

STRIKE A CHORD

Turn Your Dream Into Action

A study guide to the Keynote Concert Experience · Craig Colley · 2026 Edition

60+
YEARS ON STAGE

12,000+
LIVE PERFORMANCES

ZERO
SHOWS EVER MISSED

THIS GUIDE IS FOR YOU — WHICHEVER WAY YOU ARRIVED

■ YOU WERE THERE

This brings it all back — and takes it further.

■ YOU FOUND ME ONLINE

Welcome. You're in the right place.

You were in the room.

You heard the music live. You raised your hand. You took the selfie. This guide is your companion — a way to go deeper on every story and every step, revisit the CHORD framework on your own terms, and turn what you felt in that room into something that keeps producing results.

You found this online.

You haven't seen the show — but something brought you here. This guide will give you the full experience in print: the stories, the framework, the songs, and the philosophy behind a 60-year career. Everything you need to understand Craig's work and put it into practice — starting today.

Throughout this guide you'll see two types of callout boxes. One is for people who attended the live show — a prompt to reconnect to something you experienced. The other is for people discovering Craig's work for the first time — context that brings the stage to the page.

■ **YOU WERE THERE** — A moment from the live show to reconnect with.

■ **NEW HERE?** — Context that sets the scene if you weren't in the room.

WHO IS CRAIG COLLEY?

Craig Colley is a keynote concert speaker, performer, songwriter, and entrepreneur with a 60-year career spanning 12,000+ live performances. He has never missed a single show he has booked. Not one.

He's earned a Guinness World Record in music. He's released over 20 albums, streaming in 70 countries. He's written a book on the music business, published by one of the world's largest music publishers. He has a family of YouTube channels with over 2 million watch hours and views. And if you ask Siri or Alexa to play music by Craig Colley, you'll hear it.

But the credential Craig is most proud of isn't any of those things. It's the 60 years of showing up — through dyslexia, through a CLL cancer diagnosis in 2017, through every setback — and never missing a gig.

■ **NEW HERE?** Craig's keynote isn't a speech with a PowerPoint. It's a full concert experience — live music woven through storytelling, strategy, and real-world application. The stories in this guide are the same ones he tells from the stage, with the same intention: to strike something real inside you.

■ **YOU WERE THERE** Think back to the opening. You raised your hand as high as you could — and then Craig said "higher." You went higher. That moment you're remembering right now? That's the whole framework in a single gesture.

BEFORE THE CHORD — THE DREAM

Everything starts with a dream. Not a goal. Not a task list. The dream is the *reason* — the thing that won't let you quit when life pushes back.

For Craig, it was a cold Sunday night in February 1964. An eight-year-old boy on the south side of Chicago sat in front of a small black-and-white TV watching the Ed Sullivan Show — popcorn in a big silver bowl, Coca-Cola poured over ice, the whole family together. This was the night 73 million people watched the Beatles appear on American television for the first time. More than a third of the entire US population.

Craig didn't just hear the music. He *felt* it. And he knew in that moment — that is what I want to do for the rest of my life. He wanted to be a Beatle.

One problem: he didn't play guitar. Didn't even own one. So after the show, he took a piece of cardboard and some sewing thread from his mother's sewing basket and built a fake John Lennon Rickenbacker — knobs drawn on, fret marks sketched in, sewing thread glued on for strings. He jumped on his bed, tilted the lampshade for a spotlight, and lip-synced Beatles records while the imaginary audience screamed.

"That fake guitar didn't make a sound. It made something so much bigger. It created belief."

Before you can create anything in your life, you have to create it in your mind first. The dream is the necessary ingredient — the secret sauce. Coca-Cola was someone's dream. Colonel Sanders worked over a thousand times on his recipe. Without the dream, it's just chicken.

■ YOU WERE THERE

Craig asked you to picture the moment you once believed anything was possible. The time you saw something and said: *"That's what I want to do. That's what I want to be. That's what I want to achieve."*

Can you still see it? Write it down here.

■ NEW HERE?

This is where the guide begins for you — with a question, not an answer. Before the framework, before the five steps, there has to be a dream. Not a goal with a deadline. A pull. A hunger. Something that made you feel like more was possible.

Do you have one? What is it?

REFLECTION What dream keeps pulling at you right now? Why does it still matter?

Five steps to turn the rhythm of relevant resilience into real-world results. Each letter of CHORD is a principle, a practice, and a commitment.

C	Connect <i>Tap into your dream — realign your direction</i>
H	Hear <i>Listen to yourself and to the room around you</i>
O	Open <i>Take action — make your dream tangible and real</i>
R	Repeat <i>Purposeful repetition produces profound results</i>
D	Deliver <i>Bring your end result — not a work in progress</i>

■ **NEW HERE?** In the live keynote concert, Craig demonstrates each step of the CHORD framework with live music — playing guitar and piano the way a musician practices: slow first, then up to speed. The Sultans of Swing guitar lick you'll read about in Step R? He plays it for the audience. It's the framework made audible.



Connect

Tap into your dream — realign your direction

STEP 1 OF 5

You have to tap into your dream. Whatever it is, you have to tap into it. It realigns your direction. Like putting on a guitar — it just changes things. It says, "Play me."

We get so buried in the daily routine that we lose the connection to why we started. Connect is the act of remembering — and choosing to realign.

FROM THE STAGE

Craig moved to Los Angeles in 1981, leaving a goldmine gig — headlining the MGM Grand in Reno, sharing Frank Sinatra's dressing room — because it wasn't what he really wanted. His first LA gig paid \$30 on a Friday night at the Hobo Junction for 12 people, six passed out at the bar. He went from Frank Sinatra's dressing room to six conscious people. But he was connected to the dream, and he started.

■ YOU WERE THERE

Craig put on his guitar during this section and said it just changes things — it says "play me." What's your equivalent?
What physical object or habit reconnects you to your dream?

■ NEW HERE?

Connection isn't nostalgia. It's navigation. When Craig asks "what dream are you disconnected from?" — he's asking you to locate your original compass bearing before you take a single step.

YOUR ACTIONS

- Write one sentence: "The dream that started all of this for me was..."
- Identify where you've drifted from that original direction.
- Ask: what would realignment look like in the next seven days?

REFLECTION What dream are you currently disconnected from? What would realignment look like this week?

Connection to your dream is what keeps the compass pointed in the right direction.

H

Hear

Listen — to yourself, and to the room around you

STEP 2 OF 5

Musicians don't only play — they listen. Leaders don't just talk — they listen. There is so little reciprocity in the world today. How often are you talking to someone who isn't actually listening? They're just waiting to say what they already decided to say.

Hearing means two things: the voice around you, and the deeper voice inside you — the one that already knows what truth sounds like. What voice have you been ignoring?

FROM THE STAGE

When Craig's mother's dementia had progressed so far she couldn't remember when a selfie was taken ten seconds earlier, music still reached her. He'd play songs from her generation, and she'd come back — remembering every lyric, knowing who sang it, knowing where she was when it was popular. When Craig wrote "Gloria" for her and played it live at one of his shows with her in the audience, she smiled in a way he'll never forget. It was the last song she ever heard. Music heard her in a way words couldn't. That's what it means to truly hear.

■ YOU WERE THERE

Craig asked: what voice have you been ignoring? What truth do you already know? Sit with that for a moment. Write down what comes up — even if it's uncomfortable.

■ NEW HERE?

Craig doesn't just mean listening in meetings. He means the inner voice you override when it's inconvenient. The one that said "you should stop doing that" or "this isn't working anymore."

YOUR ACTIONS

- In your next conversation today, listen completely before responding.
- Ask yourself: what voice have I been ignoring?
- Write down one truth you already know that you haven't acted on.

REFLECTION What truth do you already know — that you haven't acted on yet?

What you're willing to truly hear is what will change you.



Open

Take action — make your dream tangible and real

STEP 3 OF 5

You have to take action. You have to make your dream tangible — turn it into something you can touch, see, and hear.

It doesn't have to be spectacular. It just has to be *something real*. A cardboard guitar made from sewing thread was real enough to start a 60-year career. Dreams that stay invisible fade. Dreams you can touch grow.

**FROM
THE
STAGE**

Craig is convinced: if he had not built that cardboard guitar on February 9, 1964, he would not be standing on a stage 60 years later. Long before the skill showed up, that piece of cardboard created belief. And belief delivered the dream. He played his first song on a Martin guitar in front of the audience to prove it: "Can You Feel My Heartbeat?" — the first song he ever wrote, cut by another artist in 1985. That song started as a cardboard dream too.

■ YOU WERE THERE

Craig played "Can You Feel My Heartbeat?" for you — the first song he ever had cut by another artist. That song existed in his head long before it existed on record. What's yours?

■ NEW HERE?

The "Open" step is about tangibility. A dream you can see, touch, or hear becomes real. A sketch. A note. A commitment made out loud. Something that says: this is no longer just an idea.

YOUR ACTIONS

- Identify one tangible action you can take in the next 72 hours toward your dream.
- Create something physical that represents where you're going.
- Tell one person what it is.

REFLECTION What tangible action can you take in the next 72 hours?

What would make your dream something you can touch?

Open the door. You don't need everything figured out. You need one real first step.

R

Repeat

Purposeful repetition produces profound results

STEP 4 OF 5

There is no substitute for repeating what you must become proficient in. The prep is in the rep.

Practice makes improvement — not perfection. The Olympian on the world stage brings years of suffering in silence, sweating alone, and sacrificing for something the crowd never sees. They don't bring a work in progress. They bring the end result.

Are you bringing your end result — or a work in progress?

FROM THE STAGE

Craig demonstrated the Sultans of Swing guitar lick live on stage — slowing it down to show how you take something difficult apart, work it piece by piece, and then bring it back up to speed. He failed the music school entrance exam twice before passing on his third attempt. He skipped third grade due to dyslexia and had to invent his own way of learning. He got into a major university music program — Northern Illinois — and started acing theory because he had learned to slow things down, repeat, and rebuild.

■ YOU WERE THERE

You heard Craig slow down the Sultans of Swing and bring it back to speed. That's not a guitar lesson. That's a framework.

What in your life needs to be slowed down and rebuilt?

■ NEW HERE?

In the keynote, Craig plays a notoriously difficult guitar part live — first slowly, then at full speed. It's the framework made audible: slow down, isolate, master, then deliver at full tempo.

YOUR ACTIONS

- Identify one skill that needs to become consistent — slow it down, take it apart, rebuild it.
- Commit: this week I will repeat _____ every single day.
- Ask yourself honestly: am I bringing my end result, or a work in progress?

REFLECTION What daily practice builds your edge?

"The prep is in the rep." What rep are you willing to commit to?

The gap between where you are and where you want to be is closed by repetition.

D

Deliver

Bring your end result — not a work in progress

STEP 5 OF 5

When you've done the work often enough, it turns into something magical. But only if you bring the end result.

And beneath all five steps is one principle that bundles everything together. It's simple, it's hard, and it changes everything:

Do what you say you're going to do.

Think about the impact of showing up for every commitment you ever made. Think of the decisions you'd have to make — for your mind, your spirit, your body, your faith — to do that every time. Think how you'd be perceived. Absolutely, absolutely amazing.

FROM THE STAGE

New Year's Eve. A hotel ballroom. Four or five hundred people. A three-hour show booked. Craig had a 103–104 degree fever and felt like he was in his deathbed. He dragged himself out and did the show. Not because he felt ready. Because he said he would. In 60 years and 12,000 performances, he never missed one — not one. He also applied the CHORD framework to his marriage of over 25 years: they connected (C), listened to each other (H), were open to possibilities (O), repeated what was working (R), and delivered (D).

■ YOU WERE THERE

Craig closed the keynote by asking you to take a selfie and save it as your screensaver — so that on the hard days, you'd remember: you raised your hand higher than you thought you could.

■ NEW HERE?

Deliver isn't just about performance. It's about trust. The trust you build with yourself when you do what you said you would — is the foundation everything else is built on.

YOUR ACTIONS

- Write three commitments you will honor this week.
- Share at least one with someone who will hold you accountable.
- Ask yourself: what one unfinished thing, if I delivered it today, would change everything?

REFLECTION What finished result are you ready to share or deliver right now?

"Do what you say you're going to do." What does that mean for you today?

Deliver is where resilience becomes visible. It's what people remember.

THE TRIPLE R — THE RHYTHM BENEATH THE CHORD

The CHORD framework lives inside a larger rhythm that powers everything: the Triple R — Rhythm, Relevance, and Resilience. These three forces reinforce each other. And underneath all three is the force that sustains them:

the dream that gives you reason to keep going.

RHYTHM	RELEVANCE	RESILIENCE
Recognize when the world changes	Stay connected to the moment you're in	Continue forward no matter what happens
<i>Are you showing up?</i>	<i>Are you still connected?</i>	<i>Are you still standing?</i>

REFLECTION Which of these three do you need to strengthen most right now — Rhythm, Relevance, or Resilience? And what one action would strengthen it this week?

THE MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE

"Do what you say you're going to do."

Easy to say. Hard to do. But it avoids and solves so many problems. It builds trust — with yourself and with everyone around you. There are only two pains in life — the pain of commitment or the pain of remorse. You get to choose which one you live with.

Craig applied the CHORD framework to his marriage of over 25 years. They connected. They listened to each other. They were open. They repeated what was working. They delivered.

■ YOU WERE THERE

Craig ended by asking you to take a selfie and save it as your screensaver. On the days when you don't feel like it — look at that photo. Remember: you raised your hand higher than you thought you could. That's the whole framework in one gesture.

■ NEW HERE?

Take a photo of yourself right now. Seriously. Save it somewhere you'll see it. This is your starting point — the moment you decided to take this seriously. On hard days, come back to it. It's the same thing Craig has asked countless people to do from the stage.

FROM THE TOP

Craig closed every keynote the same way — playing "Waiting in Line" twice. Once on guitar (earlier in the keynote concert). Once on piano. Same words, same chords, same key. Completely different feeling.

The point: sometimes you don't need a new direction. You just need a fresh perspective on the one you're already on. Change the way you see it, and you change what's possible.

"When I was struggling & looking forward, I was in line. Now I'm at the front, looking back."

Tonight, when you lay in bed and the noise of the day turns down, you may not remember every word in this guide. But you will remember the way it made you feel — and the way you still may feel.

A well-purposed dream is like the sun coming up every day. Even when it's cloudy, there's still light. That Beatle Moment in February 1964 still powers Craig through the dyslexic days. It helps on the days when having cancer is not very fun. But it works. He shows up. He does what he says he's going to do.

And so can you.

YOUR COMMITMENT

Three things I will do — starting today:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Share at least one of these with someone who will hold you accountable.

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