

# Whatever

## FIX YOUR HEARTS OR DIE

### The Big Idea: Randee Dawn

Posted on April 8, 2025 Posted by Athena Scalzi 1  
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#### WHATEVER

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#### Whatever Days

April 2025

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Strap in for today's Big Idea, because we're getting the band back together! At least, author Randee Dawn has brought us a fantastical band from Ireland. And with them comes some groupies, some gigs, and of course, some fae. Read on to see if *The Only Song Worth Singing* is touring in a city near you.

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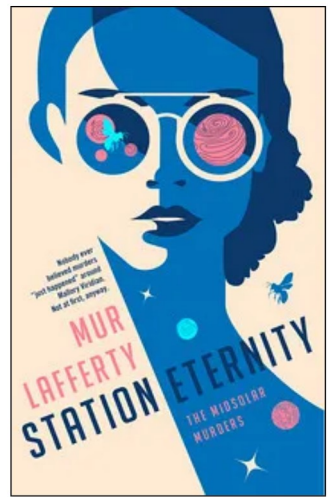
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**The Big Idea**



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 Authors explaining the the big ideas behind their latest works, in their own words. See

**RANDEE DAWN:**

Modern musicians, based on our pop culture renderings of them, are ... well, kind of assholes. Want to create a character who's simultaneously entitled, coddled, egoistic and (frequently) personal hygiene-avoidant? Get yourself a rock star. Based on portrayals on TV, in movies and often in books, the Rock Star™ model trashes hotels, terrorizes members of the opposite sex, eagerly experiments with inserting powders into nostrils – basically, they're living clichés.

That's not the portrayal I wanted for *The Only Song Worth Singing*, my new dark fantasy novel about a rock band on their first big American tour in the 1990s who are pursued, bedeviled and changed forever by several Irish fae. Why not? Because when I was covering the indie music scene (and taking notes) for various outlets during that same time period, actual assholes were thin on the ground.

*Are* there rock musicians who are entitled jerks? Of course. I met some of them, interviewed them, and had a few dodgy moments. Nothing to recoil from, particularly, nothing anyone would label as *traumatic*. One of the weirdest moments was having a group interview in the record company's conference room in which the four guys wouldn't stop making obscene sexual references. I got what I needed for the article, and then made sure to include *all of that shit* in the published interview later on. I also got an apology from the singer at the show that same night.

So in my experience, in any case, the musicians I was

**the latest Big Ideas!**

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Scalzi

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by John Scalzi

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meeting were ... well, people.

In *The Only Song*, we're taken into the lives of three guys who've been friends since they were children, who grew up making music together outside of Dublin. Now they're hitting it big: they've got a tour bus, groupies, gigs that keep attracting bigger audiences, and the promise of great things to come. What could go wrong? Well, when you throw in fae with their own agendas – including one known as the *leannan sídhe*, the fairy mistress who attaches herself to one member, inspiring his music but sucking his life away – the answer is *a lot*.

The backdrop to all of this going on, though, is the fact that these guys are on the road for weeks at a time. It's the 1990s: No one has cell phones or the internet. They're three guys in their early 20s, explorers in a new and strange world, without anyone around them who isn't reliant on a paycheck. It's disconcerting. It's foolhardy. It's amazing. When I was in my 20s myself and meeting these mystical beings, I was deeply impressed. I've never written music – I just obsess over it. For me, a concert can be a transportative experience. Performers like Peter Gabriel, Martin Stephenson, Sting, and – laugh if you like but I challenge you to deny it – Taylor Swift give us the closest we get to actual, real magic in this world. It's one reason why the changes corporations have made to the music industry in the past several decades are such tragedies.

What I tried to do was weave my own backstage experiences into the book, with the goal of humanizing the insane world of the rock star on tour. Anyone who gets to some level of fame understands that the world of celebrity

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## Whatever Everyone Else is Saying

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Ron Beilke on  
Interrupting The Spiral

Robert M Roman on  
The Big Idea: Rande  
Dawn

Lym on Interrupting  
The Spiral

Tim on Interrupting  
The Spiral

CB McGuire on  
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Sarah Smith on  
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J.M. on Interrupting  
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Katy Lewis on  
Interrupting The Spiral

Ray Cornwall on  
Interrupting The Spiral

is a bizarre experience; after a certain point, it's impossible to tell who's with you because they like you, who's hanging out because you're famous, and who's looking for an angle. Years ago I interviewed Crowded House, and Tim Finn (who was then playing with them) insisted on wearing sunglasses indoors. How cliché can you get, right? So I asked him why, and he told me honestly, "Sometimes you just get tired of looking at people." That's a statement I used to find *hilarious*. Now I think I have a better understanding – not because I'm famous, but because I grew up. The wide-eyed gaze of the enthusiastic fan is a weighty thing, indeed.

I traveled on the road with a couple of bands over the years, sometimes in the bus itself (thanks for the ride, Beautiful South and Trashcan Sinatras) and sometimes adjacent to it (Radiohead gave me a tour of the bus, but no women were permitted on the drive). The week I spent popping up at Radiohead gigs, or taking Amtrak with them from city to city, was my entrée to what the grind of a tour could look like. Yes, bad food. Yes, monotony. Yes, long waits. But yes, magic. Yes, camaraderie. Yes, grace, joy, and kindness. Plus, the revelation that in a band there are several human beings and an extra creation that only exists when they are on stage playing together. The band itself is its own, mythical beast.

If I've done it right, then my band members – Ciaran, Mal and Patrick – echo some of what I saw during those unexpectedly educational, sometimes inspiring days and nights hanging out with musicians. Sometimes, they're just happy to have someone they aren't paying to be there, who they aren't playing with every night, to hang out and talk.

Peter on Interrupting  
The Spiral

JK on Interrupting The  
Spiral

Kasumii on  
Interrupting The Spiral

MintWitch on  
Interrupting The Spiral

Gayle Tapp on  
Interrupting The Spiral

Larsaf on Interrupting  
The Spiral

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## Whatever Just Happened

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The Big Idea: Randee  
Dawn

Interrupting The Spiral

Hello From Awesome  
Con

The Big Idea: Jade  
Presley

The Big Idea: Meredith  
R. Lyons

View From A Hotel  
Window, 4/2/25:  
Chicago

Brookline Travel Issues

The Big Idea: Ada  
Palmer

Wednesday Check-in



For some it is about what you can put in your nose or how much you can drink, but virtually every one I met during those days hadn't yet become a Famous Rock Star creation. They were thoughtful, sometimes shy, generous and talented folks who'd taken a brave leap into the unknown in pursuit of their art.

One or two of them could have done with an extra bar of soap, though. But I kept the T-shirt and the extra bottle of Absolut. I wrote the articles. And with luck, some of all of that has distilled into the extraordinary experience of my guys in *The Only Song Worth Singing*. Let's buy 'em another round.

**The Only Song Worth Singing: Amazon|Barnes & Noble|Bookshop**

**Author Socials: Website|BlueSky|Instagram**

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Category: **Big Idea**

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← **Interrupting The Spiral**

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**Robert M Roman**



The Big Idea: Mary G. Thompson

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 **The Name of My Next Band**

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Egg Wedger

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Qualified Sandwich Inspectors

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Boston Pizza Festival

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Renaissance Spork

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Disaster Paladin

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Pleatherhosen

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Electric Santa and the Luminous 8

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Potato Shame

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Drinkable Mayo

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The Great Eggnog Riot

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