Cleveland Sports/ Classic Rock Vault: Sure- 591,361 Announced, But How Many Really?
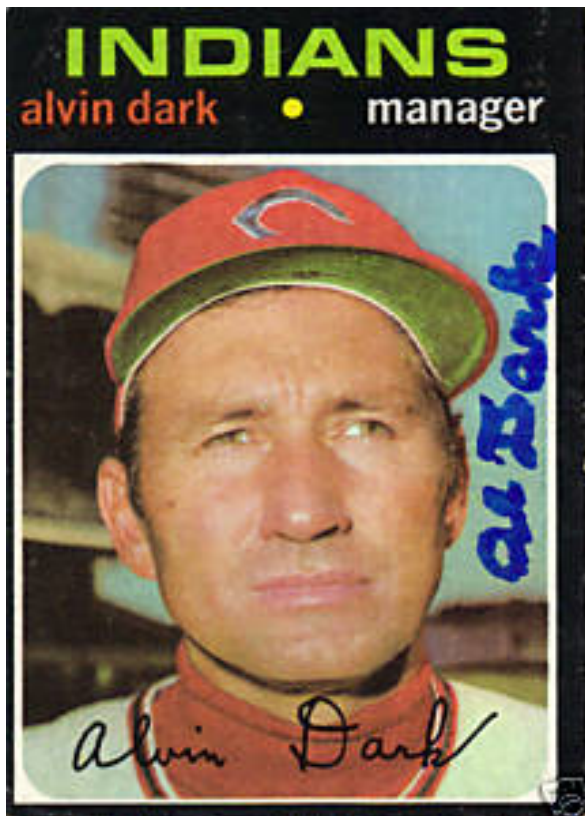
Written by {ga=googleeph2}
Thursday, September 26 2013 11:00 AM - Last Updated Thursday, September 26 2013 12:02 PM

(Shouting) "Live music is better; bumper stickers should be issued." – " *Union Man* ", from Hawks and Doves, Neil Young, 1980.

You may know - or recall - that on one glorious afternoon in 1954, the Cleveland Indians drew 80,000+ fans   to a late summer doubleheader vs. the New York Yankees. Since a constant theme throughout this 2013 season has been lagging attendance, today we are going to shine the light of day on perhaps the darkest era in Cleveland baseball fandom.

We could focus on the Indians' season of 1963. They did finish with a respectable 79-83 record that year. Apparently the disappointment of becoming an also-ran after contending as recently as 1959 had taken its toll. In '63, Cleveland hosted the All-Star game, and only a little more than half the stadium was filled for that event!

There was the Tribe of 1983-1985. The weak turnout during this period puzzles me, since one of my reasons (excuses) for the light attendance in 2013 is the lack of hitting. Fan favorites Grady, Victor and Pronk are gone, and while this team can pitch, "chicks (and kids) dig the long
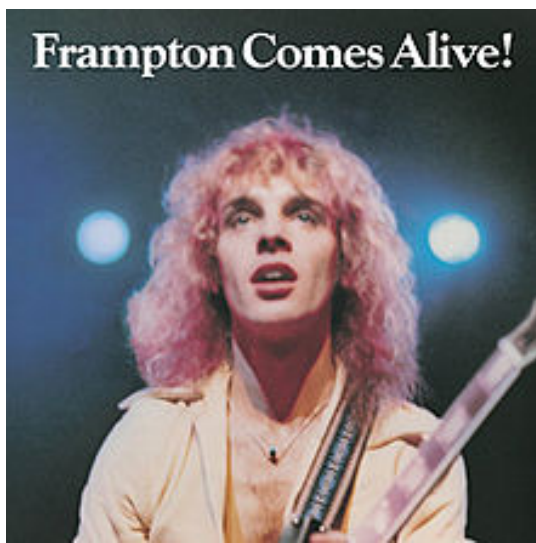
ball" (and offense in general). The mid-80s squads lost a lot of games, but boasted lineups that could score. Andre Thornton, Julio Franco, Mike Hargrove, Brett Butler, Joe Carter, Pat Tabler, and Brook Jacoby dotted the rosters of those teams.

Then there were the Cleveland Indians of 1971. The season attendance of 591,361 – an average of 7,300 per game- was among the team's lowest since WWII. However, my understanding is that in some of those 'bad-old-years', the announced attendance was often higher than actual. So, who is to say 1971 didn't 'beat' 1963 in the 'how low can you go' derby?

Let's continue to celebrate the joys of live performances by giving a nod to some of tasty live-recorded Classic Rock tunes. This time, they'll all be pulled from the mid-to-late '70s (yes, it was my formative era). Because it'll be fun- and this is Cleveland after all, where we like this kind of stuff.

For instance, how about Peter Frampton's " **Do You Feel Like We Do** *", from "Frampton Comes Alive" (1976)?*
Nobody doesn't love them some Frampton, no? The full 14:16 version is fun, but the shortened 7:19 live single is just fine as well. After a background role with Wishbone Ash, Frampton toured the U.S. in support of the J.Geils Band and ZZ Top. This song became his finale, as it continues to be today. The talk box is featured- this is an effects pedal with a tube for the mouth that a guitarist can use to vocalize sounds. (Some non-Frampton songs employing this effect include "Rocky Mountain Way" by Cleveland's Joe Walsh, "Tell Me Something Good" by Chaka Khan and Rufus, and "Sweet Emotion" by Aerosmith.)

Of course, to my nine year old eyes, that '71 Indians roster was terrific. I was jumping with both feet into my hero-worshipping era. And really, what more could a fan ask for than the typical lineup the Tribe trotted out onto the field?

The manager- to start the season, anyway - was Alvin Dark (top photo).

1B Chris Chambliss. The flashy Ken Harrelson (self-glossed, "Hawk") was expected to continue to man the position, but he was injured, and retired to play professional golf during the

season. Tony Horton's unfortunate exit from the game (and the public eye) had occurred in 1970. Chambliss, chosen #1 overall by the Tribe out of UCLA in '70, won the 1971 A.L. Rookie of the Year award.
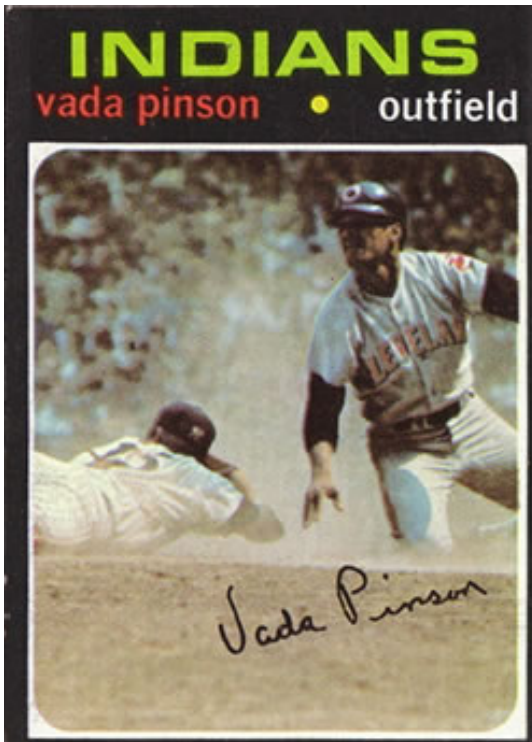
2B Eddie Leon. A fine infielder who played with hustle. A slap hitter who'd led the league in sacrifices in 1970.

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