As founder and lead singer of FEAR, Lee Ving was the roaring voice of the west coast punk movement of the '70s and early '80s. FEAR cut thru a sea of mumbling, wrist cutting, overdosing, musically challenged bands with an in-your-face, get-out-of-my-way, 1,2,3,4 sonic wall, that sounds as fresh today as it did back then. FEAR still sells out clubs in New York, Chicago, Miami, Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle, Austin, Dallas, Denver, and the Sunset Strip, with a seemingly ageless and endless string of 15-18 year old fans still lining up around the block.

Formed in 1977 FEAR was part of the first wave of west coast punk. Lee, stubborn and perfectionist off stage as well as on, refused every record deal put in front of him for over three years (Clive Davis, Ahmed Ertegun and brother Nesuhi were very disappointed) until with the help of Larry, his lawyer he finally got a really shitty deal from Slash Records in 1981 (.014 cents per song writers royalty), and no advance. Resulting in one of the few punk records that stand the test of time. THE RECORD featured already classic songs like "I Love Livin in the City", "I Don't Care About You", "Let's Have A War", "New York's All right If You Like Saxophones" and "Beef Bologna", most of which had been bringing LA clubs to their knees since 1977. The muscular and draining 1-2-3-4 sound was as influential as it was impossible to duplicate (unless you were willing to work out night and day, your body just couldn't handle it). Full of wit, irony and humor that passes over the heads of critics to this day, the stage show was as in your face as the music was. Lee and guitarist Philo Cramer would beat the audience about the head and brain for hours on end, there hasn't been anything like it before or since.

Thankfully it was captured for posterity on the Penelope Spheeris documentary THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION (1981). A truly great film and a worthy historic record. That will see the light of day on dvd sometime next year (at least that is Penelope's hope).

After the breakout performance in DECLINE and a hell raising lifetime network banning performance on SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, Lee soon had acting offers to go along with the club dates. A steady stream of screen and television roles started in 1983. From the out of control Piggy in GET CRAZY (1983), the sleazy club owner in FLASHDANCE (1983), the immortal Mr. Boddy in CLUE (1985), the ruthless thug fighting it out with Tommy Lee Jones in BLACK MOON RISING (1986), and not one but two TV-episodes of FAME (1984 and 1987)!

Lee is a force with whom to be reckoned. Having left Hollywood in the 1989 to raise a family in Austin, Texas, Lee is back in town and ready to kick ass (hopefully not mine).

Lee Ving: This old boy says to me, he says why howdy partner, can you tell how far it is to town. I said why yes I can, it's about three lengths of a fool. You don't believe me, lay down and measure. (laughs)

Ving: Shock Cinema. Now is that like Shock Theater back in Philadelphia? Growing up I had John Zacharly as Roland every Friday-Saturday night.

SC: So you loved movies from an early age? What kind of films did you like growing up? What kind of films do you like now?

Lee Ving as Mr. Boddy in CLUE

Ving: As a kid in Philly I loved the Universal Horror films. FRANKENSTEIN, DRACULA, THE WOLF MAN, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN also THE MUMMY (which has the eerie same intro music as DRACULA), These were and are my favorites. The best and only Great horror movies ever made and ever worth mentioning. No others measure up. As Count Dracula says about Carfax Abbey I shall do very little repair. It reminds me of the broken battlements of my own castle in Transylvania and "There are far worse things awaiting man than Death." I also loved THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME with Charles Laughton.

One day while we were filming STREETSCAPES OF FIRE (1984), under the pretense of "warming up the bikes" at lunch me and some of the Bombers did our daily terrorize the lot and run away from security routine. Great fun riding a loud Harley Davidson around Universal Studios with some of the most notorious outlaw bikers in California. So once I had lost the security who were chasing me and I found a place to hide in an old world Swiss looking street, just down the hill from the Bates house of PSYCHO fame, I began to have a feeling of Deja Vu, of having been there twenty years later while watching FRANKENSTEIN on late night TV. I realized, that was where I knew that street from on that day at Universal. It was the street in the little Swiss-Austrian town where Baron Frankenstein lived and was preparing for his son's wedding. A street I had seen so many times as a kid watching the FRANKENSTEIN movie and there I was hiding from security not realizing my hiding place was the famous village of FRANKENSTEIN.

There are 5 and only 5 films which embody (no pun) The great Italian American, Mafia, Cosa Nostra, Crime Syndicate and general Italian neighborhood fuck ups and wannabes experience. They are; MEAN STREETS, GOODFELLAS, CASINO all directed by Martin Scorsese and THE GODFATHER and THE GODFATHER PART II directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Being an Italian American myself, born Lee James Capellaro in Philadelphia (during the time of Angelo Bruno and Nicky Scarfo) to a third generation Italian American family from Saglanomincia, un po di conto chilometri al nord di Firenze (a hundred kilometers north of Florence), e di Napoli, Italia (and from Naples, Italy).

It has been my life ambition to work on a Mob related film (Which I am writing about. Philadelphia) directed by Mr. Scorsese with his A list actors, as one of those colorful characters that were my heroes growing up on the Mean Streets of "Fishtown" (Kensington and Allegheny Ave.) and South Philadelphia.

SC: Where are you from?

Ving: Philly, Fishtown, Kensington and Allegheny Ave., Germantown, Roslyn, Willow Grove, St Lukes Elementary in Glenside, St John of the Cross Elementary in Roslyn, Abington High School and South Philadelphia and Villanov University (V for Villanova V for victory). Everybody sing, Now!!!

I'm from Philadelphia can't you tell. Fucking guy over 'der. I was born Lee James Capellaro in Philadelphia a couple a weeks ago, in Germantown Hospital, my family was living in Fishtown at the time, Kensington and Allegheny, sort of that neighborhood down by Pulstdushky's, on Allegheny Ave, across the street from the Nativity church, a Polish, Irish, Italian neighborhood, bad then, bad now. I call myself Lee Ving, it's a joke name (un nome scherzo) like leaving like ok I'm leeving now, get it? But with a name like Lee Ving, Martin Scorsese probably never knew that I am Italian, that I could be a "made" guy. 100% Italian, with both sides of my family traced back to Italy and thus help him out in case he has any union problems with his next film starring Lee Ving Capellaro. Any of you got a problem with that?

Ving: Shock Cinema. Now is that like Shock Cinema? Now is that like Shock Theater back in Philadelphia? Growing up I had John Zacharly as Roland every Friday-Saturday night.
SC: When did you first get involved in music?
Ving: I don't know, I just always was, my earliest recollections are musical ones. I started playing at the age of 4, my mother had a mandolin and began to teach me how to play and I would entertain the family, now I'm 22 and I'm still at it.

SC: Any crazy memories about starting out, jobs you had before FEAR took off?
Ving: Well shit, I was a bartender most of the time. Slug's Jazz Cafe on the lower East side of Manhattan and Don'ts in North Hollywood, I was a singing waiter at one point at the Great American Food and Beverage Company in Westwood that was very crazy, people would stop for dinner and I would torture them with FEAR songs I was writing at the time.

Ving: Si, Certo, FEAR, 1977, 78.

SC: You were playing clubs?
Ving: We were playing clubs in LA we had recorded one single in 1978 "I Love Livin in the City" with a b side of "Now You're Dead" we hadn't done a back yards in tents and shit, they were really close friends. Tino said to John no no don't get whoever the hell they were gonna get, call FEAR. So one afternoon I get home and the phone is ringing, its Michael O'Donaghe and he says, hi is this Lee? I say yea, well this is Michael O'Donaghe from SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE. I said I get home and the phone is ringing, its Michael O'Donaghe and he says, hi is this Lee? I say yea, well this is Michael O'Donaghe from SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE. I said sounds great lets do it, so we went, and in the meantime we had met John, and I realized right away we were gonna be friends, we hit it off. We showed up in New York, played the rehearsals for the show, played the taping without the audience and the taping with the audience, which got shut down in the middle because we had invited a few people to see the show, not we, but John did, called some people in DC and Philadelphia, and by the time they got to New York what was intended to be 20-25 people wound up being 100, and they were in the green room, drank all the beer, ate all the sandwiches, gave each other haircuts, by the time they let them out into the audience they were a ball of springs and jumped onto the stage as we were playing the intro to one of the tunes, all hell was breaking loose as far as they could see, it was what was normally expected for a show of this kind, but no one from Nebraska or Kansas who had come to SNL to see the taping of this show was prepared for that. So it got shut down after someone screamed an expletive (FUCK NEW YORK) into a microphone that we had dropped because there was such pandemonium going on, they cut to stock footage because they couldn't bleep it out, and it went out to the whole country over the airwaves and this four letter word happened and it wasn't anyone in the band saying it, it was someone in the audience but no one knew the difference, and that was the last time we played SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE. John was there too, he showed up for the taping, he had just quit the cast, and they said well you're here man you wanna do something? He said ok and they put a camera on him and he just did one of his eyebrow numbers that he did, and that was his last bit of work for SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE.

SC: Didn't somebody get hit in the head with a pumpkin? (laughs)
Ving: Yea, Dick Ebersole the stage manager hit someone in the head with a pumpkin but it wasn't life threatening. There was some damage to one of the old television cameras somebody put a dent in one of the hydraulic tubes that bring it up and down, and so I got a call the next day from the New York Post and they said we heard you caused 20-30 thousand dollars worth of damage to the studio. I said that's bullshit, we are professionals we caused $500,000 worth of damages I counted it myself. "Demolition was the other thing that we did, we played music, did demolition, public relations you know. (laughs)

SC: How did you end up acting? Was it off the SNL appearance?
Ving: Not really. It was from THE DECLINE and then Allan Arkush came to see FEAR play at the Whiskey, and they were about to do a movie that had a part in it for a crazy singer named PIGGY, and apparently I fit that description quite well, and before you know it I'm acting in this film with the great Malcolm McDowell, this beautiful Icelandic actress named Anna Bjorn, The Turtles, Daniel Stern and Lou Reed. I got an agent, John Burnham at ICM and the rest is history and how I can now afford to live in Bel-Air next door to John Travolta. It's the American dream really.
Lee Ving in Walter Hill's STREETS OF FIRE

Yea. I was in the trunk of this car being driven by those three actresses, only a crazy person would get in the trunk of a car being driven by an actor much less these three ditzos. So they pulled in and stopped; the trunk opens, I jump out of the car run over and dive into a bunch of trash cans, run back over to the car where somebody has put down a contract for me to sign, but instead of signing the contract I decide I am going to put a dent into it with my head and plow my head into the trunk of the car and put a huge dent in the thing, for real, this was when I was crazier, and that was my initiation into the world of dramatic acting, having been taught by Miss Stella Adler and Mr. Lee Strasberg, because my craft is everything, yis know what I'm talkin over there?

SC: (laughs) Yea, it has to be one of the greatest entrances in film history, right up there with Orson Welles in THE THIRD MAN.
Ving: Yeah or Arnold in PREJUDICE.

SC: What was it like working with Malcolm McDowell?
Ving: Of course, Malcolm is a gentleman and an unpredictable sort in the presence of debauchnik droogs such as myself or a right gorgeous devotchka patitsa as Anna Bjorn. And so your humble narrator one afternoon in Malcolm's trailer having many a malaka of Budweiser and some Gran Fine Brut is introduced to us the very beautiful Icelandic co-starring actress Anna Bjorn. Malcolm before saying a word, sweeps her into the bed chamber of his motorhome, picks her up and onto the bed as he introduces himself. Right, Right says I.

However, I was told that on the Johnny Carson show, Malcolm said that all he remembered of the filming of GET CRAZY was working with that manic Lee Ving. Showing that he is a discerning fellow.

SC: (laughs) What was your next job?
Ving: My next movie was FLASHDANCE, my agent, John Burnham at ICM at the time, sent me to read for it he said Lee you're not gonna get this part Adrian Lyne wants Keith Richards to play the part, they're buddies, but just go, I'll be good practice. Well, you know maybe Keith doesn't talk like an east coast city guy that has a club that he runs, and maybe they thought it might be difficult to get him out of bed at 4:30 in the morning for 8 weeks to make the movie. Anyways make a long story short and since I would also cost a bit less, I wind up with the part. The movie came out, and in three weeks it had made like 90 million dollars or something, all of the sudden I have a lot of friends at Paramount and Universal, not to mention Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson.

SC: Was NIGHTMARES (1983) next?
Ving: Yea, Christopher Crowe and Alan Barrette are friends of mine. This was their first feature. They cast me as an escaped killer hiding in the back seat of a car. In the end I get shot up with squibs, just blown away. I had my family, my wife and son on the set to watch, they found it all highly entertaining. Alan and Christopher then did some ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS remakes for Universal, and cast me in the very first episode, called "The Fatal Fall," a remake of an old black and white episode that had starred my friend Richard Jaeckel.

SC: Ned Beatty was the other actor in your episode, what was he like to work with?
Ving: Ned Beatty is a true gentleman, he went on the Merv Griffin show about the time this was going to air, and said to Merv that he had worked on this episode with a great young actor, talented fellow, smart named Lee Ving. I never got to thank him. Thanks for the plug Ned.

SC: How did you get cast in Walter Hill's rock epic STREETS OF FIRE (1984)?
Ving: I read for the part of the boss of this biker gang The Bombers for Walter Hill, Judith Holstra and Joel Silver. The part called for a sledgehammer fight. I just happened to have a 12 pound sledgehammer, so I snuck it into universal in my guitar case, I also hid a .38 in the neck of the case. So I'm reading for the part, I pull out the sledgehammer and go through those motions and Walter's eyes are very wide at this point. Judith's too, then I pull the .38, man I thought everyone was gonna need new shorts. It wasn't loaded, I didn't bring a loaded .38 to Universal Studios but I did bring a .38, to accentuate my otherwise brilliant reading of this part. Fortunately for me I wasn't arrested. I was hired, for the part of Greer the underboss. We shot over 16 weeks at Universal Studios I met the Heathens motorcycle club during the filming, and shortly after we wrapped the movie I became a member of the Heathens, go figure.

SC: Did it get crazy with all these real bikers at Universal Studios?
Ving: One day at lunch with me, Willem Dafoe and some of the other guys, took the motorcycles we were riding in the movie out on the universal lot, mine belonged to this guy named "dog" who was in the Crucifiers. We're out terrorizing the lot, going real fast, being crazy, the Universal tram comes by and the lady sees that there's this motorcycle speeding towards the tram and she says, ladies and gentleman that is one of our stunt drivers from the film STREETS OF FIRE, at the very last minute I grab hold of the breaks, the bike starts to slide in the sand on the lot out there, and I bring the bike to a stop maybe a half a foot from the tram. She says again, that's one of our stunt drivers from STREETS OF FIRE. (laughs)

SC: (laughs) That was like Bill Paxton's first movie?
Ving: Yea, yea, I got to hit Bill real hard in the stomach and Walter put a really good sonic thud in the soundtrack of it, so it looked like I really whacked him. I just ran into Bill the other day, and we went and had lunch together, I said, Bill and I grabbed him by the neck and I really slammed him in the gut and said, I just wanted to see if you still had it man, and you do, you still got it Bill.

SC: Next up you were in that weird almost sequel to Fast Times with Chris Penn and Eric Stoltz, THE WILD LIFE.
Lee Ving in Michael Mann's CRIME STORY

great actors, it was pretty cool. One day, after Mr. Boddy was killed in the story, the cops are on their way to the house, and I am supposed to be passionately making love to Madeline Kahn, she is operating my arms making them look like they are moving, my back is to the door as Bill Henderson the cop shows up. Jonathan Lynn says lets rehearse it, he says action, she starts moving my arms and kissing me, all of the sudden she stops and screams “He is kissing me BACK!” and I say “hey over there whataya expect, a guy gets a shot you take advantage.” Hoh.

SC: That's a movie that wasn't considered a big success when it came out, but it seems to have a big following now.

Ving: It's a cult film, the three endings, it was very cool. Last year they asked me to host this midnight screening of CLUE where people throw stuff at the guests, somehow I found something else I needed to do that night.

SC: BLACK MOON RISING?

Ving: BLACK MOON RISING was great. Got to work with Tommy Lee Jones, good fella, country music fan like myself. We had fight scenes where we beat the living tar out of each another. When it was over, the stunt coordinator, Bud Davis, a guy who had done the stunts in SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT was so impressed by my pummeling of Tommy Lee that he offered me work as a stunt man. The shoot was great. It was the great Keenan Wynn's last role. The late Richard Jaeckel was also in it, who I had become friends with at Joe Gold's World Gym. That was a great place, you would see the governor, the hulk Lou Ferrigno. We were on the set of BLACK MOON RISING and I was complaining about something, and I turned to Richard and said what do you think? and he said “man I’m just happy to be here.” I thought to myself, “oh man I wish I had said that.” My hats of to you Richard wherever you are, bless you man.

SC: How did you end up on a WHO'S THE BOSS episode?

Ving: (laughs) I play a hooligan from Angella's high school days that still has a band, I get to sing two songs to Judith Light. Singing two songs on a hit TV show is very cool. Tony was a great gentleman, everyone was great. I showed up to rehearse one day and it was supposed to be a bunch of bikers in this bar, and it looks like Hollywood's version of what bikers look like, I went up to Tony and I said, I know you can get some guys in here that look like a helluvast more realistic than this bunch. Tony said you just go ahead. So the next day I had populated the bar with Heathens, Crucifiers and other clubs. All actual members at the time, so it looked extremely authentic, I knew many of them from Streets of Fire, so the bar scenes really looked as real as they could possibly be. I got to sing “Are You Lonesome Tonight,” the Elvis tune for Judith Light, and Charlie Musselwhite's “Help Me” which I still sing to this day, it was very cool. We finish filming and it’s the big wrap party, this red headed actress Tawni Caplan who was in a scene at the club, shepshed this 4 star brut bottle of champagne with my name on it, she takes it and leaves me the cheap bottle and scoots. (laughs) So me and all the bikers head back to my house for an all night party, the cops didn’t come, happy ending.

SC: SCENES FROM THE GOLDFMINE (1987)?

Ving: SCENES FROM THE GOLDFMINE was great, directed by a friend of mine Marc Rocco. He was doing a movie about the backstage life of rock n roll. I got to work with the great Steve Railsback from HELTER SKELTER. Very intense actor, great guy.

SC: You had a great guest starring part on Michael Mann's CRIME STORY (1987).

Ving: I got to play a Jimmy Hoffa type character “we’re lookin out for the workers here, were lookin out for the union benefits” all that kind of stuff, I got to do great scenes with all the Crime Story regulars. I got this big speech in a union hall, my ties loosened, sport coat off, my sleeves rolled up, talkin turkey to the union members, it was gift, it was just a great part that I loved thoroughly. Bonnie Timmerman cast me in it, she was gonna cast me in a MIAMI VICE, and cast me in this CRIME STORY instead, got a phone call on Tuesday morning, can you be in Vegas by tomorrow afternoon and I say, “Does a bear shit in the woods? Is the Pope Catholic over there?”

SC: Somewhere along in here you did a song for the Louis Malle movie ALAMO BAY (1985).

Ving: Yea Tom Scott and Ry Cooder were doing the soundtrack, I got to write the title song “Alamo Bay” with Ry Cooder, sang the song and played harmonica on it.

SC: You played the infamous Mr. Boddy in CLUE, what was that like?

Ving: CLUE was great, working with Madeline Kahn, Eileen Brennan, Christopher Lloyd, Colleen Camp, Michael McKean, Tim Curry, Martin Mull and Bill Henderson, a singer and actor who I'd worked with on GET CRAZY.

SC: You were a dead body for most of the film, but you were on screen a lot, what was that like?

Ving: Face down on the rug was position one many an afternoon. It was all the same to me, it was very cool. To be riding my Harley Davidson to work at the Paramount lot with a big old buck knife, and then getting into wardrobe with all these Boom Boom Mancini, Ken Norton, Gregory Harrison, amazing cast. We shot in Cancun and in Puerto Morelos a short train north of Cancun, it was great, like a little vacation for everyone. It was an NBC movie of the week.

SC: SOMEBODY ELSE'S CHESS GAME (1982)?

Ving: I was a cable guy that showed up and wouldn’t go away. It was a lot of fun. Chris Penn (god rest his soul) and Sean came to a few FEAR shows along the way.

Ving: Yea yea yea. In fact up until we started to film FLASHDANCE I was still tending bar at Donie's Jazz supper club in North Hollywood.

SC: So all through these acting roles FEAR was still playing?

Ving: Yea yea yea. In fact up until we started to film FLASHDANCE I was still tending bar at Donie's Jazz supper club in North Hollywood.

SC: Somewhere along here Alan Arkush the guy who put you in GET CRAZY, cast you in an episode of the TV show FAME right?

Ving: Yea I did two episodes. I got to sing in both. I played some local hood in the first episode, then a computer repair guy in the second one. In the course of chasing around some of the regular actors in the first one, I stand and sing "The Impossible Dream" on a stage, a song most out of character for a local hood, but something I enjoyed doing. It's all about contrast.

SC: In the second one you had this big Bruce Springsteen kind of number. I switched that to "Yea that's right I got a better pipe than the boss." I may have already had the job, but if I didn't it was secured after that. I went into the studio and sang the song that you hear.

Ving sings on the TV-series FAME
called Missoula. I love Penelope always have, always will. Flea was in the movie, he had been in FEAR for a couple years, he was our bass player, we didn't record during that period, by the time we recorded again Flea was in the Chili Peppers. I remember one night both me and Catherine Mary Stewart, one of the stars of Dudes, fly into Phoenix at the same time and meet at the rental place, we have to drive from Phoenix north to Flagstaff at like 2 in the morning and we decide to race, it took us a good 20-30 minutes to get there. We went 120-140 mph the whole way. We just saw each other, it was 2:30 in the morning and we decided what the hell, let's race.

Ving: It was at De Laurentis Studio in Rome, heaven on earth, the place they break you for lunch is the best Italian restaurant I have ever eaten in, but then every restaurant you go to in Rome is the best Italian restaurant you've ever eaten in, and I'm moving there as soon as we finish this interview. (laughs)

SC: PULSEPOUNDERS was finished, but it's never come out?
Ving: Yea it's finished. It's great. I see on the internet that they are still trying to get it out.

SC: MASTERS OF MENACE?
Ving: Oh yea, Tino Insana wound up producing this film, sort of a biker comedy, and I get to sing two songs in the film. It was a tongue in cheek biker movie, where we are bringing a friend of ours' remains back to his home turf to be buried and the long odyssey which involves stealing a beer truck and getting drunk many many times.

SC: What's with this lost Charles Band movie PULSEPOUNDERS?
Ving: It was a trilogy of stories. I played the devil's theatrical agent, the devil was played by the great Richard Moll. The devil is killing me in the end, levitating me up in the air, and I get to say to the Italian crew “per favore non mi ropere i coglione” which means in Italian, please don't break my balls. Ok over der, that's for the Italian language students in the audience. (laughs)

SC: Where did you film that movie?

SC: Why did you move out of LA.
Ving: I moved to Austin to relocate. (laughs)

SC: Range War is this mythical band you still hear people talk about, read about on the internet, but you never released an album or anything.
Ving: Yea we played all over, we played out here in LA. We played one night at a club called The Lingerie in Hollywood, and I was a member of the Heathens at the time and I had to tell the guys in the motorcycle club that we were playing a joint called The Dead Dog Saloon so that they would show up, (laughs) they did, the rest is history. The Range War album is finally coming out. The recordings are done. It's finally gonna be available.

SC: What are you up to now?
Ving: I am up to establishing the empire. My own record company, I'm writing a book, I have a Live DVD featuring confiscated FEAR footage from the best shows, I have a bluegrass band called Lee Ving and String Theory, the Range War record is about to be released on my own label, there are 4 FEAR albums due to be released on my label, FEAR played this years Warp Tour, there will be a reality show from that that we are in, a record from the tour and a DVD. Next year we are gonna play the west coast leg of the Warp Tour again. I just appeared in a surfer film set in the early 80's that Kevin Lyman wrote and produced. That should be coming out next year. A film called “I'm callin Frank” that I star in and play a baseball bat wielding entrepreneur named Frankie “Bats” Capellaro. And FEAR will be coming to a city or Mega Metroplex near you. Keep your eye out. Ω