommy James and the Shondells’ “Mony Mony.” Before long it was “White Wedding” and “Rebel Yell,” “Eyes Without a Face,” “Flesh for Fantasy,” “Sweet Sixteen,” “To Be a Lover,” all the immortal ‘80s hits we know and love. And Billy, a film buff – he’s a big westerns fan, actually – played footsie with Hollywood. Oliver Stone tapped him for the role of Jim Morrison’s drinking buddy Cat in 1991’s *The Doors* and the very same year, Billy would have played the T-1000 in James Cameron’s *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, but a motorcycle accident he endured in 1990 kept him from that opportunity and it also minimized his role in *The Doors* as well. Also around this time came the Andrew Dice Clay film *The Adventures of Ford Fairlane*, which featured the Billy Idol song “Cradle of Love.” The music video for that song, you might recall, was directed by one David Fincher. Now, to catch us up to 1994, Billy was coming off of a pair of albums that saw him and Steve Stevens go their separate ways: *Charmed Life* in 1990, which featured “Cradle of Love,” and *Cyberpunk* in 1993, which was a bit of an experimental thing both in concept and execution. More to the point, *Cyberpunk* was a notable disappointment for Billy in the marketplace, and that is where he was in his career coming into *Speed*. So, with that long preamble out of the way, let's hear from the legend himself: Billy Idol.

BILLY IDOL

I had taken this kind of left turn a little bit away from the traditional Billy Idol sound. You know, the *Cyberpunk* thing was a fun thing, but it was really for a movie. Initially, it was a movie project. It was going to be *The Lawnmower Man 2*. It was going to turn into a franchise. The director, he did the “Shock to the System” video in the *Cyberpunk*, and that's why I got him to do it, because I liked *Lawnmower Man*. You know, I liked – he had done another one, too, with Denzel Washington, another cyberpunk movie. “Cradle of Love” was for *Ford Fairlane*. So, I had done a song for a movie, and I'd written a bit, a song at the end of *Days of Thunder*. I didn't do it. In the end, I couldn't do it. Coverdale did it, you know, the song at the end of *Days of Thunder*. So, it was fantastic. I mean, it's just great to be involved in movies and living out here in Los Angeles. It's just magic. And *Speed*, I think we came late to it. You know, we were one of the last things they put in. Yeah, because we were that song going out at the end. So, I think we were one of the last things they thought about in terms of the soundtrack or the music. So, we wrote

a kind of basically a classic Billy Idol song that almost has a like a “Rebel Yell” structure, you know? Verse, chorus, verse, chorus, middle bit, drop down, you know? Which was perfect. And I think, you know, coming at the end of the movie, I kind of knew – we obviously saw a rough cut. And so, we could put a lot of things in the song that we’d watched in the rough cut, you know, so we can mention a train, we can mention, you know – you can mention the idea that it’s moving all the time. And I hadn’t done that before, where you saw it, you know, and then you wrote a song. You know, before, we just happened to have a song or someone asked you for a song. You didn’t see the movie, necessarily. This one, we saw the movie in a rough cut and then we were able to, you know, write a song lyrically that fit what had been going on on the screen. I did think it would have been great if Keith Forsey, my producer at the time, who really was a kind of hitmaker, if he had have produced it, really. Because he was part of the iconic Billy Idol sound, was this kind of triumvirate of Billy Idol, Steve Stevens and Keith Forsey. But that chap, he did a really good job. I just thought there would just be a bit more of an edge if Keith had done it, just because he had the Billy Idol hit-making ability. Also, it was a reunion for me and Steve. I mean, me and Steve had sort of temporarily broken up while I made *Charmed Life* and *Cyberpunk*. So, it was us really getting back together. So, there was a reunion factor. Mark Youngsmith had done a fantastic job on *Charmed Life* and *Cyberpunk*, but Steve’s really the guy that’s – he’s the guy who can play – you know, it takes two people to play the beginning intro to “Rebel Yell.” Steve can do it. It’s just, he’s just one guy. He’s playing like three people when he plays the beginning to “Rebel Yell.” This guy, he’s super. His ability is just out of this – just crazy.

KRIS TAPLEY

Now let’s talk about Steve Stevens. And Billy’s not kidding, by the way. Look up a YouTube video of Steve playing the intro to “Rebel Yell.” I don’t think my brain could make my fingers do that. Just an epic, legendary figure in glam rock, hair metal, that whole scene. Steve actually played the “*Top Gun Anthem*” from that film’s soundtrack and won a Grammy for it in 1987. He also played guitar on Michael Jackson’s “Dirty Diana” and, in addition to his work with Billy, he’s played for Ric Ocasek, Robert Palmer, Vince Neil. He’s also released solo albums like *Atomic Playboys*, *Flamenco a Go-Go* and *Memory Crash*. And he still plays with Billy to this day. But let’s hear from Steve on all this.

STEVE STEVENS

We were already in writing mode and this kind of came up and we kind of just shifted and said, “OK, let’s write a track for this film.” And, you know, I’m not sure if they gave us much of an outline of what they were looking for, but “up-tempo” was the word. So, we said, “Oh, yeah, we can do that. We do up-tempo.” And then it was just pretty much, you know, we came up with the music, Billy wrote all the lyrics and then it was done very quickly when we went into the studio. I think it was two days total. We used the drummer we were working with at the time, Mark Schulman, on it. And I think Mark was the only other musician on it other than Billy and myself. I had come from working with Vince Neil for a while, and all of my guitars were tuned down a whole step. Ordinarily, guitars are tuned to E. These were tuned to D, and I just kind of left it that way. And

ordinarily, we never do that with Billy Idol. Everything's usually standard tuning. So, this one, you know, when we've played it live, I'm reminded, "Oh, you know, why didn't I retune?" I just ordinarily, you know, would have done standard tuning for Billy Idol. But that's why it sounds a little bit heavier than some of the Idol stuff, because of that reason. The guitars are tuned down a bit.

KRIS TAPLEY

Let's go back over to Mark Mancina.

MARK MANCINA

So, I went over there to Hans's place and there's Billy, and he had just been in a motorcycle accident, he had a broken leg, and he was just kind of coming up with ideas. But what I loved about him is that the Billy Idol that we see on MTV, that Billy Idol, he's exactly that person. Like, that's not a put-on. He talks that way. He sings that way. I mean, we're by ourselves, he's got a hand-held mic and I'm at the keyboard and he's going, "Yeeeeooowww," doing all that Billy Idol stuff. And I'm just kind of going, "Yeah, well, he's Billy Idol. That's what he does," you know? That's what he does, you know? It was really fun but I just thought "Rescue Me" would have been so great. The only collaboration was me telling him to go do more of him. Like when he would do his thing and then he would start to kind of sing a little bit straighter and I'd say, "You know, you can keep the character going," and he did, and it worked good.

KRIS TAPLEY

Oh, and fun fact about Mark and Steve...

STEVE STEVENS

The guy who actually scored *Speed*, Mark Mancina, I ended up working with on *Assassins*, the Antonio Banderas, Stallone movie. He knew that I played flamenco guitar, so I came in and played some flamenco guitar on that. So, I don't know if that came about through *Speed* or whatever, but I had heard about Mark also because I was a fan of Yes and he was a big prog fan. So, I think he sought me out knowing that, you know, I could play some nylon guitar.

KRIS TAPLEY

Now, a little bit about the recording session. In addition to guitar, Steve actually played bass for the song as well.

STEVE STEVENS

I don't know why we just didn't look for a bass player on it. Or I think maybe I intended the bass that I did to be temporary, but it worked well. I put the bass down and then laid my guitars down, and they seemed to work. And, you know, I'm not precious about any of that stuff. And, you know, I said, "You know, book a bass player," but they never did so, which was kind of cool. And I remember, the interesting thing was, when I was out with Vince Neil, we supported Van Halen for about six weeks, and Eddie and I were friends and Eddie had gifted me a bunch of guitar amplifiers. He had just come out with a Peavey 5150 model amplifier, and I used those on the recording of this. That's

probably why the guitar sounds a little bit heavier than then when I was using my Marshalls. So, that's the first time that I recorded with those amps that were gifted to me by Ed.

KRIS TAPLEY

How cool is that, by the way? Amps that Eddie Van Halen gifted to Steve Stevens were used to record "Speed." Here's Ralph Sall.

RALPH SALL

We did it at Ocean Way on Sunset. The music was heavily informed by Steve, for sure, in terms of getting it down, and I just remember little things about the recording, like, I think the lead vocals bounced from left to right in the chorus that I did, because I thought it would kind of sound cool and exciting. Billy, you know, he'd come into the room to check and see how things were going with the recording of the track and, you know, he'd throw up his fist and kind of curl his lip up, kind of like his signature look, to convey that things were moving along to his satisfaction, and then he popped back out to the lounge and we'd continue working.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, the song lands in the film. A funny side note here is that Steve Maslow, one of the sound re-recording mixers we met last week, told me that to this day he always thought he had mixed it a little too loud. Nah. Arista Records and Chrysalis Records partnered on the release and it was a modest hit. It peaked at number 38 on the Billboard Album Rock Tracks Chart and reached number 47 on the UK Singles Chart. Here's Billy again.

BILLY IDOL

It was huge in Europe as well, because in Europe, the wall had come down. They were finally getting MTV in there, sort of in Europe, in the sort of Eastern Bloc countries. And this is what they first saw, one of the first things they saw was *Speed*, and when we play in Europe, they want to hear "Speed." For them it was like Serbia and places, it's where they were seeing MTV for the first time and stuff. And that's what they loved about it. They loved things like the soundtrack to *Speed*. They loved the song "Speed." They want to hear it. countries like Bulgaria behind the Iron Curtain, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY

Then, of course, this being the era of MTV and this being Billy freakin' Idol, there was a music video! It was directed by Andy Delaney and Monty Whitebloom under their shared "Big TV" moniker and it's not very elaborate or anything, nor should it have been. It's a bunch of footage from the movie intercut with a club performance by Billy with tons of sweaty girls all over the place.

BILLY IDOL

It was just a fun, all sweaty, some sort of sweaty, glamorous, kind of [growls] kind of club, you know? It was fantastic, like, a punk rock club downtown. You know, everybody started out there, initially, in the early days of LA punk. So, we did it down there. You know, it was a bit of a hardcore, just a real shithole club. It was great, though, because

it's just another bit that sort of brought this gritty ambience. And then I think they sort of put little bits of the movie into the video as well. So, you had all these sweaty girls, then you had the stuff of the movie. So, it was fun. It was just a fun shoot. You know, sexy. Back then, things were sexy, you know?

STEVE STEVENS

The theme of the video, unrelated to the movie, was very punk rock. So, I remember I cut my hair shorter than I had ever had it before. And I thought, well, you know, alright, it's good. I'm newly sober. I'm cutting my hair and I'm back with Billy Idol. So, it was great. The video is actually really good. It's really gritty and sweaty, and it's really good.

KRIS TAPLEY

I mentioned the directors, Big TV. Together these guys directed the videos for Soul II Soul's "Back to Life (However Do You Want Me)," Seal's "Crazy," Paula Abdul's "Blowing Kisses in the Wind" and "The Promise of a New Day," Tori Amos's "Cornflake Girl," Spice Girls' "2 Become 1" and Lauryn Hill's "Doo-Wop (That Thing)." So, that ought to give you a pretty good sense of time and place. I managed to track down half of that tandem, Andy Delaney over in the UK, and here's what he recalled.

ANDY DELANEY

We got sent the track by Virgin Records, I think. I mean, we came out of, like, indie music in the UK, dance music stuff. But we were doing well in the states and then Virgin were, like, "We're going to make a music video for Billy Idol and we've got, like, not the normal, huge budget. We just want to make a quickie. Do you want to do it?" You know, and we were, like, Billy Idol! Because when I was a kid, I was a late punk rocker, right? So, Generation X were, like, OK, yeah, Billy Idol, alright. I hadn't really been into his music for, like, 10 years before that, you know? But we were, like, "OK, we'll do it, but we need to try and recreate a punk club in London in 1977." Right? That was it. And they were, like, "Yeah, but what's that got to do with the film?" We were, like, "Yeah, don't worry about that. We'll figure something out, you know? It's going to be in a club. It's got to look kind of grungy." We went looking at all these punk books and recollections and stuff as a kind of look-book, and that got kind of upgraded to LA, everyone was good-looking. Because back in London in 1977, no one was good-looking. Right? Not really. So, that was it. It was very simple. And we met Billy, and we were like, "Alright, Billy." You now, "How's it going? Do you remember," and we were trying to reminisce about the old days of the punk scene, and he was, like, "Mate, I can't remember anything. Like, don't even ask me." And we were, like, "Alright, OK. I won't ask you why you can't remember anything, Bill, but that's fine." And so, yeah, we got on with him. We found this club, did some casting, got everyone all greased up, did a bit of kind of styling that was a mixture of kind of a glamorous vision of '77 London and off we went. And the connection to the movie was, like, "Oh, it's just going to be – the film's going to be playing on some TV screens and the camera will kind of race into the TV and the movie would be on the telly and that will get us in and out of clips." You know, we didn't just want to just cut. And that was, you know, a bit of stop-frame animation. Just, easy.

KRIS TAPLEY

I haven't been able to track down the name of the club they shot in, but Andy says it was in East LA and was part of the local Latino punk scene, so it could have been one of a few possibilities, some of them long gone by now.

ANDY DELANEY

It just seemed appropriate to us. It was a black box. We could shoot during the day. There was no natural light. Pretty small, pretty affordable. Yeah, it was just a day downtown. And this is before downtown was gentrified, you know? So, it was, like, rough and ready down there. And yeah, the trouble is we shot it in a club that was too small. We wanted it to be cold and sweaty. We couldn't get any decent camera angles. And also, we wanted to shoot it anamorphic because we figured that would match better with the film, but the budget didn't stretch to anamorphic lenses and just crappy things like that. So, it didn't quite have the look we wanted. We had grungier vision originally. It could have been realer. It was too stylized for me. We wanted, like, as much as possible, if you see Billy, you're still aware of the crowd. So, it wasn't like you can just shoot the band and then they can go and then you shoot all your vignettes. I mean, there was some of that. At the end of the day, we were shooting vignettes without the band in, so you do band on their own, but with foreground people, then a couple of side angles and it's, like, one of those things where we had to do a lot in a very limited time, really. And we were just frustrated that we weren't able to craft the images as well as we'd liked, you know? If it had been anamorphic, it would have had a really different vibe. It still would have been gritty, but it would have been cinematic, and my letdown was, like, when you cut to the movie, the movie's just got a different cinematic feeling. And you can get that. Anamorphics in a small space work brilliantly well. And the way that the focus falls off on people, it's really good. It still bugs me to this day. It's like, why didn't we just – couldn't we get the lenses? Jesus. But it was fun. One-day shoot. Long day. Bill was great. The boys were great. It was just a bit of a laugh, really. And then the studio guys came down, some Fox guys came down, I think. We were, like, "Oh, alright, how are you doing?" And they didn't – they were just fine. They were just, like, "What the hell this has to do with the movie?" You know, it was, like, recreating some vintage punk thing, but it worked because "speed," obviously, has got a double-edge, you know, meaning for people in punk rock music. A different form of speed was going on. And so, it just kind of worked, I think. It's not one of my finest hours, but it was great to do. It was of the time. And, you know, we were making a music video. Billy had just done some videos with Fincher and they were really stylized and they were beautiful and so, we were, like, "Oh, man, we're going to work with Billy." Because we had done Paula Abdul and Fincher had done Paula Abdul and we were, like, Fincher freaks and we got to hang out with Fincher a few times. But what I do remember is when we were doing the post, it was the O.J. Simpson white Bronco chase. So, we were in an edit suite in Hollywood and, like, there was this O.J. chase going on all the time. And I remember the O.J. chase more than, like, finishing off the video. I mean, we did a rough cut and put it together and then just when we were doing the VFX of going into the TV screens, watching that, which is the kind of timestamp for me. That was kind of it, man.

KRIS TAPLEY

Andy and Monty no longer work together, though they're still friends. They made the film *Love is Blind* together a few years ago and that was the end of their partnership, but they had a 30-year run, which is pretty remarkable. Andy was most recently in post-production on his upcoming film *Holly by Nightfall*, while Monty, Andy says, is living in Cornwall writing these days. Now, I said earlier that Billy is a westerns fan. Both Billy and Steve are film buffs, as it turns out, and Steve has some refreshingly varied taste. I hit him up for his favorite movie and he went from *Taxi Driver* to *Bride of Frankenstein* to *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Both of these guys were stoked to be involved in a project that featured actor Dennis Hopper and, beyond that, to be pitching in on a movie that featured a lot of folks trying to break on through to the other side.

BILLY IDOL

We were fans of people like that, because of *Easy Rider* as well. I ride motorcycles, so it was huge, seeing something like that. And then, I've done that. I've ridden across America. Didn't throw my watch away, but we rode across America. I've done that because of that film. Because of Dennis, really, because he was sort of showing us, you know, the counterculture in movie. So, it was kind of great sort of being part of his sort of second Hollywood renaissance, you know, after *Blue Velvet* and everything, you know?

STEVE STEVENS

I enjoy doing the soundtrack things because you can kind of step out of what's expected. You know, your possibilities are endless, and I like being inspired by visuals. Even when Billy and I will come up with something, we'll talk about a film or we'll watch a film together just to inspire us. It may be something totally unrelated but we do think in visual terms a lot to get ideas. Obviously, you know, "Eyes Without a Face" is, you know, the title came from a French horror film. So, yeah, doing soundtracks is liberating a lot, and I haven't done that many, but they are special. Yeah, it is pretty cool. You know, we felt like this was kind of a rock and roll movie, you know? It felt different than the other action films around. We were happy to be part of something that felt like the next step in high-adrenaline movies.

BILLY IDOL

Keanu was going from, you know, the kind of comedy films he'd done to action as well, apart from – he had done some serious films as well, but he hadn't become an action hero. So, it was, like, it was really cool. And then, look, it's *John Wick* and everything today, so you know, so, he became part of the American Film firmament, you know?

STEVE STEVENS

I think a lot of it is about the chemistry between Keanu and Sandra Bullock, you know? And Dennis Hopper is fantastic in it, you know? It's good chemistry, and obviously, a director who looks at things a little bit different and wants to prove himself. You've got a lot of people who want to prove themselves in this movie and are going to really go to the extra umpteenth extent to make something really, really great.

BILLY IDOL

That means a lot to me, because we came out of punk, you know? Initially, when we were new. And, you know, you want to see people break through, you know? You just do, because, you know, people gave us a chance or whatever. It's just great to be involved in that, you know? Where people are sort of advancing their careers. And yeah, it was part of reinvigorating me and Steve. That was great. You know, it really did a lot for us. And we're still playing together a million years later now. I mean, we were playing it recently on the Billy Idol show. Sort of swapping it off between "Scream" and "Speed," you know, in that space. There this other song we do, "Scream," that we sort of trade it off sometimes. One night "Scream," one night "Speed."

STEVE STEVENS

It's also a great rocker, and it never fails that if we have, you know, a kind of slower song or something, we'll throw "Speed" in right afterwards to kind of get the audience up. It works really well. It's just so much fun to play live as well.

KRIS TAPLEY

By the way, Billy and Steve just came off of a stint in Las Vegas late last year and they're even playing a big Super Bowl pregame program through On Location next weekend. Billy says they're hard at work on a new album that should land next year as well. Ralph Sall, meanwhile, says he's kicking a memoir idea around and he's got an ongoing project with his band All Too Much that he's hoping to put out into the world soon. But anyway, go figure, right? This song that feels like a silly throwaway on a '90s movie soundtrack actually played a key role in the career of one of pop music's biggest superstars. It got him back on track with his longtime guitarist and helped them reintroduce their iconic sound to the world again. Billy and Steve recalled going to the premiere of *Speed* and how that was one of the first big public things they did after joining forces once again. And, indeed, 30 years later, their contribution to the film remains a popular staple of their setlist.

BILLY IDOL

Yeah, it is kind of wild, I know. I couldn't have imagined that we would seriously be going this long. You know, but it's been fun. So, as long as it's fun, and we're getting somewhere enjoying the music we're making. That's – that's it.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

KRIS TAPLEY

Next week on *50 MPH...*

KRIS TAPLEY

With Billy Idol behind us, who's up for a dive into the '90s movie soundtrack heyday?

TODD GILCHRIST

There's, like, this amazing combination of, like, having Iggy Pop's "Nightclubbing" and "Perfect Day" by Lou Reed, and then also this, like, really super-modern electronic music, and then Brit pop.

KRIS TAPLEY

If I was going to say a number one all-time '90s soundtrack, this would be it. "Would?," "Birth Ritual," "State of Love and Trust," "Seasons."

KRIS TAPLEY

Join us as I welcome *Variety* senior editor Todd Gilchrist to help break down a bygone era we'll never see again.

TODD GILCHRIST

These were not songs that were high-profile in the zeitgeist, and he unearthed and gave them new life, as opposed to going, "Yeah, we all know that 'Turn! Turn! Turn!' is a banger."

KRIS TAPLEY

You've got stuff from Helmet and House of Pain, stuff from Teenage Fan Club and De La Soul, Living Colour and Run-D.M.C., Biohazard and Onyx, Slayer and Ice-T, Faith No More and Boo-Yaa T.R.I.B.E., I mean, come on! Look at these pairings!

KRIS TAPLEY

All of that and more next week right here on *50 MPH!*

KRIS TAPLEY

Thanks so much for listening. *50 MPH* is written, produced and edited by yours truly, Kris Tapley. You can find us on Twitter @50MPHPod. I'm @kristapley. That's Kris with a K. You can also catch every episode and more at our website 50MPHpodcast.com. If you dug the show, please like and subscribe and do all the things. We'll see you next time.