

# Latest career twist brings Robert Hazard home

By Julian Walker  
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Robert Hazard has a new lease on life.  
On his songwriting life, that is.

The 50-something musician spoke about recent developments in his career on a cell phone last week while being driven to Philadelphia International Airport to catch a flight to his home in Vero Beach, Fla.

Hazard was in town to do press for the forthcoming release of his independent record, *The Seventh Lake*, a stripped-down collection of songs that represents a return to the roots of the singer-songwriter from the Quaker City.

He's also slated to appear at the Point, 880 W. Lancaster Ave., in Bryn Mawr for two shows on Friday. During the interview, Hazard discussed his lengthy career and his newest project.

The disc, which currently is being pressed, is his first new release in several years. Writing the project was a cathartic experience for Hazard, who had grown weary of music industry politics and its focus on image over substance.

"I was kind of disillusioned with the whole music business and my place in it," Hazard said.

So he retreated to his home in upstate New York's Adirondack Mountains "and just started writing (songs) with an acoustic guitar. It was the best stuff I had written in a long time, and it took me back to where I started."

Those origins were as a solo musician begging to get in the door and play a set at coffeehouses around the city. He didn't have much luck as a solo artist, so Hazard slowly picked up stray musicians and formed a punk rock band whose sound slowly evolved to a more mainstream melody.

"Basically the band started out as something raw," he said. "I used to do these really crazy songs. Gradually, the band evolved into a pop sound, from a punky, street thing into new wave."

Hazard's parents, especially his father, a singer with the Philadelphia Opera Company, initially were none too thrilled about his choice of musical expression.

Other family members were more understanding.

With a \$12,000 loan from a generous uncle, Hazard and the boys recorded a five-song album at Sigma Sound Studios. On the strength of the title track, *Escalator of Life*, the record sold more than 50,000 units in the region.

A loyal local following developed, and some positive press in a prominent music magazine helped the band of the kid who once was denied the opportunity to perform for free to earn some paying gigs.

In his own right, Hazard has been a musical success, rising to relative fame as a new wave rocker in the early 1980s while fronting the band Robert Hazard & the Heroes, which released two albums on RCA Records and toured for several years before disbanding.

But his greatest triumph is one he isn't widely known for outside of music industry circles.

A song he penned in 1979 later became a hit for pink-haired pop darling Cyndi Lauper.

You may remember the song — 1984's *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*. The success of the tune never made Hazard a household name in the mind of the average music fan, but it certainly helped his bank account.

As the song's lyricist, Hazard (it's his stage name) receives a nice royalty each time the song is used — for example, the current Carnival Cruise Lines television ad campaign employs the jingle.

Living down that success initially was tough for Hazard.

"It was bittersweet, especially at first," he recalled. "Now I'm just gratified it is still generating money and has had pretty good longevity. But when it first came out, it was a little bit weird because the song was more famous than I was. I was pissed, but not for long."

It probably was hard to remain angry. The song earned Hazard enough money that "I could have laid on the beach for the rest of my life."

But loafing isn't Hazard's style.

When the Heroes disbanded, Hazard continued to work as a songwriter for hire, though his heart wasn't into it.

"For years I was just writing for other people, so I'd write songs that always had parameters wrapped

around it," he said.

During that period, he also drifted back toward his roots of simplified music, forming a country band called the Hombres in the early 1990s and releasing one record, *Howl*, that was produced by Ian Cross, a veteran music mixer who has worked with Janet Jackson and Rickie Lee Jones.

Later he toured with the original Mr. Tambourine man himself, Bob Dylan.

"One night I was out there (onstage) playing, and I noticed Dylan in the wings nodding his head and rocking to the beat. For a low-key guy like Dylan, that was a big deal. And it was really neat for me,"

Hazard recalled with a wistful tone.

Hazard hopes to hit the road again soon in support of his newest effort, a "totally poetry driven opus" filled with personal songs and traditional instrumentation.

On Friday, he will play two shows at the Point. At 7 p.m., he will be joined by Nik Everett. The 10 p.m. show will feature Tommy Conwell, who also was a staple on the local music scene in the 1970s and '80s.

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*Friday's shows are \$19.50 in advance and \$22 at the door. To purchase tickets, visit **[www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com)** or call 1-866-468-7619.*

*For more information on Robert Hazard, visit his Web site, **[www.roberthazard.com](http://www.roberthazard.com)***

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