

Rand (right) with his "My List" co-writer Tim James (left) and Toby Keith



Hit songwriter
Rand Bishop serves up
some tips for music-biz
survival in his book,
Makin' Stuff Up.

SURVIVOR SAGAS

Rand Bishop always struggled for the answer to the dreaded icebreaker question, "What do you do?" He eventually came up with the perfect, and certainly intriguing, rejoinder: "I make stuff up."

Rand was simply telling the truth in a sly—some would say smart-alecky—way. He made his living by mainly writing songs, but Rand has held virtually every sort of job the music business might have to offer, including producer and session vocalist.

"My life is about making stuff up," explains Rand, who has spent around 40 of his 59 years in the music business. He wrote the No. 1 smash "My List" for Toby Keith and has also crafted hits

for Tim McGraw, Indigo Girls, Lorrie Morgan and many others. Rand also scored a Grammy nomination for "(We Dance) So Close to the Fire," from the *Saturday Night Fever* movie sequel, *Staying Alive*.

"I feel that it is such a privilege to be a writer and have success doing something that is creative. And I have done other jobs and all of those were really difficult," he adds with a laugh.

Rand is attempting to make life easier for aspiring songwriters and musicians

with his new book, appropriately titled *Makin' Stuff Up*. "I wanted to tell some of the war stories I'd been through and also use those stories and the craft I've learned to inspire writers and maybe help them

make good choices from a career point of view," says Rand. "If I can entertain people at the same time, I'll be thrilled."

Both missions appear to be achieved. In the book, Rand tackles some of songwriting's basic mechanics in chapters like "The Opening Line" and "The First Verse." But he also regales the reader with humorous stories of bouts with industry heavyweights, including the renowned Clive Davis (whom he famously insulted), the early days of his career and his stint as an A&R/talent development executive for a small record label.

"The subtitle for the book could have been *How I Shot Myself in Both Feet and Came Up Dancing*," he admits, only half-jokingly. "I did try to look at everything with a sense of humor and I think I have a better perspective on a lot of these stories now. I just wanted to

make sure to share lessons that would be pertinent for the aspiring songwriter."

Where so many "insider" books tend toward sour grapes and discouraging words, Rand hopes instead to encourage the aspiring writer with *Makin' Stuff Up*. "This is all about giving writers the opportunity to succeed," he says with a smile. "I really do hope that every writer will have the experience of one day finding out that your song went No. 1." He pauses and adds, "It's something they can never take away from you."

You can make further use of Rand's expertise through his website, makinstuffup.net. The site offers VIP members career guidance, one-on-one coaching sessions, song evaluations and other essential songwriting tips.

—BOB PAXMAN

