

Highwire Days

Life is a balancing act for **Rich Good**,
the Twentynine Palms–based graphic designer,

entrepreneur, and guitarist for The Psychedelic Furs.

STORY BY STEVEN BILLER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRANDON HARMAN



W

WHEN YOU LIVE A double life, the subversion often entails personal sacrifices. For Rich Good, proprietor of Very Very, the Twentynine Palms store known for its “Other Desert Cities” T-shirts and locally created art and oddities, this meant the horseshoe moustache he proudly grew, shaped, and wore over the winter had to go.

A few days after returning from a weeklong Grand Canyon vacation, Good shaved his bewhiskered face. He was as crestfallen as he was smooth.

“I sometimes wear this long black jacket and a big cowboy hat that my friend Todd [Fink, lead singer of The Faint] made,” says the lanky, 6-foot-1-inch Brit. “With the moustache, I looked like I’d stepped out of *Tombstone*. It was full Doc Holliday.”

The look suited Good’s dusty desert lifestyle but was woefully out of tune with his better-known identity: lead guitarist of The Psychedelic Furs, the post-punk 1980s phenomenon whose latest tour culminates May 17 at Agua Caliente Resort Casino Spa Rancho Mirage.

Good, a graphic designer by trade, hails from Horley, Surrey, about 20 miles southwest of London. He had moved to Nevada City, California, with his former wife in the late 1990s, and eased into life in the Sierra Foothills town. From there, frequent road trips opened his eyes to the otherworldly landscapes of Monument Valley and Grand Canyon. He discovered the Mojave Desert after first learning to love the American West.

“When you’re English and you get off the plane in California, you’re like, ‘Oh, my God, this is where everything’s from,’” he says. “I wanted to see all those things that you see in movies. Then, you realize there’s so much more, and those road trips kept getting bigger and bigger.”

One early-fall excursion included a spontaneous detour to Joshua Tree National Park, where the pair lucked into a mostly empty Jumbo Rock campground and marveled at the scraggly namesake trees, gigantic rock formations, and deafening silence. “It gets under your skin,” he says. From then on, every road trip included a stop in the Joshua Tree area. They would stay at the eclectic 29 Palms Inn and at different vacation rentals. “One guy [in Wonder Valley] had five places, and we would stay at those.”



Their visits became so frequent that they started scouring the area for land of their own. “We were out having a look, and a guy came out in a little buggy with a big Colt .45 on the seat next to him,” Good recalls. “It turns out he knew the neighboring parcel owner. She was from Brighton, in England, and she’s a real estate agent. So it was through another Brit in Wonder Valley that I ended up getting 5 acres of California real estate in a place where most people would be like, ‘Why the fuck would you live here?’”

He unwittingly answers his own question: “I’ve been in creative professions all my life, and this is such a visual place. You see a sunset in Wonder Valley, and the sky flames up, and it’s unlike anything anywhere else. Those 100-mile views are beautiful. It’s fascinating to be in this vast wilderness. There’s a connection to planet Earth. It’s primal. It wouldn’t let go of me.”

— Evidence of a life in music — from guitars, amplifiers, and effects to artwork and an encyclopedic collection of vinyl — fills the living spaces of the Twentynine Palms house that Rich Good shares with his partner, Dana Longuevan.



— Good expresses his love for American muscle cars and the open road behind the wheel of his 1967 Plymouth Fury. His friend Todd Gint, lead singer of The Faint, made and gifted Good's signature cowboy hat.



NEVADA CITY, the tiny town of only a few thousand people located 60 miles northeast of Sacramento, had a surprisingly strong alternative music scene when Good arrived. It wasn't long before he befriended musician and producer Noah Georgeson and formed the indie band The Pleased in San Francisco.

"We had good luck from day one," Good recalls of the band's short but prodigious run from 2002 to 2006. "The whole New York scene was popping — The Strokes, Interpol, TV on the Radio, The Walkmen, the Yeah, Yeah, Yeahs. Somehow, we were included in that scene; we would open for all those bands."

The Pleased released a record with Big Wheel Recreation, the now-defunct label that helped launch other post-rock, punk, metal, and hardcore bands. But it was the band's booking agent, Bruce Solar (now a partner in Paladin Artists in Los Angeles), who delivered their big break. "It turned out that [Solar] also handled The Psychedelic Furs," Good says. "[The Pleased] got on a couple short tours with them, and then a big six-week tour."

Good, who will turn 50 in June, was only 6 years old when The Furs released its self-titled debut album in 1980. He recalls hearing the 1982 single "Love My Way" at a school disco. "I remember I liked that song, but that was all I knew about The Furs until later."

He learned that frontman Richard Butler and Butler's bass player brother, Tim, founded The Psychedelic Furs after seeing the Sex Pistols perform at the 100 Club Punk Special festival in London in 1976. The Furs careened into the mainstream when actress Molly Ringwald told screenwriter John Hughes about the single "Pretty in Pink," from the band's second album, *Talk Talk Talk*, instigating Hughes to write the popular 1986 Brat Pack film of the same title and include the song on the soundtrack.

Midnight to Midnight (1987), the band's fourth album and biggest Top 40 success, saw its catchy single "Heartbreak Beat" win steady airplay. Three additional albums followed, but the Butlers began to feel The Psychedelic Furs was losing its edge. "You're either in the studio, rehearsing, or touring with very little time off," Tim Butler says from his home in Kentucky, "and the record company's trying to dictate what you should do on the next album."

The band took a hiatus from 1993 to 2000, and the Butlers founded Love Spit Love with Richard Fortus and Frank Ferrer (both later joined Guns N' Roses). Love Spit Love put out two albums. Richard Butler also released a self-titled solo LP.

The Furs, with longtime guitarist John Ashton, tested the waters again in 2000 by joining The B-52's and The Go-Go's on a short tour. "We were loving it," Tim recalls. In 2001, they reassembled for their own tour, joined by The Pleased.

That's when Good befriended The Furs, finding common

ground in their reverence for Roxy Music. "I've been a Roxy Music guy since I was 11 years old, and that stayed with me," Good says of the influential English band. "Roxy was an easy way to bond with Richard and Tim and John. At the end of the tour, Richard's like, 'Come on up tonight, and we'll do 'Virginia Plain,' the first-ever Roxy single. I learned the hell out of it and got to come out near the end of the first set in Houston and play a Roxy song with Richard Butler. I'm like, *This is it. I've done it.*"

At the time, no one knew that performance would be Good's audition, but five years later, after Ashton had left The Furs, Good would find himself rehearsing with the band in upstate New York.

"Their manager left me some phone messages, and honestly, I had this feeling that they wanted me to design a website or a poster or T-shirts," he says, referencing his graphic design studio, No One. (Good also serves as creative director for the Nevada City Film Festival.) "We were just chitchatting on the phone, and he said, 'So how would you feel about playing guitar for The Furs?' I wasn't expecting the question. I remember thinking, *Just say yes, and think about it later.*"

The Furs played a week of club dates so Good could get into the groove before they performed in front of 70,000 people at a festival in Spain.

"He fit in really easy," Tim says. "It's like putting on an old glove or an old sock or something — I think because he was an English guitarist. I think English guitarists have a different way of playing than American guitarists."

That was 15 years ago. Now, Good spends up to four months a year on tour with the band. He wrote four songs — "The Boy That Invented Rock & Roll," "No-One," "This'll Never Be Like Love," and "Come All Ye Faithful" — and co-wrote (with the Butlers and former drummer Paul Garisto) "Don't Believe" on *Made of Rain*, released to wide acclaim in 2020; it was the band's first album since 1991.

"It's great to have someone else who comes from the same sort of background in music, likes the same sort of music, and writes songs that fit with what we are doing," Tim says.

BACK IN TWENTYNINE PALMS, the freshly sheared Good has only a few weeks to inventory and fine-tune product displays at Very Very before heading to Los Angeles for Furs rehearsals. He and artist Dana Longuevan, his partner of 13 years, never planned to open a store in the High Desert town known for having the largest U.S. Marine Corps base. They did it on whim.

Longuevan, with tongue firmly in cheek, had created T-shirts with block letters reading "Other Desert Cities," riffing on the Interstate 10 sign. She made enough for their friends, and then, while shopping in Twentynine Palms at White Label Vinyl, the record store owner suggested the couple open their own shop across the street.



—
Longuevan and Good
(opposite) opened
Very Very to provide
a space where they
and other local artists
and makers can
display and sell their
paintings, ceramics, and
homespun wares.

Very Very gives Good a place to display his own photography and screen prints as well as paintings by Longuevan and the work of other local artists and makers.

The store features Old Dale knives by Chris Unck of Twentynine Palms, ceramic cactus sculptures by John Flores of Yucca Valley, and glass necklaces and earrings by Brian Schirk of Wonder Valley, as well as Stan Ray shop jackets chainstitched by Jason Steady of Twentynine Palms and artful housewares by Fredericks & Mae and Corrina Cowles. Guitar gear and Psychedelic Furs concert posters hint at Good's duality.

"We wanted it to be art and design focused, but we also wanted to celebrate Twentynine Palms and Wonder Valley," Good says. "This town, it's magnetic to me. When you go into Wonder, there's something different there. I always feel this change when I'm driving out there to my place. It relaxes me. It's like you've landed on another planet. We cultivated our shop around that feeling."

Very Very and its neighbors in the Corner 62 Shopping Oasis building — Scorpion Lollipop, Desert General, and the Hi-Desert Times magazine shop — add to the beat of the town's progress.

"It's nice to see what's happening here," says Good, who names Out There Bar and GRNDSQRL among his favorite hangouts. "There's a good community spirit with all the different businesses. Everyone seems committed to not ruining the character of what makes Twentynine Palms enticing in the first place. It's about celebrating it a bit more. That's what our store has been all about."

GOOD CAME TO The Furs after its heyday but reigns as the band's longest-serving guitarist. He appreciates "origin stories" of fans who discovered the band on college radio and have been devoted to it for decades, as he has been of Roxy Music.

"I'm the right person for the job," he says. "Historically, when the band started, they were kind of like a punk band. They were musicians, but they were not extremely competent musicians. They brought attitude and creative choices. I come from a similar musical background: I'm self-taught, and I developed my own path musically."

With the success of *Made of Rain*, The Furs' audience is growing, and so are the venues where they perform. The last time the band played in the desert, they packed the house at Pappy & Harriet's Pioneertown Palace. This month, they expect to fill The Show at Agua Caliente Resort Casino Spa Rancho Mirage.

Good attributes the resurgence to the sonic diversity of the band's discography — from punk thrashes like "India" and "We Love You" to the acoustic torch song "Get a Room" — as well as Furs songs still finding their way into popular films and television series. The second season of the hit Netflix series *Stranger Things* featured the 1984 single "The Ghost in You" in 2017, the same year the soundtrack for *Call Me by Your Name* included 1982's "Love My Way."

The band's main draw will always be Richard Butler's swagger — especially his signature cross-legged bows and timeless raspy, nicotine vocals.

Good and drummer Zach Alford (formerly of The B-52's, Bruce Springsteen, and David Bowie), who joined The Furs in 2021, give the band a fresh energy. "When you have two new members who are such high-quality players," Tim Butler says, "the whole thing is a step up."

For his part, Good loves the band's catalog and favors "Sister Europe" ("The mood and the haunting feel, that's the stuff that any band is desperate to have"), "All of This and Nothing" ("It's got so many different sections"), and "India" ("It's relentless. It has this grand opus beginning that's almost pompous, and then *bam!*").

He's not above a good pop song either. When the band plays hits such as "The Ghost in You" or "Love

Continued on page 108



Introducing Powerwall 3 Freedom Calls



More Powerful • More Efficient • More Savings

WE ARE AN EXCLUSIVE POWERWALL 3 DEALER!

Contact us to see how a home battery can benefit you.

760.359.9375 gorenova.com/psl **renova.energy**



ART276

Art276 offers affordable modern art for people who want to be surrounded by beautiful things.

73950 EL PASEO, PALM DESERT, CA 92260
442-290-9405

www.art276.com @art276gallery

ERNEST ZACHAREVIC
"COMPOSITION WITH RED, BLUE, AND YELLOW"



PALM SPRINGS LIFE

Subscribe & Save

12 issues for \$42

palmspringslife.com/subscribe

877-704-0564



HIGHWIRE DAYS

Continued from page 62

My Way," light assignments for the guitar, he steps back and enjoys the moment. "The fans are so kind," he says. "They are with us on a good show. We're all together, and it's great."

WEEKS BEFORE rehearsals begin in Los Angeles, Good feels exhaustion and excitement in equal measure. Shaving the moustache has shifted his mindset to The Furs — and the reality that they'll be playing without saxophonist Mars Williams, who died of perianal cancer a few weeks after the band wrapped its last tour in October 2023.

"He was playing through the most insane pain level through that whole tour," Good recalls. "They were great shows, but everyone in the band knew Mars was in trouble, and he knew it. He was my main man in the band and an exceptional player, so that's been rough."

Rather than add a different sax player, Fortus, who played with Love Spit Love and produced *Made of Rain*, joined the tour, which includes four dates in Australia, followed by shows in Honolulu, Tucson, Phoenix, and Las Vegas and wrapping with a five-city swing through Central and Southern California.

Meanwhile, Good attends to Very Very, hosting events, including evenings of experimental music, in the courtyard. "I felt like if we're going to do a music event," he says, "it should be something slightly unusual, the same way we've tried to approach the store."

He also attends City Council meetings hoping to help thwart the development of a 120-cabin resort near his two-bedroom house on the western edge town. He and Longuevan enjoy an unobstructed view into neighboring Joshua Tree from their front window and an encyclopedic collection of desert trees and plants, from agaves to ocotillos, out back.

"Part of me wants Twentynine Palms to not lose its dusty edge," he says. "It's the end of the line, because after it, you have to go 100 miles to find anything. I like that edge-of-the-world feeling. We want to be part of this community, give something back, because the desert's given us a lot. There's such a great community right now, like something's happening."

Good might regrow his moustache after The Furs' final set in Rancho Mirage, but probably not too thick or for too long. The band departs on another tour, with shows in the United States and Europe, this fall.