

## CHAPTER 3

# I Can't Go On, I'll Go On



Dear David Bowie

Big news! Life in New Jersey is not completely terrible!

Will couldn't believe it. He was manager of Charlotte's band! This was something that he really wanted to do. His first job was to get a real drummer. But there was only one drummer Bug and Omar wanted.

Basher Martin was famous as the best drummer in the school, but he was also very scary. He could become very angry very quickly ... about anything.

When Will went to see him, Basher was working on a car in the school garage. It wasn't going well and Basher was angry. His long hair fell across his face as he hit the car again and again.

Will almost turned and ran. 'Drums!' he said quickly.

Basher looked up. 'What about them?'

Will spoke too fast. 'My name is Will. I'm the manager of this great new band and we need a drummer for Bandslam.'

'I hate Bandslam!' shouted Basher. 'Everyone wants the record deal, and nobody really cares about music!' He hit the car again.

'I care about music!' cried Will. He moved closer to Basher. 'I know you do too.'

Basher didn't look very sure, but at that moment they heard the sound of an old Bowie song. It was Will's mobile phone.

As Will answered, Basher saw the photo of Karen on the phone. 'Who's that?' he said. 'I like older girls. They understand me.'

‘That’s my ... .’ Will stopped himself. ‘That’s my older sister,’ he lied. ‘She hangs out with the band all the time.’ Basher smiled.

\* \* \*

With Basher on the drums, the band sounded much better. But Will wanted more. ‘We still need a bigger sound,’ he told the band. ‘We need more players.’

The next week was busier than ever. ‘The band needs some brass,’ Will thought to himself. He watched the school band at the football game and chose the best players. Next he went to the music practice rooms. There weren’t any rock players there, but Will found some good musicians – a piano player and even a cello player.

At last the band, with all its new players, met to practise. They sat quietly and waited. Everybody seemed to be thinking, ‘Why am I here?’



‘All of you can give something to this band,’ Will told them. ‘Let’s start. Basher, can you play something simple?’

Basher didn’t move.

‘Please?’

Basher didn’t like to play quietly, but he finally sat at his drums and started to play.

Will turned to Bug. ‘OK, now listen to the drums and just play your bass against it.’

With drums and bass playing, Will asked everybody to join in. ‘Just listen. Play something that fits the music.’

As each new player joined in, they worked with the others. They were starting to sound like a real band.

‘Will Burton, you are fantastic!’ said Charlotte.

\* \* \*

Will was listening to ska\* music on his MP3 player. He gave the player to Sam to listen. She smiled.

‘That’s cool,’ she said. ‘But Will, we have to do our project.’

‘We’ll meet up soon,’ said Will. ‘I promise. But I really have to work on Charlotte’s band right now.’

‘You don’t have to,’ said Sam. ‘You want to.’

‘You haven’t heard them! Believe me – I have to.’

Sam looked away. ‘You want to,’ she said softly.

\* \* \*

After practice, the band met as usual at the café.

‘We have to talk about the band’s name,’ said Will.

‘There can’t be two Glory Dogs.’

‘We are Glory Dogs, not them!’ said Bug and Omar. They felt strongly about this.

\* See Fact File on page 50.

'It's a bad name anyway!' said Will.  
'OK,' said Bug crossly, 'what do *you* want to call us?'  
Will looked from face to face. 'I Can't Go On, I'll Go On.\*'



'What?' cried Bug. 'That's stupid! It's not even a name!  
We're still Glory Dogs!'

Charlotte joined the table. 'Forget it! Will knows more  
about music than any of us! His dad plays with famous  
bands. We were a joke before Will came!' She picked up a  
glass of water. 'Let's drink to I Can't Go On, I'll Go On.'

\* 'I can't go on, I'll go on' is the last line from *The Unnamable* by Samuel Beckett (1953).

# THE MUSIC OF BANDSLAM

From 1950s Jamaican ska to The Burning Hotels, *Bandslam* is full of exciting music. The film takes us from the sounds that influenced music today to the new young bands of tomorrow.

## Ska

Will's band, I Can't Go On, I'll Go On, plays 'Everything I Own' at Bandslam. The song was originally by Bread, a rock group. Will's band play it in the style of ska music. Ska music started in Jamaica in the 1950s, with singers like Prince Buster. Ska was also very popular in the late 1970s, with bands like The Specials and Madness. Reggae music came from ska.



Prince Buster



The Velvet Underground

## The Velvet Underground

Will and Charlotte both love The Velvet Underground, a New York band from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The band's two main songwriters were Lou Reed and John Cale. The Velvet Underground's songs were often dark and strange. At the time they weren't a popular band, but they had a big influence on later music.



The Ramones

### New York Punk Rock

Will's favourite place in the world is CBGB, a little music club in New York. In the 1970s the club became famous for a new kind of music – punk rock. The Ramones, the Patti Smith Group, Television, Talking Heads and Blondie all played there. The club stayed open until 2006. Punk singer Patti Smith was back on stage for the club's last night.

### DID YOU KNOW?

*Bandslam* director, Todd Graff, was once in a band that played at CBGB!

Which bands or music styles would you like to find out more about? Why?

### Bandslam bands

Todd Graff filmed *Bandslam* in Austin, Texas. 'There are lots of great bands in Austin,' he says, 'and a lot of them don't have record deals. So they're playing in bars and clubs, and they're on MySpace and YouTube.'

Todd picked five of these bands to be in the *Bandslam* competition. At the competition, the bands and the actors played in front of a real crowd. Over 1200 people came to watch. One of the young bands in the film was rock band The Burning Hotels.



The Burning Hotels

What do these words mean?

You can use a dictionary.

influence (n & v) originally style  
director actor