

Excerpt from the book “Jerry Lee Lewis: Lost And Found”
By Joe Bonomo

“One particular track has become for me a kind of talisman. I knew the Flamin’ Groovies’ “Shake Some Action” from WFHS, the great progressive radio station in Bethesda, Maryland, where afternoon dj Weasel would often play it. A majestic pop anthem, the song is one of my favorites, an example of the power and desperate sincerity in a great, three-minute pop song. Sometime in high school, my brother Phil’s friend Jim introduced me to another version of the song, a live recording by Charlie Pickett and the Eggs. (Jim had put the version on an ironic mix-tape that he called the *Death Tape*: every song on it was so good and so intense that listening to it while driving could have lethal results. I think that the Modern Lovers’ “Roadrunner” was on there, and Jim Carroll’s “People Who Died,” and J. Geils Band’s “Looking For A Love” from “*Live*” *Full House*. This was the mid-1980s and blow was everywhere and, looking back, the *Death Tape* was a native element in those speedy, reckless years: lines in the backseat of someone’s ’72 Toyota in the Tastee Diner parking lot, a sluggish, beery evening ignited afresh. Jim had an apartment on upper Connecticut Avenue in Washington, D.C., and these were fun nights ending with rock’n’roll on the stereo and the chalky, electrifying taste of cocaine in the backs of throats.)

Charlie Pickett and the Eggs’ version of “Shake Some Action” is remarkable. Like so much of the best rock’n’roll, it threatens to fall apart at each measure. It’s sloppy, anthemic, authentic, and frightening. Near the end of the first chorus, someone at the Button--the got-to-be-tacky club in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, where the show was recorded in January 1982—lets loose a barely audible whoop of pleasure or pain or rhapsody or torture; it’s hard to know which exactly, but it’s spine tingling in it’s weirdness. As I remember, that was Jim’s favorite moment. We’d guffaw while we listened, drunk and zooming, the tops of our heads coming off at the song’s oddly stirring desperation. *Live At The Button* is a great record, well-recorded and full of loose and shoddy bar-band rock’n’roll, a couple of Pickett originals and some other great covers, like the Flamin’ Groovies’ “Slow Death” in front of a drunk and rowdy crowd. “Shake Some Action” was the highlight and still remains one of the high points in my music collection: proof that a venue’s ambience—in which both song and crowd fuse into something combustible—can be translated by audio somehow, perhaps only by magic and luck. The guy who sold the album to me was a record store owner in Ft. Lauderdale who was not only at the Pickett show, but claims to remember that otherworldly howl during “Shake Some Action.” I believe him.