

OPERATION BRUCE

Bruce Willis and the Accelerators continue the legacy of entertaining US troops abroad.

Stories By Lieutenant Colonel Lon VomBaur, Master Sergeant Reed Lawson, Sergeant Nicholas Wall, and Staff Sergeant Dawn Finniss

Photographs By Staff Sergeant Dawn Finniss

After Bruce's well publicized visit to Iraq, we contacted some of the soldiers who experienced his arrival first hand. We wrote to them through brucewillis.com and asked if they could write about their personal take on his visit with them. Lieutenant Colonel Lon VomBaur, Master Sergeant Reed Lawson, Sergeant Nicholas Wall and Staff Sergeant Dawn Finniss have graciously shared their in-depth accounts on what it was like for them to meet Bruce Willis and the Accelerators.

The entire *Moonlighting Strangers* staff thanks them for sharing their incredible stories with us fans and we thank Staff Sergeant Dawn Finniss for providing the incredible pictures. We are truly honored to publish them.

We also wish all the soldiers good luck as they continue their mission in Iraq. God bless you and please stay safe.





Operation KING B

By Master Sergeant Reed Lawson, USAF

"Bruce Willis is visiting Al Dhafra Air Base? Yeah, right!" That was my reaction when the rumor started circulating. Al Dhafra is just outside Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Abu Dhabi is very modern, clean, and beautiful city, as are a few other large cities in the UAE; however, most of the country, including Al Dhafra, is a desert. I couldn't imagine why anyone would want to visit, thus my intelligence gathering began.

I spoke to a very credible source that confirmed the rumor and added that Bruce Willis and the Accelerators are coming to give us a concert on a USO tour. This news really sparked my imagination because I'm a musician. I've been playing drums for 25 years and I've played in almost every kind of band imaginable. I currently play and sing with the rock band iNu (pronounced "in you") out of my hometown of Montgomery, Alabama. I've also been on active duty in the United States Air Force for almost 19 years. After traveling around for years, I was able to get assigned to Maxwell Air

Force Base in Montgomery. As I finish my temporary deployment to Al Dhafra Air Base sometime in mid-November '03, not only will I be returning to my home base, but I'll also be going home to my family, friends, and my band.

At this point, my mission was clear: get on-stage to play one song with *Bruce Willis and the Accelerators*. I sat down at my computer, launched my web browser, and typed www.brucewillis.com. It was a lucky guess – I had never been to the site before. It didn't take long to find my way to the forum, where I found lots of really nice people. I posted a short message on the forum explaining that I'm a drummer in a band and thought it might be good public relations for my band, Bruce, and the Air Force to let me play a song with them when they came. I was surprised when Bruce replied personally under his username of King B on September 13, 2003 with the following message:

Hey Reed,

Sir, I am unaware of any such

activity or operation (clears throat) nor would I...be disposed to discuss such an operation if in fact it did exist...sir.

But if such an operation were to exist, at the appropriate time I am sure your wishes would be taken into consideration.

If you catch my drift.

bw



The USO tour was not being publicized to reduce security threats, but it was quite the topic of discussion at Al Dhafra. Being new to the forum, I was skeptical that it was actually Bruce; but it did attract a lot of attention and generate hundreds of replies from other members of the forum. My daily routine of working 12 hours a day, six days a week continued. I wasn't really familiar with their music, but just in case, I found three songs *Bruce and The Accelerators* recorded and had one that I liked picked



out just in case I got the chance to play. The day finally came: September 24, 2003. Al Dhafra was the first stop on the tour and despite being 8 hours ahead of the Eastern Time Zone (imagine the jet-lag), Bruce arrived and spent the day taking photos with well over 1,000 people. It was 115 degrees that day, but fortunately for Bruce and the band, it cooled down to a nice 100 degrees that night for the concert. A little heat wouldn't slow them down though.

Bruce and the Accelerators put on one hell

of a show for us. They brought a party that everyone here is still talking about. Early in the show, Bruce announced that his long-time good friend, Bruce DiMattia, who was playing harmonica with him, is the owner and CEO of Krispy Kreme donuts and is worth 2.1 billion dollars so he would be buying the drinks. Then Bruce [Willis] jumped off the stage and ran over to the bar while the band kept playing. Minutes later the bartenders brought boxes of miniature bottles of whiskey and vodka to the stage and

began tossing them out to the crowd. The party was out of control. We usually have a three beer limit managed with a ration card and no hard liquor – but, of course, this was a special occasion. Everyone, including me, was having a blast and at the height of the show, Bruce shouted out, "I heard there's a kick-ass drummer here. I need Reed Lawson to come up to the stage." Of course, I wasn't very far away so it didn't take long to get there. Bruce asked the band, "What are we going to play?" One of them

mentioned a song I never heard of, then another one suggested another song I never heard of, then I suggested the one I had in mind, and Bruce said, "no...made up my mind." I still didn't know what we were going to play but Bruce had made up his mind. The song had a guitar lead-in and the band started playing. I never heard the song before but it was easy to jump into. Bruce DiMattia gave me great cues so I would know when to break and when to kick. The crowd was going wild and I loved every second of it.

I was pretty high on life when I left the stage, everyone. Then I realized I still had no idea what song we just played. A couple weeks later, when the USO tour was over, I got an email from Bruce DiMattia who wrote:

Hey Reed,

Good job the other night! You fit in great! Man, we had a blast (or maybe you hadn't noticed!)

Nice to meet you! Brown

I replied thanking him for the great cues and took advantage of the opportunity to find out what the name of the song was. He replied back and let me know the song was *Made Up My Mind* by Savoy Brown. Bruce [Willis] had given me the name – I just didn't realize it.

I'm still not sure if it's just part of the show or actually true about being the CEO of Krispy Kreme and 2.1 billion dollars, but they ran up an \$8,000 bar tab that night and somebody paid it. What a party! See the pictures on my band's website at inurocks.com.

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My name is Sergeant Nicholas Wall. I am with the 1st Battalion 163rd Field Artillery Detachment three currently deployed in the Middle East under