

To: Hamish Dodds
CEO Hard Rock Café
150 Old Park Lane
Orlando, Florida

From: Isaac Tigrett
Village of Puttaparthi
Andhra Pradesh, India

Dear Hamish

I can't even begin to tell you what an honor and thrill it was to be with you in Hyde Park. To see all those beautiful, young Hard Rockers from all over the world communing together under the HRC power, "Love all, Serve all." It was very heartwarming and a testament to the power of a unique culture that is all-inclusive and lives on today as it began.

As you must know, I am a huge fan of your efforts to maintain this formula, which has brought so much pleasure and love to those that work there, as well as to the millions served. My twenty years in developing this beautiful energy was well spent as it keeps on rolling around the world.

You have done a magnificent job, having inherited an ailing ship, rudderless, that was exploited and compromised by the previous owners.

You are a great CEO and your leadership is admired by all who work for you. You understand the original culture and the need to represent to the young that this is a business that belongs to the people and speaks loudly through its social outreach.

You had the difficult task of cutting the losses by closing many great opportunities that had been mismanaged. You streamlined and steadied the corporate culture, as only a real pro can do. For this, you have the respect of the ownership, the sea of children that are under your stewardship, and myself.

Now for the hard part – "Constructive Criticism." The HRC is blessed and burdened with the great responsibility of representing American and World Music Culture throughout the "Globe." Culture is ever-changing, and the HRC must continue to explore its next destination and be there before the others. It was my good fortune to learn this and, in fact, be fearful of not being up to the task as I watched the HRC, a great 70s phenomenon, move into the 80s. I was terrified until I realized that we had to celebrate the musicians of the culture that were in actuality the spokespersons, and for all intents and purposes, "Gods" to their fans. In 1984, the world's first Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame opened on 57th Street in New York. A week later the original in London reopened as the second. We wowed the world, the musicians, and their fans. First and foremost, it was essential now that the HRC must maintain a constant relationship with the ever-changing culture. When I spoke, which was actually a warning that first time we met in Miami, I asked the ailing corporation you inherited how many knew the percentage of airplay on Top 40 radio for rock 'n' roll. Intoxicated with the brand called "Hard Rock," some said 70%, some said 40%. No one knew where the culture had evolved to, which was 87% Top 40 airplay (still nearly that today) was R&B, Rap, and Urban. Why is the Hard Rock still stuck in the 1980s? Why do you still fill the

place all over the world with memorabilia of artists that no one's ever heard of? Why are there no artistes that are heroes in the various countries adorned on the walls of the HRCs?

You're only as contemporary as the latest musical heroes. Why are all these guitars put in cases? Are the musicians dead? Why has black and chrome, and the already past tense minimalist décor phase of the 90s, replaced the warm, rich, natural woods and seductive monotones of the original? The destruction of the beloved vibrations of Chicago and Dallas are prime examples. The New York HRC, as case in point, is a black, cold environment that has nothing to do with the excitement of something authentic and visionary. It's a hole in the ground, with no spirit and no continuity. You think just because it's making good numbers that it's okay to give people a dungeon of an experience. Corporate designers—you must be kidding yourself. I know you inherited the insane, egocentric shift that led the Hard Rock environment into obscurity.

Guitars up on the ceilings, high up on the walls, behind glass, with plaques you can't even read? It took us months to figure out how to hang the guitars, which are precious icons in themselves, open and touchable to all the fans. People lined up to have their photos taken with the memorabilia of the contemporary heroes. I welcomed people to touch them, even steal a knob or a string (easily replaceable). Don't you realize that getting near these things and touching them is, to a fan, the next best thing to touching their heroes? You would have to give everyone a letter to have this experience in the HRC today. The fact is you have no one in your organization that really even follows contemporary culture.

Your memorabilia chief must be hip to everything the fans want. The one you have now is a blustering antique that makes up stories about things that happened decades ago. So goes your collection. Most kids today don't even know who the Beatles are. Who in the hell is Cheap Trick in regards to anything happening today? Where are the contemporary heroes today in the HRC? Why aren't there weekly presentations all over the world by the heroes of each culture?

When HRC started, even when it changed and re-launched into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, American music was predominant around the world. No longer. There is Thai popular music in Thailand, Dutch popular music in Holland, Spanish popular music in Spain, all descendants of the American and English powerhouse of the 50s, 60s and 70s. Contemporary fans are only interested in their contemporary heroes. Why are there not highly publicized investitures for today's fans of the people they worship? It was a great disappointment to me to see the lack of visionary guidance in these areas, but let's face it, the creative entrepreneur days are a thing of the past. You have left all the things you don't really know about to novices, and turned your back just because you think you've got it covered; but you don't. I know it's hard to control as it's spread in over forty countries. That doesn't mean it can't be improved.

That brings us to the most pressing and important issue. "The Greatest American Food in the World." I traveled around the world when I was very young with my father, who was in the oil business in Arabia, Libya, and the Arab Emirates. His bases were London, New York, and

Cairo. I was blown away when we went to a restaurant that represented the culture and food of Polynesia at Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo. It was called Trader Vic's. It amazed me when we then went to the Trader Vic's in London, New York, San Francisco, etc. They were all beautiful, exotic, and the food was superlative, the best of Polynesia. Trader Vic's represented this culture, its look and feel, and its fabulous cuisine as a consistent model wherever it went. It never left my mind that one brand could represent the best of a culture in all the capitals of the world.

It was a constant mantra in the creation of the Hard Rock Café. Two years were spent in preparation, gathering the greatest recipes from the greatest chefs and restaurants in the South. The bread came from a hundred-year-old institutional bakery in Memphis that had lines around the block at the end of the baking day. Two years went into testing for the finest burger with the perfect fat content. Restaurants all over the U.S. were visited until the correct formula was agreed. The ice cream came from the most famous dairy in the South East, Angel Food, owned by the famous Klink Brothers, who are friends of the family and sent over representatives to make sure we got it right. Some of the best American chefs were consulted for their individual, famous recipes. The "best of the best" always.

I have been deeply embarrassed by the mediocre quality of the HRC offering that is supposed to be representing the best of America. The food is an embarrassment. Your predecessors, I understand, thought Friday's was their competitor and emulated their ungodly menu of processed fried foods.

Hamish, for all your good qualities as executor, you are not a food man. Your background is not in food or restaurants, so you leave it to your own personal taste and that of your corporate chefs who do not know how to authenticate the greatest American fare, which is the business you're in. You're supposed to be the No 1 representative of the culture in the world, and the food is not even mediocre. I had the chef in London cook me a burger the night I was there. It was inedible and the chef I've known for thirty years knew it was too. I asked him, "What the hell is this?" He said, "Some sort of meat deal from Germany. I'm sorry, Mr Tigrett, the food's gone downhill for years. I just serve what they tell me to."

When I visited Orlando and the glamorous corporate kitchen, I was served everything on the menu. The chef said, "What do you think?" I said, "This is garbage. You should throw the whole menu out and start all over again." It should be a simplistic menu of the very best, not dozens upon dozens of items that any fool would know could not be freshly prepared, and probably come frozen or vacuum packed. Everything should be made from scratch, from salad dressings to sauces, with the freshest ingredients and the finest products available in the world. There is absolutely no excuse, in my opinion, for ignoring this cold fact, which was agreed on by practically every member of your staff when I was in London, and has been complained about continuously by all long-standing patrons. When I questioned why no one was doing anything about it, they resounded, "But that's not my department." Great food, even simplistic, is created by great chefs. The simple folk in your organization simply don't know the difference. They grew up

on McDonalds and Burger King, and uninteresting food is the norm. Who cares what they think is good food? It's not theirs to choose. You have a great brand with lousy food. Why?

Throw out the menu, get one of the greatest chefs in America, a Beard Foundation winner, Emeril Lagasse, Todd English, any master. Make a small, concise menu of winners that will keep the locals coming back and the international traveler dreaming of home. Every bad bite is a drop in the power of the brand. You're not Friday's or Appleby's or Fuddruckers, you are the world-famous Hard Rock Café. Your corporate chefs are only good at maintaining dynamic recipes and presentations that are created by others. For you to depend on them is ridiculous. Go back and look at the original menu. It was simple, represented the All-American fare, and is what kept the customers coming again and again long before T-shirts, caps, and jackets, and memorabilia. Once you've seen the memorabilia, why come back unless the food is dynamic?

We are going into a deep recession worldwide. Every customer must be fought for and come away with the divine service and eating experience. Great service is meaningless if the food is not greater than the brand. You're all resting on the laurels of something created by others. It's so corporate now that nobody wants to take responsibility for maintaining the HRC as the leading representative of American food and culture worldwide.

Check out a place called Father's Office in Santa Monica. The Korean owner was trained by the greatest acclaimed chef in the world, Alain Ducasse in France, and went on as a major chef with Wolfgang Puck. He left out of

boredom and started his own place using his gourmet talents and training to create a unique product. There is a line around the block every night for his gourmet burger in his tiny place, which is now an institution in Santa Monica. Go buy the best recipes from the best chefs and stop fooling around with inexperienced, unmasterful "corporate food men." I have enclosed a recent cover of "Bon Appetit," one of America's top gourmet magazines with the ultimate burger on the cover. Why doesn't the HRC burger taste "American Authentic," like off every man's backyard grill? There is absolutely no excuse, Hamish, for settling with mediocre food under the umbrella of one of the greatest brands in the world.

Look, Hamish, I'm sorry to be so demonstrative. This is not your field and you've left it to others and this error must be corrected, and quickly, for the food doesn't deserve the brand, and I, Sir, like it or not, was the guy that created it and brought it up for twenty years. I'm only trying to be helpful in pointing out the shortcomings that no one else seems to want to talk about, except behind the back of the boss. This is the way it always is in a corporate monster where everybody is trying to maintain the status quo, not rocking the boat, and keeping their families fed and secure. Welcome to the recession! It's gonna be a fight. Many doors will close, many institutions will fail. If you get it right, the bright shining star in the coming sea of darkness will be the world-famous Hard Rock Café "keeping the promise" of authentic contemporary musical culture, sincere service, and the best food in the world cooked with love and served with pride.

You probably won't want to invite me over again, and that's okay. I simply have to communicate what I know is correct as essential to the legacy you inherited. You are a great soul and a great leader. You know how to manipulate a brand, but the building blocks that created it have been ignored for far too long.

I wish you well in your journey.

Kind regards and respect,

Isaac Tigrett