SPECIAL EDITION

CLASSIC ROCK

LEGENDS OF THE '70s

STARRING

LED ZEP
AC/DC
PINK FLOYD
QUEEN

INSIDE STORIES FROM ROCK'S GREATEST DECADE

QUO, SKYNYRD, SABS, STONES, PROG, PUNK & MORE!

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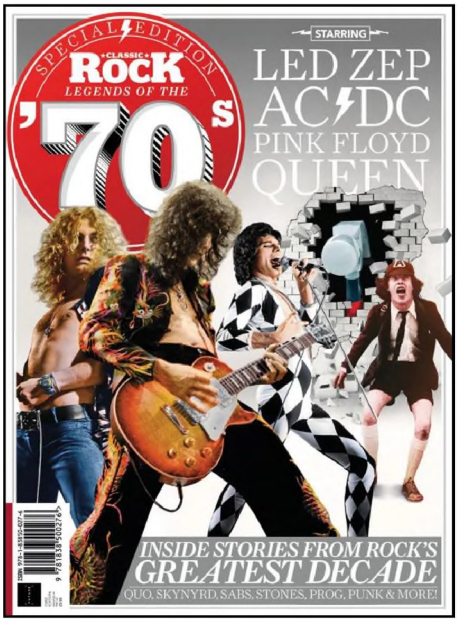
FUTURE

SIXTH EDITION



The music of the 70s is a bit like the moon landings. Sure, the first one happened in the 60s – but there were *twice as many* in the 70s. More people did it, they did it for longer, and you couldn't help but think it'd last forever. (It didn't, of course – but the music of the 70s did at least last longer than manned lunar landings: the last man to walk on the moon did so in December, 1972.)

In the 70s, rock music was unstoppable. Alice Cooper once said that the 60s and 70s "were kind of a breeding ground for exciting new sounds, because easy listening and folk were kind of taking over the airwaves... It was a natural next step to take that blissful, easy-going sound and strangle the life out of it."

Certainly, the musicians of the 70s looked at this music that had been invented in the 60s and took it to *extremes*. Hendrix, Morrison and Joplin were dead. The Beatles split. It was time for a new generation. Heavy metal, arguably born with Black Sabbath's debut in 1969, took a template established by Cream and Zeppelin and made it louder, darker, meaner. Prog rock smashed boundaries like they weren't nuthin'. Glam rock *wham-bammed and thank-you ma'am*'d a uniquely 70s take on rock'n'roll. And then there were all the other genres influencing rock itself: funk, jazz, country, disco, soul, folk, krautrock. (Just listen to David Bowie's 70s output to see the impact *those* all had.)

The innocent, whimsical 60s were over. Rock music was a *business* now. Album-oriented rock. Concept albums. International tours. Superstars. Rock gods. Guitar heroes. And everything that came with all that: money, cocaine, groupies – organised excess on a massive scale.

It couldn't last.

At the decade's end, along came punk rock, undermining the decade's new gods and breaking rock into its component parts ("This is a chord... Now form a band" etc), and setting up the music for the next decade perfectly...

Scott Rowley,
Editor In Chief


FUTURE

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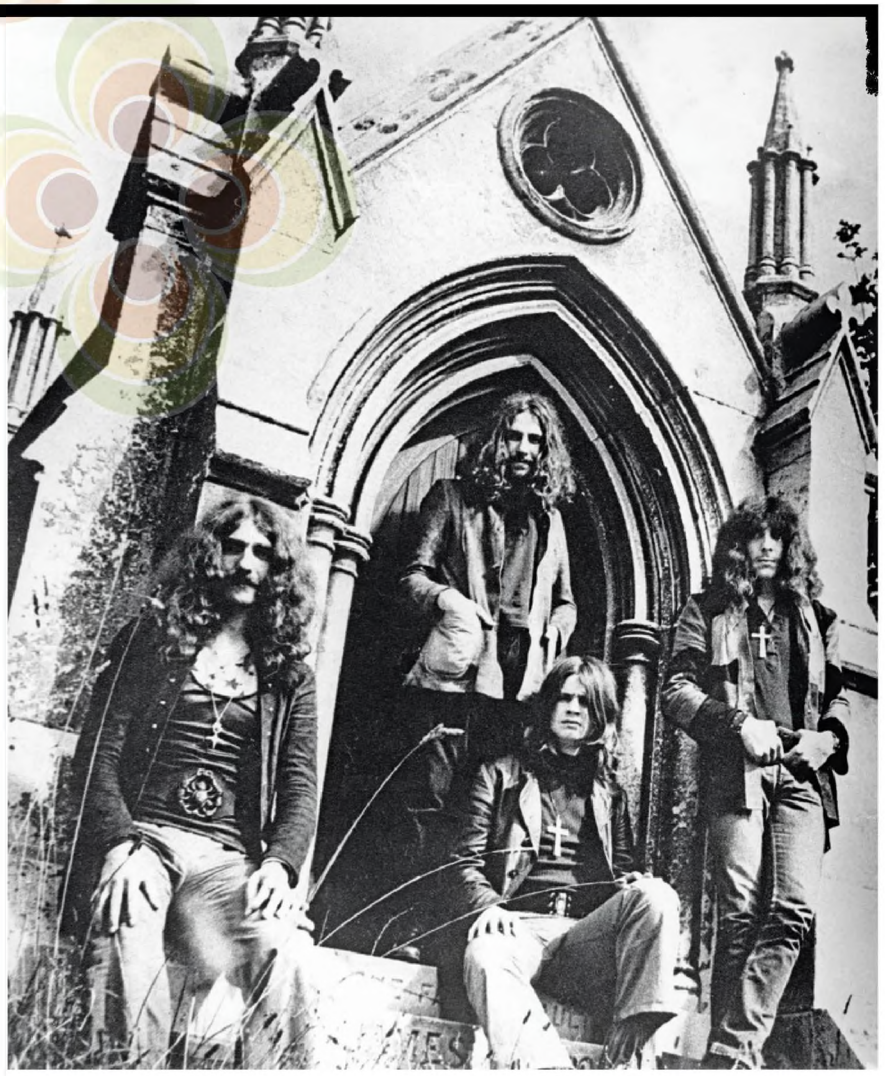

Features

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WHEN ALL IS ONE AND ONE IS ALL

The making of **Led Zeppelin IV**

It had no title, no band name on the sleeve, no singles released to radio. But the album that the record company said would bomb made Zeppelin the biggest band on the planet. Forty years after its release, the inside story of a rock classic.

Words: **Barney Hoskyns**

THE SCENE IS the Atlantic Records HQ in New York City, the date is early September 1971. The event is a tense stand-off between, on the one hand, Atlantic co-founder Ahmet Ertegun and, on the other, the ectomorphic guitarist along with the behemoth manager of a band who have just hit town to play a show at Madison Square Garden. Sitting in are legal representatives for both sides.

The issue at hand is the cover and sleeve design of Atlantic 7208, Led Zeppelin's fourth album for the label. The manager, Peter Grant, is laying down the whole of the law – or at least the wishes of the guitarist, his master – and informing Ertegun that the record will be released without a title and without even the band's name on the cover. Ertegun is having kittens, throwing his hands in the air in disbelief. How can you put an album out without your name on the cover? It's suicidal!

"It went down like a lead balloon," recalled Phil Carson, then head of Atlantic in England. "[Atlantic] were like: 'That's crazy. It'll never sell.' But Peter said: 'Listen, this record would shift units if we put it in a fucking brown paper bag.'"

Peter Grant, the behemoth who is already terrorising the industry, won't give an inch and says he won't hand over the master tapes until Ertegun agrees to Jimmy Page's demands. When 'G' finally leaves after a long afternoon's wrangling, Page stays on to press his point. "[The lawyer] was saying: 'You've got to have this,'" he remembered of the showdown. "So I said: 'Alright, run it on the inside bag. Print your "Rockefeller Plaza" or whatever it is down there.'"

"In the end I went back to the label and said: 'Trust me, people will find it,'" Phil Carson said in 2003. "You have to remember that by the time the album

GETTY

came around, the band was responsible for about 20 to 25 per cent of Atlantic's total sales. My job as chief liaison officer was to keep Led Zeppelin happy and keep those successful records coming."

Two months later, the fourth Zeppelin album appears with nothing on the front cover bar a framed photo of a bearded codger hunched under a bundle of sticks – a picture hanging on a wall whose flowery paper is badly peeling. On the back cover, behind what turns out to be a partially demolished home, a modern council tower block looms behind a row of derelict terrace houses.

"The picture of the old man was Robert's," Richard Cole, Zeppelin's legendary tour manager, tells me brusquely. "None of us could work out why the fuck he wanted that old bit of rubbish on the cover."

To Jimmy Page, a mite preciously, the cover represents "the change in the balance which was going on. There was the old countryman, and the blocks of flats being knocked down. It was just a way of saying that we should look after the earth, not rape and pillage it." To the more prosaic John Bonham, who had once lived in a tower block a stone's throw from the one on the back cover, "it means I'd rather live in an old house than a block of flats". (Led Zeppelin's drummer had already been granted that particular wish.)

Even on the album's inner sleeve, the band's name is conspicuous by its absence. Instead it features four runic symbols, plus the titles of the eight tracks and some cursory credits. Along with Barrington Colby's sinister inner-gatefold illustration, *The Hermit*, the symbols prove irresistible to the growing fan base of besotted adolescents in thrall to the enigma Led Zeppelin project.

Releasing an album without 'Led Zeppelin' on the cover (or even on the spine) is a giant 'Fuck You' to anyone who ever accused them of being a 'Superhype', the name Grant and Page had chosen for their production company. Smarting from the negative press they'd suffered since the band formed, Page wants to prove that their music can stand on its own merits.

"[The press] didn't really start bothering me until after the third album," he told *Guitar World*'s Steven Rosen more than 20 years later. "After all we had accomplished, the press was still calling us a hype. So that is why the fourth album was untitled. It was a meaningless protest, really, but we wanted to prove that people were not buying us for the name."

"The genius of Jimmy Page that people are always missing is the idea of the anti-establishment 'punk' things he was doing," Zep fan Jack White told me in 2006. "Things like releasing records with no information and no writing on the cover. I mean, that's pretty bold. It's a lot more punk than the Sex Pistols signing a contract in front of Buckingham Palace."

Punk or not, the courage of Zeppelin's convictions was soon vindicated when the untitled album – referred to as 'IV', 'Led Zeppelin IV', 'ZoSo', 'Runes', 'Four Symbols' or (silently) as – became their best-selling to date. (It currently ranks as the twelfth best-selling album of all time.) If their first three albums made them stars, their fourth turned them into superstars. Within two years they were unquestionably the biggest band on the planet.

Combining the bruising power of *Led Zeppelin II* with the unplugged side of *Led Zeppelin III*, the album swung wildly from blues-rock strut (*Black Dog*) to ➔

FOUR SYMBOLISM

The origins of the album's four symbols explained.

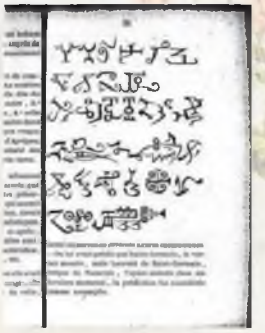
Ever on the lookout for new ideas to present the band in a different light, the art-schooled Jimmy Page came up with the idea of an unpronounceable title made up of four distinct symbols, or runes, for their fourth album. "After all the crap that we'd had with the critics, I put it to everybody else that it'd be a good idea to put out something totally anonymous," Page remembers. "At first I wanted just one symbol on it, but then it was decided that since it was our fourth album and there were four of us, we could each choose our own symbol. I designed mine, and everyone else had their own reasons for using the symbols that they used."

The use of four symbols as the title for IV only added to their overall mystique, and the saga of what they represent (if anything) still rages today on Zep internet forums and message boards.

The four symbols were first introduced to the rock media via a series of teaser adverts placed in the music papers in the weeks leading up to the album's release – each ad depicting a particular symbol alongside a sleeve of a previous Led Zep album.

The symbols for John Paul Jones and John Bonham were selected from Rudolph Koch's *The Book Of Signs*. Jones's is a single intersecting circle, said to symbolise a person who possesses both confidence and competence (as it's difficult to draw accurately).

John Bonham's three interlocking rings is said to represent the triad of mother, father and child. It was also – somewhat appropriately, given the late drummer's penchant for alcoholic beverages – the logo for Ballantine beer.



Robert Plant's symbol was apparently his own design, though it can also be traced to a book titled *The Sacred Symbols of Mu* by Colonel James Churchward. The feather in the circle represents the feather of Ma'at, the Egyptian goddess of justice and fairness, and is the emblem of a writer. "The feather is a symbol on which all sorts of philosophies have been based," noted Plant. "For instance, it represents Red Indian tribes."

Jimmy's symbol is often referred to as 'ZoSo' and there have been various theories put forward surrounding its origin. Some point to it being used as early as 1557 in representing Saturn. It has also been noted that it is made up of astrological symbols for Saturn, Jupiter and perhaps Mars or Mercury. The symbol also appeared in almost identical form in a rare 19th-century dictionary of symbols titled *Le Triple Vocabulaire Infernal Manuel du Demonomane*, by Frinellan (a pseudonym for Simon Blocquel), published by Lille, Blocquel-Castiaux in 1844. "My symbol was about invoking and being invocative," Page told *Classic Rock*'s Mick Wall in 2001, adding, "That's all I'm going to say about it."

Whatever their meaning, these symbols have, become synonymous with each member of Led Zeppelin, and over the years have been adapted by Plant, Jones and Page in presenting their respective solo projects. Most recently they have been used by Plant, whose feather design was adapted for the back cover design of last year's *Band Of Joy* album, and by Page, who used his enduring 'ZoSo' image as the embossed cover on his deluxe pictorial autobiography *Jimmy Page By Jimmy Page*.

Dave Lewis

canyon reverie (*Going To California*), retro blast (*Rock And Roll*) to medieval mandolins (*The Battle Of Evermore*). It also featured an epic, eight-minute track called *Stairway To Heaven* – not, as it turned out, a cover of Neil Sedaka's bouncy Brill Building hit from 1960.

"Music is very like a kaleidoscope," Robert Plant told *NME* the following year. "And I feel that particular album was just a case of us stretching out. It was a very natural development."

"My personal view is that it's the best thing we've ever done," John Bonham maintained in *Melody Maker*. "It's the next stage we were at, at the time of recording. The playing is some of the best we've done and Jimmy is… mint!"

More terse were the reflections, years later, of the classically trained multi-instrumentalist whose composing and arranging skills were so vital to Zeppelin's music: "After this record," John Paul Jones stated for the record, "no one ever compared us to Black Sabbath."

LED ZEPPELIN'S FOURTH album started life a year before the Ertegun stand-off, on the band's previous visit to the Big Apple. With *Led Zeppelin III* about to be released, the final date of their sixth US tour also found them at Madison Square Garden, in a state of near-exhaustion from the relentless criss-crossing of a country they had now conquered.

"We were fed up with going to America," Jimmy Page said in 1973. "We'd been going twice a year, and at that time America was really a trial, an effort."

Playing two shows at the Garden on Saturday, September 19, 1970, Zeppelin were on the verge of collapse and could hardly wait to fly home. Moreover, the news had just winged its way across the Atlantic that Jimi Hendrix had been found dead in London, casting a dark pall over both shows. After the fourth song, *Bring It On Home*, Robert Plant paid tribute to the guitar magus who had once raved that John Bonham had "a right foot like a pair of castanets".

Bonham himself was not just exhausted, he was also pining for his wife Pat and four-year-old son Jason. "We did three tours last year and finished off feeling: 'We've just about had enough,'" Bonzo told *Melody Maker*'s Chris Welch. "We had done so much in such a short space of time, we were drained. We had offers to go everywhere – France, America. And we could have done them, but what would be the point? We were tired. We had worked hard, and Peter had probably worked harder than any of us. We enjoyed working but we needed the break before we got stale." The break they did get led to groundless rumours that Zeppelin were on the point of splitting up.

Grant wasn't in the best of shape, either, and saw an opportunity to do something about his ballooning weight by checking into a health farm. Meanwhile, Page and Plant remembered the tonic that "a small, derelict cottage in South Snowdonia" had provided the previous spring, and decided to return there, to Bron-yr-Aur, to see if it might inspire a similar spurt of creativity. Their only company this time came in the form of roadies Sandy MacGregor and Henry 'The Horse' Smith.

"We drove to Bron-yr-Aur in a white panelled truck," remembers Smith, the American who had worked alongside Richard Cole on US tours by Zeppelin and the Jeff Beck Group. "It was like a camping trip. Jimmy was wearing the high wellies and cardigan sweaters, and that famous hat he wore at the Bath

"After this record, no one ever compared us to Black Sabbath."

John Paul Jones

festival. It was the folksy look. In some ways it was grounding for them. Jimmy was a city kid, where Robert was more of a country boy. And Robert had been to Bron-yr-Aur as a child, so he remembered it as a safe, secure place. It was interesting to see them work that part of life out to where serenity was."

A humble stone structure standing in the midst of a sloping sheep pasture, Bron-yr-Aur "just felt like a good thing" to Smith. "Like, if you want to write you need to get away. And this was a great place to go to get away because there was *nobody* around. The sheep would almost come into the house while Jimmy and Robert were working on songs. There were a couple of times when Robert and I went out back and sat in the grass by the stream. And he was talking about songs and looking for a little inspiration for some lyrics. I remember talking about little animals in the grass, parting the grass and seeing what was underneath."

IN 2003, PRIOR to interviewing him in nearby Machynlleth, I persuaded Plant to drive me up to Bron-yr-Aur, in a muddy, burgundy-coloured 4x4. That afternoon he waxed nostalgic about what the place had meant to him and Page: "In among it all when we set off for the Welsh mountains was the question: 'What sort of ambition do we have? And where is it all going? Do we want world domination and all that stuff?' We didn't really have anything to do with the Stones or The Beatles or anybody, but we lived on the side of a hill and wrote those songs and walked and talked and thought and went off to the abbey where they hid the grail. No matter how cute and comical and sad it might be now to look back at that, it gave us so much energy because we were really close to something. At that time and that age, 1970 was the biggest blue sky I ever saw."

On their second visit to the cottage, Page and Plant worked on a number of songs both old and new, some scarcely more than sketches that would remain on the back burner: things like *Down By The Seaside, Over The Hills And Far Away, Poor Tom* and *The Rover*. Also coming along nicely was the music for *Stairway To Heaven*, on which Page had been working in his home studio for some months.

By December, Page and Plant were reunited with John Bonham and John Paul Jones at Island Studios in London, where some of *Zeppelin III* had been recorded (and the majority of it mixed). Here, early versions of *Stairway…* (*sans* lyrics), *When The Levee Breaks* and other tracks were attempted. After Bron-yr-Aur, however, the studio vibe left much to be desired.

"You really do need the sort of facilities where you can take a break for a cup of tea and a wander round the garden and then go back in and do whatever you have to do," Page reflected. "Instead of that feeling of walking into a studio, down a flight of steps and into fluorescent lights… and opening up the big soundproof door and being surrounded by acoustic tiles."

Ross Halfin

Jimmy Page "loved the atmosphere" of Headley Grange, and was convinced there were ghosts in the house.

As they had done with *III*, Zeppelin chose to decamp to a damp mansion in Hampshire. "For the third album, I'd suggested going to Mick Jagger's house with the Stones' mobile," says engineer Andy Johns, who had already used the unit to record the Stones' *Sticky Fingers*. "Now, Pagey is a wise fellow and doesn't like to expend money when he doesn't have to. 'How much would that cost?' he says. 'Well,'
I reply, 'the truck's about £1,000 a week and Stargroves is about £1,000 a week.' He says: 'I'm not paying Mick Jagger £1,000 a week! I'll find somewhere better than that.' So they found this old mansion, and we went down there and it was somewhat seedy. There was stuffing coming out of the couch, springs coming out of the bed. But it wasn't a bad place. It had a nice fireplace, and I was bonking the cook."

"We've done a good deal," John Paul Jones informed *Disc*'s Caroline Boucher shortly before Zeppelin set off for Headley Grange. "We've broken the back of it, and recording starts this month. But rather than waste a lot of studio time thinking of the riffs and lyrics in the studio, we decided this place in Hampshire was definitely the best place to get the numbers down before we were there."

"Maybe the spark of being at Bron-yr-Aur came to fruition by saying: 'Let's go to Headley'," Page told me in 2003. "It was: 'Let's go to Headley with a mobile truck and see what comes out of it.' And what came out of staying in the house was the fourth album. Although some things were recorded outside of that location – like *Stairway…* – the germ of it was Headley."

Things didn't commence well. January 1971 found the house significantly colder and damper than it had been the previous spring. "It was horrible," John Paul Jones recalled. "There was virtually no furniture, no pool table, no pub nearby… We all ran in when we arrived, in a mad scramble to get the driest rooms." The house boasted central heating but the boiler was so ancient it had given up the ghost. "It seems more dilapidated than it was the last time we were here," Bonham remarked mopily to Richard Cole as he wandered through its rooms.

Page, however, "loved the atmosphere" of Headley Grange, convinced there were ghosts in the house. "Jimmy had a room right at the top that was haunted, I'm sure of it," says Richard Cole. "None of us would go up there. It had an old electric fire. The rest of us didn't particularly like the place. By now they all had lovely houses and had been living in five-star hotels. They recorded in the worst fucking places imaginable. I don't know whether it was because in the back of Jimmy's mind he thought: 'If I can make the outside surroundings as unpleasant as possible, they'll get on with it'!"

"You didn't have anything like a snooker table or anything like that," Page noted of the distraction-free environment. "No recreational pursuits at all. It was really good for discipline and getting on with the job. I suppose that's why a lot of these came at Headley Grange. For instance, *Going To California* and *Battle Of Evermore* came out of there."

It wasn't all hard graft. Richard Cole recalls that the band ate like "million-dollar Boy Scouts" at Headley, lubricated by cider purchased in the local village. "There weren't any serious drugs around the band at that point," the road manager remembered. "Just dope and a bit of coke. They were playing at being country squires. They found an old shotgun and used to shoot at squirrels in the woods – not that they ever hit any." Attired in a gamekeeper's cap and tweed jacket, farmer Bonzo regularly repaired to the nearest pub after the band had finished for the day.

Since nobody was taking notes – and since the memories of the surviving members are understandably hazy – it is difficult to be sure exactly what Zeppelin did after settling in at Headley. Up to 14 songs – enough for a double album – may have been tried out before Andy Johns showed up with The Rolling Stones Mobile Studio after a week. Among them were a slightly zippier version of *No Quarter* (later recorded for *Houses Of The Holy*) which began life as one of Jonesy's keyboard instrumentals; *Down By The Seaside*, a Plant-steered homage to Neil Young dating back to the first stay at Bron-yr-Aur; The Faces-esque *Night Flight*; a version of Leroy Carr's *Sloppy Drunk* that morphed into *Boogie With Stu*; and possibly other Bron-yr-Aur songs (*Poor Tom, The Rover, I Wanna Be Her Man*) that had failed to make it on to *Led Zeppelin III*. Rehearsal bootlegs from the period do not establish definitively what was rehearsed at Headley and what wasn't.

One that definitely was is *Black Dog*, a track conceived by John Paul Jones. "We were always trying to encourage Jonesy to come up with bits and pieces," Page recalled in 1983. In Joe Smith's book *Off The Record* (1988), Robert Plant recalled that "sometimes John Paul would contribute the main leading part of a song, and then it would be a pretty quick arrangement of bits and pieces so that the thing fitted together rather quickly."

Inspired by a twirling, circular blues riff on *Tom Cat* (a track on Muddy Waters's critically reviled psychedelic album *Electric Mud*, from 1968) *Black Dog* had been developed by Jones on the train home from a pre-Headley Grange rehearsal at Page's boathouse in Pangbourne, Berkshire. "My dad had taught me this very easy notation system using note values and numbers," he told *Mojo*'s Mat Snow in 2007. "So I wrote it on a bit of paper on the train… probably the ticket."

Easy the system might have been; fiendishly complex the unfolding time signatures of *Black Dog* – named for an elderly Labrador that wandered in and out of Headley Grange – turned out to be. So much so that when it was first ↪

attempted in rehearsal the song imploded amid a collective fit of hysterical laughter. Subsequent run-throughs – and arguments – can be heard in riveting detail on the *Stairway Sessions* bootleg.

"It was originally all in 3/16 time," Jones remembered, "but no one could keep up with that." Least of all Bonham, who understandably struggled with the jarring juxtaposition of the song's basic 4/4 rhythm with the 5/8 riffing of Jones and Page in its B-verse section. "I told Bonzo he had to keep playing four-to-the bar all the way through *Black Dog*," Jones recalled years later. "If you go through enough 5/8s it arrives back on the beat." Bonzo was unconvinced, and to most ears the B-verse rhythm still sounds wrong.

Equally complex groove-wise was *Four Sticks*. Intended as a trance-like raga with Indian overtones, the song had the band flummoxed from the outset, fluctuating as it did between five- and six-beat meters. "I had real problems working out where the beat should go," said Jones. "Rhythmically it was quite unusual. But I was the only one in the band who could do that, because of my background as an arranger."

MUCH SIMPLER IN construction were *Going To California* and *The Battle Of Evermore*, acoustic songs that picked up where *Led Zeppelin III* had left off. One night at Headley, after the others had hit the sack, Page spotted a mandolin Jones had bought on tour in America in 1969. "I just picked it up and started playing a sequence," Jimmy told Stuart Grundy and John Tobler. "It probably consisted of the most basic chords on a mandolin, but from that I worked out the sequence to *The Battle Of Evermore*."

Starting out, in Page's words, as "an old English instrumental", the chords quickly meshed with a lyric Robert had begun at Bron-yr-Aur, inspired by his immersion in Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* and in the military history of the Middle Ages. *The Battle of Evermore* referenced the Battle of Pelennor Fields from *The Return Of The King*, while the Queen Of Light was Eowyn, the Prince Of Peace, Aragorn, and the Dark Lord most likely Sauron. The name-check for the Ringwraiths was an even more explicit nod to Tolkien. Plant also alluded to English and Celtic history in a line about *'the angels of Avalon'*.

"You don't have to have too much of an imagination or a library full of books if you live near the Welsh border," Plant told Robert Palmer of the *New York Times* years later. "It's still there. On a murky October evening, with the watery sun looking down on those hills over some old castle and unto the river, you have be a real bimbo not to flash occasionally. Remember, I wasn't living in London. There you can be a fashion victim, but you can't feel like your average working man's Celt."

A companion piece to *...Evermore*, the gorgeous *Going To California* had no Tolkien references, but similarly stemmed from what Page described as "a late-night guitar twiddle" at Headley. The next afternoon, with Jones pitching in on mandolin, Plant completed what was essentially an ode to LA's Laurel Canyon as personified by Joni Mitchell, the Canadian songstress who'd made the city her home early in 1968. *'Someone told me there's a girl out there with love in her eyes and flowers in her hair...'* Plant sang.

"Songs as sort of fey as *Going To California* were basically just joining in with Neil Young's vibe," Plant told Mick Wall in 1988. "Like, you know, [Young's album] *Everybody Knows This is Nowhere*. For me, I was back there in that sort of environment where harmony was the answer to everything, to create harmony and to promote... the brotherhood of man."

"Robert was more of an American type of peacenik than maybe the others were," says Henry Smith. "He was more of a caring soul. I remember times that we would sit down in the 70s and go: 'Whatever happened to this peace-love generation? What made it stop in America and what made it stop in Europe?'"

It was to Plant's great chagrin that, as he told me in 2003, "the people who lived in Laurel Canyon avoided us... because we were in the tackiest part of the Sunset Strip with tacky people like Kim Fowley and the GTOs." Years later, nonetheless, Joni Mitchell expressed sincere appreciation for Led Zeppelin's unlikely championing of her music.

The funky, mid-tempo stomp of *Misty Mountain Hop* coupled Plant's hippie inclinations with his Tolkien obsessions, the mountains in question featuring in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord Of The Rings*. Plant's lyric drew allegorical parallels between long-hairs and *The Hobbit* (he was hardly the only flower child of his time to regard Tolkien's books as sacred texts of fantasy). The song concerned a drug bust, either in London or in San Francisco, and a consequent desire to flee to a place *"where the spirits go now/Over the hills where the spirits fly..."*

As with *The Battle Of Evermore*, *Misty Mountain Hop* came together quickly at Headley Grange. The song's core riff came from Page – "I just came up with that on the spot," he remembered – before being developed one morning by Jones, who'd woken earlier than the others and plonked himself down at a Hohner electric piano. "Jonesy put the chords in for the chorus bit, and that would shape up," Page recalled. "We used to work pretty fast. A lot of that would have been made up during the point of being at Headley."

Page had already spent many hours working out the different sections of what would become *Stairway To Heaven*, layering six- and 12-string guitars at his new eight-track studio in Pangbourne. "When we were recording it," he said, "there were little bits, little sections that I'd done, getting reference pieces down on cassette, and sometimes I referred back to them if I felt there was something that seemed right that could be included."

"I wanted to try this whole idea musically," Page continued, "this build towards a climax, with John Bonham coming in at a later point... to give it that extra kick." He was also determined to break a rule drummed into him and John Paul as young gunslingers on the London session scene of the 60s, which was that a track should never under any circumstances speed up. (Possibly Page was unaware that Boz Scaggs had beaten him to the punch with the extended Les Paul heroics of Duane Allman on 1969's 13-minute *Loan Me A Dime*. Less likely would have been his unawareness of Spirit's 1968 instrumental *Taurus*, which partially influenced the opening guitar melody of *Stairway*... – Spirit were, after all, one of Robert Plant's favourite bands.)

One evening at Headley, Page and Jones worked on the song on acoustic guitar and electric piano after Plant and Bonham adjourned to the pub. The *Stairway Sessions* bootleg features the pair experimenting with the transition from the song's bridge to its final solo section. "Both Jimmy and I were quite aware of the way a track should unfold and the various levels it would go through," Jones later remarked. "We were quite strong on form. I suppose we were both quite influenced by classical music, and there's a lot of drama in the classical forms."

The next evening, with Jones and Bonzo nipping up to London for a party at rock'n'roll hang-out the Speakeasy, a frustrated Plant sat by the fire with a strumming Page and grappled with the lyrics to *Stairway*... "I was holding a pencil and paper, and for some reason I was in a very bad mood," Plant recalled. Suddenly the pencil seemed to move of its own will and the song's opening couplet appeared as if by magic on the page.

The next day, Plant all but finished the lyric in the presence of his bandmates. "By the time we'd gone through it a few times, Robert was obviously pencilling down words," Page told Dave Schulps of *Trouser Press*. "About 75 to 80 per cent of the words he wrote on the spot. Amazing, really. In other words he didn't go away and think about it, or have to sort of ponder and ponder and ponder."

"I'm pretty sure the first time I heard *Stairway*..., John Paul was playing it on a recorder," says Richard Cole. "Whenever they got together to write or record, Jonesy would come down with a carload of instruments, usually acoustic. This particular time he came down with the mandolins, and I remember Robert sitting on a radiator working out the words."

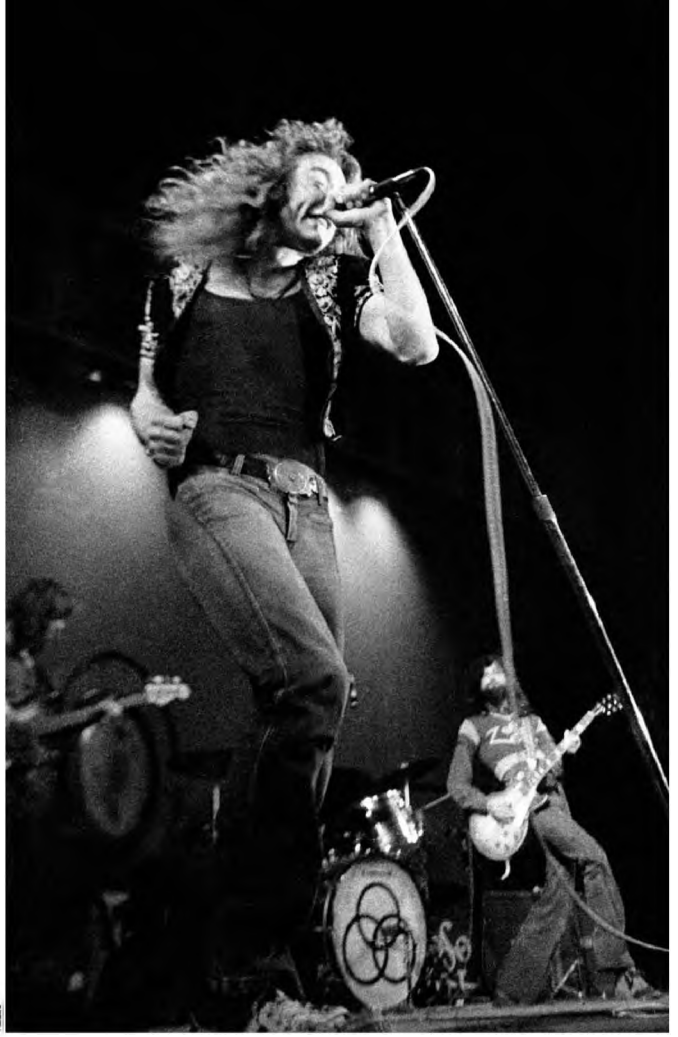
"It was done very quickly," Plant himself said of a song he famously came to disown. "It was a very fluid, unnaturally easy track. There was something pushing it, saying: 'You guys are okay, but if you want to do something timeless, here's a wedding song for you."

The tune had come to them at last.

Andy Johns arrived at Headley Grange with the Stones mobile in late January. Thrown in at no extra expense were Stones co-founder/pianist Ian 'Stu' Stewart and a battered upright piano. Parking the truck round the back of the house, Johns ran leads through the windows of the drawing room, the ↦

"I wrote it on a bit of paper on the train... probably the ticket."

John Paul Jones on *Black Dog*



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"There were times we sat down in the 70s and said: 'Whatever happened to the peace and love generation?'" Zep at peace and in action, 1971/72.

Listen to the Blind Faith song *Can't Find My Way Home*. It's just two mics, and that includes the vocals and the drums. So we carted Bonzo's kit out to this huge lobby where the ceiling was at least 25 feet high. It sounded really good. How could he not like *this*? 'Bonzo!' I said. 'Come and listen!' He came out to the truck. 'Fucking hell!' he said. 'It's got *thrutch*!'"

"Thrutch" – one of Bonzo's favourite onomatopoeias – was an understatement for the drum sound on *When The Levee Breaks*. The primordial thwack of the groove, with its fat, booming echo (courtesy of a new Binson unit), was like industrial funk – in Lester Bangs's words, "a great groaning, oozing piece of sheer program music". What made it even more remarkable was that Johns had dispensed with a separate mic for the bass drum.

"We could have used one but we didn't need to," Page told *Guitar World*. "[Bonzo's] kick sound was that powerful. And his playing was not in his arms, it was all in his wrist action. Frightening! I still do not know how he managed to get so much level out of a kit."

No wonder the group delayed the entrance of Plant's vocal for almost a minute-and-a-half.

Bonham was less enamoured of *Four Sticks*. So frustrating did he find the song's awkward rhythm that, in a moment of rage, he downed a can of Double Diamond and instead launched into the drum intro to Little Richard's *Keep A-Knockin*. It was one of those impetuous impulses that takes a band off on a tangent and winds up creating something completely new – in Jimmy Page's words, "a spontaneous combustion number".

Page instantly piled in with Bonzo, cranking out a gnarly, neo-rockabilly riff that combined the influences of guitarists like Scotty Moore and Cliff Gallup. Jonesy got stuck in on bass, and Plant ad-libbed a vocal line over the top. Even Ian Stewart joined in, hammering out a piano part that was pure Jerry Lee Lewis. Fifteen minutes later, *It's Been A Long Time* – eventually given the superior title *Rock And Roll* – was all but written and recorded.

For all their love of early R&B and rockabilly – live, they often inserted medleys of classics like Elvis's *That's Alright, Mama* and Eddie Cochran's *Somethin' Else* into the breakdown section of *Whole Lotta Love* – *Rock And Roll* marked a new departure for Zeppelin. It also made the point that they were as passionate about 50s rock'n'roll as any of the other 70s acts – from Don McLean on *American Pie* to John Lennon on *Rock'n'Roll* – who were busy paying homage to the stars of that era. Page's collection of early Sun and rockabilly singles was rumoured to rival even his collection of Aleister Crowley artefacts.

"He came out to the [recording] truck. 'Fucking hell!' he said. 'It's got *thrutch*!'"

Andy Johns on John Bonham first hearing the now legendary *When The Levee Breaks* drum sound

walls of which were covered with empty egg cartons for acoustic baffling. Though he had misgivings about mobile studios – "you end up talking to the band through a closed-circuit camera and a mic instead of through the studio glass, [which] can get a bit impersonal" – Johns acknowledged that the band felt more at home at Headley.

"It's that old cliché about a place in the country," Plant reminisced to interviewer Rick McGrath at the end of the year. "The microphones coming in through the windows, and a fire going in the hearth, and people coming in with cups of tea and cakes, and people tripping over leads, and the whole thing is utter chaos. It was a good feeling, and we did it as easy as pie."

"As musicians and performance-wise they were so fast," Johns recalls. "You could get three or four tracks done in a night. Jimmy and John Paul were session musicians – and the best session musicians. Bonzo would play the same thing on everything, so it wasn't like he had to figure out something new."

It was Bonzo who prompted Johns to come up with the album's most famous experiment. Tired of hearing the drummer moan about never capturing the sound he heard in his head, one evening Johns asked him to stay behind. The band had already made one stab at covering Memphis Minnie's 1929 blues *When the Levee Breaks* at Island, but the results – in Page's words – "sounded flat". Johns suggested to Bonham that they drag his Ludwig drum kit out of the drawing room into Headley's hallway and dangle two Beyerdynamic M160 mics from the top of the stairwell.

"We'd recorded a couple of tracks and the sound pressure was building up as it always did with those buggers," Johns says. "I'd been experimenting with Blind Faith and Blodwyn Pig, and I was always thinking about how to record things with just two microphones, because my mother loved classical music.

Plant, too, was a connoisseur of American oldies: the lyrics he wrote, virtually on the spot, amounted to a high-speed hymn of nostalgia, referencing The Diamonds, The Monotones and The Drifters as he sought to rekindle the innocent magic of rock's early days.

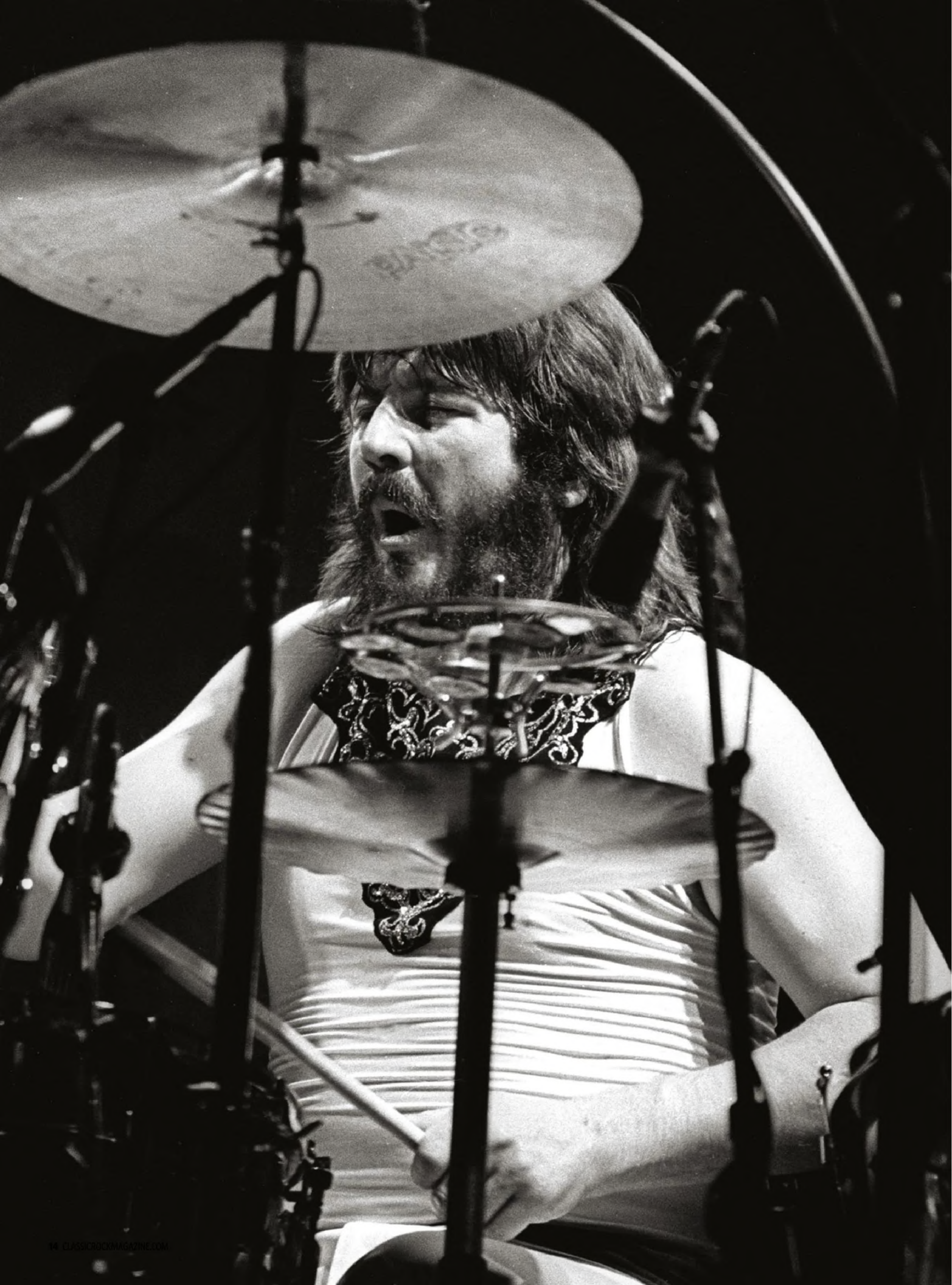
"We just thought rock'n'roll needed to be taken on again," Robert told Chuck Eddy in 1988. "So we had all these little rock'n'roll nuances, like in *Boogie With Stu* and *Rock And Roll*. I was finally in a really successful band and we felt it was time for actually kicking ass. It wasn't an intellectual thing, cos we didn't have time for that, we just wanted to let it all come flooding out. It was a very animal thing, a hellishly powerful thing, what we were doing."

Following the week of rehearsals at Headley, the band spent a mere six days in the house with the mobile studio. "Looking back, I suppose what we really needed was at least two weeks solid with the truck," Page admitted. "But as it turned out we actually only had about six days. Usually we need a full week to get everything out of our system and to get used to the facilities."

In no time they were back at Island studios in London, primarily to record *Four Sticks* and *Stairway To Heaven*, but also to take care of the overdubs for the album. "A lot of times we'd leave Jimmy alone to do his layering and overdubs," says Richard Cole. "You'd leave on a Friday afternoon, and then when you turned up on a Monday morning you'd hear something completely different."

Zeppelin had already used Island's Studio One for two of the third album's highlights – the dreamy Bron-yr-Aur strumalong *That's The Way* and the harrowing blues ballad *Since I've Been Loving You* – and so were used to the room's cavernous resonance.

"It wasn't a little den," says Digby Smith, one of Andy Johns's assistants at Island. "You could get a 70-piece orchestra in there. The problem was ➔



controlling the liveness of it. So the sound was heavily compressed by Andy. It seemed like whenever he was at the desk, everything got bigger and louder – the excitement levels rose. The quality of the sound he could create, and the speed with which he worked, really impressed me. The confidence he exuded fed through to the band. He had great style. Every take was a performance. If George Martin was the fifth Beatle, then Andy at that point was the fifth member of Zeppelin."

One evening, Smith had barely arrived home – "looking forward to a well-deserved night off" – when the phone rang. It was studio manager Penny Hanson, asking if he could come straight back to the studio and deputise for Bob Potter. The session was for *Stairway*…

"Zeppelin had been in for a couple of nights and were due in for one more," Smith says. "When I walked in, Jonesy was sitting at a keyboard and Jimmy was playing acoustic guitar, surrounded by four tall, beige baffles that almost obscured him. Seventy per cent of Bonham's drum sound came from a Beyer M500 ribbon microphone hanging four or five feet over his head. I don't think Robert had even done a guide vocal for the song."

Although it was a complex song – in Smith's words "a medley of two or three tunes tied together" – the first take almost nailed it. Johns called everyone in to listen, increasing the volume to what Smith recalls as "hooligan level".

"There's a two-inch tape somewhere of Take 1 that's awesome, no mistakes from beginning to end," says Smith. "Bonham and Jones and Plant all agree that that's the one. The only person not saying anything is Jimmy. So Bonham turns to him and says: 'What's wrong?' Page says nothing's wrong. Bonham goes: 'No, something's wrong. What is it?' 'There's nothing wrong.' 'Well, is that the take or *isn't* it?' 'It's alright.' 'It's alright. So you want us to do it again.' 'I think we've got a better take inside us.'"

REX FEATURES

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Top: Led Zeppelin with Sandy Denny, who sang on *The Battle Of Evermore*. Above: Page with his signature Gibson EDS 1275 6/12 double-neck.

Fuming, Bonham picked up his sticks, stomped down the steps from the control room and planted himself behind his kit. "I can still see him sitting there, waiting to come in, *seething*," says Smith. "And when he finally comes in, he's beating the *crap* out of his drums and all the meters are going into the red. And they come back up into the control room, play it through, and it's just that little bit more urgent. And Bonham gives Pagey a metaphorical hug and says: 'You were right.'"

It was now time for Jones to overdub the three recorders he played on *Stairway*…, enhancing the already Elizabethan feel of Page's picking. Which left the vocal, and the small matter of the guitar solo, which Page opted to play not on one of his then-preferred Les Pauls but on the old psychedelicised Telecaster that Jeff Beck had given him in 1966.

"Instead of headphones we set up some big playback monitors – as big as Page was – and Jimmy leant on one of them with a cigarette in his mouth," says Digby Smith. "We did three takes of lead guitar and comped the solo from those three takes. I was audacious enough, even as a fresh-faced 19-year-old, to point out that one of Andy's switches didn't quite work and that there was an alternative solution that might. And Jimmy was like: 'This kid's good.' After the solo, Robert went out and did the vocal – one take, maybe two."

"Robert was sitting at the back with me and I said: 'Come on, it's your turn now'," says Johns. "He said: 'I'm not finished. Play it again.' And he's got this legal pad in front of him. So I played it through again and he said: 'Okay, I'm ready now.' It was two takes, one punch-in."

Four Sticks, which they'd so singularly failed to nail at Headley, was finally sussed out at Island. Re-energized by seeing Ginger Baker's Air Force at London's Lyceum on February 1, Bonham came to the studio determined to do the track justice. But it took four drumsticks to make it work, hence the song's eventual title.

"It was two takes, but that was because it was physically impossible for him to do another," Jimmy Page said of Bonzo's playing on the track: "I couldn't get it to work until we tried to record it a few times, and I just didn't know what it was, and I still wouldn't have known what it was – we probably would have kicked the track out."

To Page, the guitars on *Four Sticks* were almost as important as those on *Black Dog*. "I can see certain milestones along the way like *Four Sticks*, in the middle section of that," he told Steven Rosen. "The sound of those guitars – that's where I'm going." After the guitars had been recorded, Jones overdubbed the synthesiser solo on the song's second middle-eight section. By the time it was complete, *Four Sticks* just about worked as an exotic oddity, its crabbed oriental feel making it a missing link between *Led Zeppelin III*'s *Friends* and *Physical Graffiti*'s *Kashmir*. When Page and Plant stopped off in India the following year they recorded versions of both *Friends* and *Four Sticks* with some inebriated members of the Bombay Symphony Orchestra.

Even after all that, *Four Sticks* was, says Andy Johns, "a bastard to mix". "When I originally recorded the basic tracks I compressed the drums," he said. "Then when I went to mix I couldn't make it work. I did it five or six times." Zeppelin only ever played *Four Sticks* once live, though Page and Plant returned to it – for obvious world-music reasons – when putting together their UnLedded project in 1994. Plant also included it in his Strange Sensation repertoire in 2005.

In addition to Page's many overdubs at Island – among them the directly injected guitars on *Black Dog* – was a guest vocal from Alexandra 'Sandy' Denny, who duetted with Plant on *The Battle Of Evermore*. "It was really more of a playlet than a song," Robert said in April 1972. "After I wrote the lyrics I

"It was like something was pushing it, saying: 'Here's a wedding song for you…'"

Robert Plant on the writing of *Stairway To Heaven*

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Left to right: Richard Cole and Robert Plant in a hotel room in New York

realised I needed another, completely different voice, as well as my own, to give that song its full impact."

Denny had been the lead singer with folk rockers Fairport Convention, who had strongly influenced the acoustic side of Zep, and jammed with them on a wild night at LA's Troubadour club the previous September. "There was a great mutual appreciation society between Fairport and Zeppelin," Plant told me in 2003. "I mean, can you say that the White Stripes might hang out with The Hives? No, and yet it was far more of a divide between Zeppelin and Fairport."

The association with Denny went still further back. "Sandy was big mates with Jimmy from their school days," says Fairport's bassist Dave Pegg. "She knew Jimmy from way back from when she was at art school in Kingston." (Pegg himself went way back with Zeppelin, having played with Bonham in Midlands band A Way Of Life.)

Andy Johns recalls: "Robert said: 'We're going to have Sandy come down.' I thought it was a brilliant idea. Of course she fitted right in – she sang like a nightingale with Robert singing at the same time. Literally, she was the inspiration for the whole thing. I went: 'Wow!'"

Denny – who was about to part ways with her subsequent group – Fotheringay, was a magnificent addition to the track. "I don't think it took more than 45 minutes," Robert Plant recalled. "I showed her how to do the long '*Oooooh, dance in the dark*' bit so there'd be a vocal tail-in. It was perfect against my bluesy thing."

As great as she sounds on the song, Denny left the studio feeling like she'd been thoroughly overshadowed by Plant. As she admitted to journalist Barbara Charone from *Sounds* in 1973: "Having someone out-sing you is a horrible feeling, wanting to be strongest yourself."

Elvis and the Gibson double-neck that had discontinued. The BBC sessions, April '71 caught the band at their peak.

By the time Zeppelin finished up at Island they had 14 tracks, enough to make the album a double – or, more eccentrically, a series of four separate EPs, a suggestion that was floated by Page. In the end, both ideas were discarded. "We have enough here for two albums," Page said, "but we won't put out a double album. I think people can appreciate a single album better."

No Quarter would appear in more brooding form on the next album, *Houses Of The Holy*. *Boogie With Stu*, like *Night Flight* and *Down By The Seaside*, would show up on *Physical Graffiti*, the one after that. *The Rover*, also included on *…Graffiti*, existed only in rudimentary acoustic form at this time. Talking to Bob Harris on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1975, Robert Plant referred to this and other material on *…Graffiti* as "old, crazy stuff… really good stuff that we thought, we can't keep it in the can any longer."

On February 9, with PR man Bill Harry busy dispelling rumours that Zeppelin would split after a 12-date tour of the UK and Ireland, Page and Andy Johns packed up the tapes and flew to LA with Peter Grant to mix the album at the famed Sunset Sound studios. Just after they landed at LAX they felt the tremors of the Sylmar earthquake that shook the city just after six that morning – an eerie coincidence, given that *Going To California* had a Plant line about the mountains and canyons starting to '*tremble and shake*'.

Johns had used Sunset Sound before, having mixed an album there by Doug Feiger's pre-Knack outfit Sky. But his ulterior motive for mixing in LA wasn't entirely to do with recording.

"I was seeing this bird, Jeanie, not to mention her friend Jackie," he says. "I was so excited to get there that I left my two tapes on the plane. These are 15-IPS tapes, and I think I had two of them and

"Rock'n'roll had to be taken on again. It was a very animal thing."

Robert Plant on the track *Rock And Roll*

Jimmy had two. So we're standing out front, and there's two limos, and I suddenly realise the tapes are on the plane. And going back the wrong way to get your stuff is far more difficult than getting on with it. I'd left *Stairway To Heaven* and *Going To California* under my seat." Luckily the reels were retrieved, and Page and Johns set off to Hollywood.

Unfortunately, the acoustics at Sunset Sound proved to be deceptive. "We wasted a week wanking around," Page moaned after returning to England. "It had sounded all right to me but the speakers were lying. It wasn't the balance, it was the actual sound that was on the tape. All I can put it down to was the fact that the speakers in LA and the monitoring system in that room were just very bright. It wasn't the true sound."

"We should have just gone home," Johns later conceded. "But I didn't want to and I don't think Jimmy did either. We were having a good time, you know?"

The one mix salvaged from the Sunset Sound fiasco was the storming *When The Levee Breaks*. Radically slowed down by Page and Johns, it stands with *Black Dog* as a vital counterweight to the album's airier moments. "It is probably the most subtle thing on there as far as production goes," Page told Dave Schulps, "because each 12 bars has something new about it, though at first it might not be apparent. It's got different effects on it, which now people have heard a number of times but which at the time hadn't been used before: phased vocals and harmonica solos backwards… a lot of backwards echo."

Page was particularly proud of the panning and 'extreme positioning' he and Johns achieved during the final two minutes of *When The Levee Breaks*. "At the end of it, where we've got the whole works going on this fade, it doesn't actually fade," Jimmy said. "As we finished it, the whole effects start to spiral – all the instruments are now spiralling. This was very difficult to do in those days, I can assure you, with the mixing, and the voice remaining constant in the middle. You hear everything turning right around."

…*Levee*… aside, the mixes met with a distinctly frosty reception when played to the other members of Zeppelin. "Jimmy brought the tapes back and they sounded terrible," Robert Plant told *Disc*. "The sound of the mixing room that Andy Johns took Jimmy to was really duff, so we had to start mixing all over again."

"I thought my number was up," Andy Johns confessed later. "But the others seemed to look to Jimmy, even though it was just as much my fault."

Johns had in any case by now fallen foul of the band's increasing control-freakery. "They were very much *unto themselves* – a clique," he says today. "There was a tremendous amount of paranoia, because all they knew was each other: 'It's us against them, because they're going to get us.'

"One time we were taking a break in the middle of the album, and I showed up at the studio on the day we'd agreed upon. They said: 'Where have you been?' I said: 'What do you mean? We said we'd start at 12 this Tuesday.' 'Well, we've been trying to get a hold of you and you haven't been communicating.' 'Yeah, that's because I was in Gloucestershire with my family and I wasn't answering my phone.' I would watch other people come in the room and it was all: 'Alright mate!' And then they'd walk out and it was: 'Fucking cunt bastard, he's trying to stab us in the back…'"

Like many who worked with Zeppelin over the years, Johns gripes that Jimmy Page, in particular, likes to take credit for everything and anything the group ever did. "Jimmy thinks he invented the fucking electric guitar," he told me last year. One of the reasons Page constantly switched engineers was so that none of them could take credit for Zeppelin's sound.

"Jimmy told me years ago: 'I'm not having anyone saying they're the sound of Led Zeppelin – *I* am the sound of Led Zeppelin.'" says photographer Ross Halfin, one of Page's closest confidantes. "And you know something? He *is*. You can play any Zeppelin album apart from *In Through The Out Door* and it sounds like they recorded it this morning. And that is 100 per cent Jimmy."

Remixing the album was in any case put on the back burner while Zeppelin set off on the scaled-down Back To The Clubs tour of the UK.

"The boys came to me after Christmas and talked about their next tour," Peter Grant told *Melody Maker*'s Chris Welch. "We decided to do the clubs and forget about the bread and big concert halls. We're going to restrict prices to about 12 bob [60p in today's money] a ticket."

The final date would be on March 23 at London's Marquee, whose manager didn't believe it was Grant on the phone when the appearance was offered.

Given the troubles in Northern Ireland, it was brave to start the tour at Belfast's Ulster Hall, on March 5. There was additional trepidation in giving live debuts to four songs from the forthcoming album – especially to the ambitious *Stairway*…, which prompted Page to invest in a custom-made Gibson EDS 1275 6/12 double-neck so he could switch from a six to a 12-string guitar.

Page had seen the double-neck on the cover of bluesman Earl Hooker's 1969

THE BACK TO THE CLUBS TOUR

1971 was the last time you could see Zeppelin for 70p…

They had been accustomed to filling the enormodromes of the US, but when Led Zeppelin undertook their first tour of 1971 – a 14 date trek across the UK – they played to venues with a capacity of less than 1,000 in what was dubbed the Back To The Clubs tour.

"The audiences are becoming bigger and bigger," explained Jimmy Page at the time. "By going back to places like he Marquee we aim to re-establish our contact with the people who got us off the ground in the beginning."

In a rare act of charity, Peter Grant charged the promoters the same fee as they had done when they originally appeared an the venues concerned in the band's early days. Inevitably there were complaints from fans unable to get tickets, especially as this would be the last opportunity to see Zeppelin in such intimate surroundings.

The tour kicked off with a visit to trouble-torn Ireland. On the evening of March 5, 1971, fans inside the Ulster Hall Belfast witnessed Led Zeppelin perform *Stairway To Heaven* for the first time. They also premiered *Black Dog*, *Going To California* and *Rock And Roll* from their as-yet unreleased fourth album, which eventually surfaced some six months later.

Paul Sheppard saw the band at Bath Pavilion for the princely sum of 70 pence (the equivalent of about £8 today). "The volume was incredibly loud for such a small venue," he remembers. "For the acoustic set, they sat on old, canvas-backed metal chairs. Robert made a reference to The Mixtures, who had a hit at the time with *The Pushbike Song*. *Tobacco Road* [a Nashville Teens hit from '64] made an appearance in the *Whole Lotta Love* medley."

Up in Newcastle, then-17-year-old schoolboy Phil Tait queued for hours to get tickets for their show at the Mayfair club and managed to take a few photos. "Cameras were banned at the venue, so I was very lucky to get my equipment through. I used a Kodak with a large flash-gun attachment – something that you see in old films of the 1950s. Getting it past the doorman was not easy. Luckily my greatcoat had big pockets."

Other choice venues included Nottingham Boat Club, the Belfry Golf Club in Sutton Coldfield, and the famous Marquee club in London. They also appeared at the BBC's Paris Cinema in London for John Peel's *In Concert* Radio One show. An hour-long edited broadcast of that show (including *Stairway To Heaven*), was aired on April 4, 1971. Listeners to the show on that spring Sunday evening could have no inkling at the time that they were privy to the very first radio play of a song that would subsequently rack up some six million plays on radio stations around the world over the next 40 years.

Dave Lewis

The Back To The Clubs tour.

GETTY

Arhoolie Records album *Two Bugs & A Roach*, and Elvis Presley had played one in his 1966 movie *Spinout*, but Gibson had discontinued production of them. So it was a minor coup to get his hands on one at all.

"When you just play the six-string neck," he later told Zep specialist Howard Mylett, "all the other strings start ringing in sympathy like the strings in a sitar… it can sound like a harp."

As the Belfast bootleg makes clear, the response to *Stairway*… was polite but equivocal: no Zeppelin fan had ever heard anything quite like this from them before. "There was always a slight resistance to new material," John Paul Jones later remarked. "The first time we played *Stairway*… it was like: 'Why aren't they playing *Whole Lotta Love*?' Because people like what they know. And then *Stairway*…became what they knew."

Phil Carson, then head of Atlantic Records in England, remembers it differently: "The audience was stunned," he told *Q*'s James McNair in 2003. "Here were Zeppelin, who were very much riff-oriented, with this almost orchestrated song. After the first few times they'd played it live, Peter said: 'You know what? You've really got to shut up after this song. Bonzo, don't hit the snare drum.' The idea was that if the band seemed reverent towards the song, then that would impact on the audience."

Though it was rooted in uncharacteristically altruistic motives, the Back To The Clubs tour was only a qualified success for Zeppelin. As Page remarked to *Record Mirror*: "We couldn't win either way… first we were this big hype, now we were at fault for not playing places big enough for everybody to see us." He omitted to say that the band were already too used to the comforts of life on the road in America to enjoy the cramped quarters at venues like Leeds University.

"They may have liked that closeness with the audience," says Richard Cole, "but I don't think they were really that enamoured of the backstage facilities. It wasn't that they were people who really had anything flashy in their dressing rooms – they had fuck all apart from drinks and sandwiches – but the dressing rooms were so small it was like, 'We're not gonna do *this* again in a hurry.'"

The day after the tour's final show, at the Marquee on March 23, Page's French partner, Charlotte Martin, gave birth to their daughter Scarlet Lilith Eleida. The day after *that*, Zeppelin were forced at the last minute to postpone their second live session for BBC's Radio 1 because Plant had strained his vocal cords. The session then took place on April Fool's Day, with John Peel introducing the band. Stellar versions of *Black Dog*, *Going To California* and *Stairway*… – officially released with the earlier Beeb session in 1997 – proved just how comfortable Zep had become with the new material on the UK tour.

"I'm not having anyone saying they're the sound of Led Zeppelin – *I* am the sound of Led Zeppelin."

Jimmy Page

By mid-April, Page and Andy Johns were booked into Olympic – where Zeppelin had recorded their game-changing debut album with Johns's elder brother Glyn – to start the new mixes. (All were credited as being "with Andy Johns" except *The Battle Of Evermore*, which employed assistant engineer George Chkiantz). Due to further live bookings, the mixing process continued into June. "It's that long, dragging-out thing of mixing a lot of the tracks," Robert Plant said at the time. "It's a drag having to do it twice, but we're coming to the tail end of it now."

Plant was nonetheless starting to feel energised about the finished album. "Out of the lot, I should think there are about three or four mellow things," he said in June. "But there's also some nice strong stuff, some really… we don't say 'heavy', do we. Well, I don't know whether we do. But it's strong stuff and exciting, and the flame is really burning higher and higher."

Shortly before a police-provoked riot brought Zeppelin's July 5 show at the Vigorelli Stadium in Milan to a violent halt, the finished mixes were finally delivered for mastering to Trident Studios in Soho.

Equally excited about the album was Bonham, who took an acetate back to his West Hagley home and blasted it at top volume to local friends. Among the privileged few was Glenn Hughes – later of Deep Purple, then of power trio Trapeze – who was treated to a private listening party in early August.

"Trapeze were playing Mother's, in Erdlington, coming to the end of the set with *Medusa*," says Hughes. "Fifteen or 20 feet in front of me, walking up to the stage as bold as brass, is Bonham with his assistant Matthew. He gets on to the stage and, without missing a beat, takes the sticks from Dave Holland and says: 'Right, play that outro section again…' And we played the outro section for about 15 minutes until we'd gone through *all* the formats of the arrangement the way he wanted it. That was my first real introduction to John. And that night he took me back to West Hagley."

On the way home, Bonham told Hughes he wanted to play him the new album. "We must have played it 10 times from tip to toe, *Black Dog* to *When The Levee Breaks*," Hughes says. "John was grinning and crying and smoking and back-slapping and dancing. And what I heard – on an amazing stereo, turned up to 11 – was life-changing. *When The Levee Breaks* just did me in, it became embedded in my soul. I didn't think, 'This is going to become one of the biggest-selling albums of all time,' I thought, 'Here I am with a great guy, we're young, we're fucking rocking, he's becoming my mentor, he's giving me advice, he's dropping the needle back to this moment and telling me how Jonesy did this or Pagey did that.' In fact he was giving me a historical lesson on the making of Led Zeppelin IV. It was one of the biggest moments of my life."

Having agreed between them that Led Zeppelin's fourth album would be untitled – and wouldn't even feature their name – the four members instead chose to represent themselves with runic symbols from Rudolph Koch's *Book Of Signs*. "Jimmy said we should all choose a symbol from the book to represent each one of us," Jonesy recalled. He later discovered that Page had had the infamous ZoSo symbol designed personally for him – "typical, really."

As Spinal Tap-ish as the symbols are, they helped cement Led Zeppelin's occult standing within their exponentially expanding fan base. 'ZoSo', in particular, turned a generation of teenage American boys into disciples of Page's guitar sorcery and with an obsession with Aleister Crowley. "My symbol was about invoking and being invocative," Page has said. "And that's all I'm going to say about it."

"To this day I don't know what Jimmy's sign meant," says Richard Cole. "For all `I know he could have been having a fucking laugh with everyone. It could have just been some old bollocks he thought up to get people at it – which is not unlikely with him. No one really delved into what he did, to be honest with you. It was as much of a mystery to us as it was to everyone else."

It was Page, too, who commissioned the rather bad drawing that graced the inside of the gatefold cover. Barrington Colby's *View In Half Or Varying Light* showed a cloaked elder – the Hermit of the tarot pack, as it turned out – standing atop a mountain with a lantern, while below him a tiny, long-haired figure clambers up the rocks towards him. For Page, this represented "the ascension to the beacon and the light of truth".

When the album finally appeared – released on November 8 in America and November 19 in the UK – it was almost a year since Zeppelin had begun work on it. The frustrating delays had taken their toll on the band as they toured Europe, America and Japan without a record to promote. "I'm pleased with the new album, but I'm disgusted at the amount of time it's taken to get it off," Plant told *Disc* on returning from Japan at the end of September. "The whole story of the fourth album reads like a nightmare."

Oddly, given its eventual phenomenal sales, the album never topped the US chart, being kept off the No.1 spot by Carole King's *Tapestry*. By May 1975, however, it had been in the Top 60 continuously for three-and-a-half years. *Stairway To Heaven*, meanwhile, had become a kind of ritual invocation.

"The song was going nuts on the radio, but it was an eight-minute cut," says Jerry Greenberg, then president of Atlantic Records and currently manager of Zeppelin tribute band Led Zep again. "I called Peter and said: 'Listen, we've got the same thing going on as we had with *Whole Lotta Love*. Will Jimmy go in and edit the track?' Peter said no. So I did the exact same thing as I did with *Whole Lotta Love*: we did our own edit. It had to go to at least five minutes; there was no way you were going to make a three-minute version of *Stairway*… But the same thing happened: Peter would not allow it to come out as a single. The only way anybody was going to get *Stairway To Heaven* was to buy Led Zeppelin IV. And it was their biggest-selling album ever."

Looking back on the evolution of Zeppelin's music, the fourth album seems to consolidate everything they'd achieved with the first three. But whereas the acoustic tracks are what most people recall of *Led Zeppelin III*, it's the power numbers that really define the fourth album.

"I'm not sure they didn't change direction and do the acoustic thing on *Led Zeppelin III* knowing they were going to go back to the other side on the fourth album," says Richard Cole. "The third album was almost like a break in the pattern. They didn't want to make it look like that was all they could do. Then when the fourth one came out, there was just absolutely no dispute as to what they were about."

Asked in 1990 if there was anything he would change about Zeppelin's fourth album, Jimmy Page replied with a laugh that he would "do it with click-tracks, synthesisers and sampling" and then retire. "I've really got fond memories of those times, and the album was done with such great spirit," he said. "Everyone had a smile on their face."

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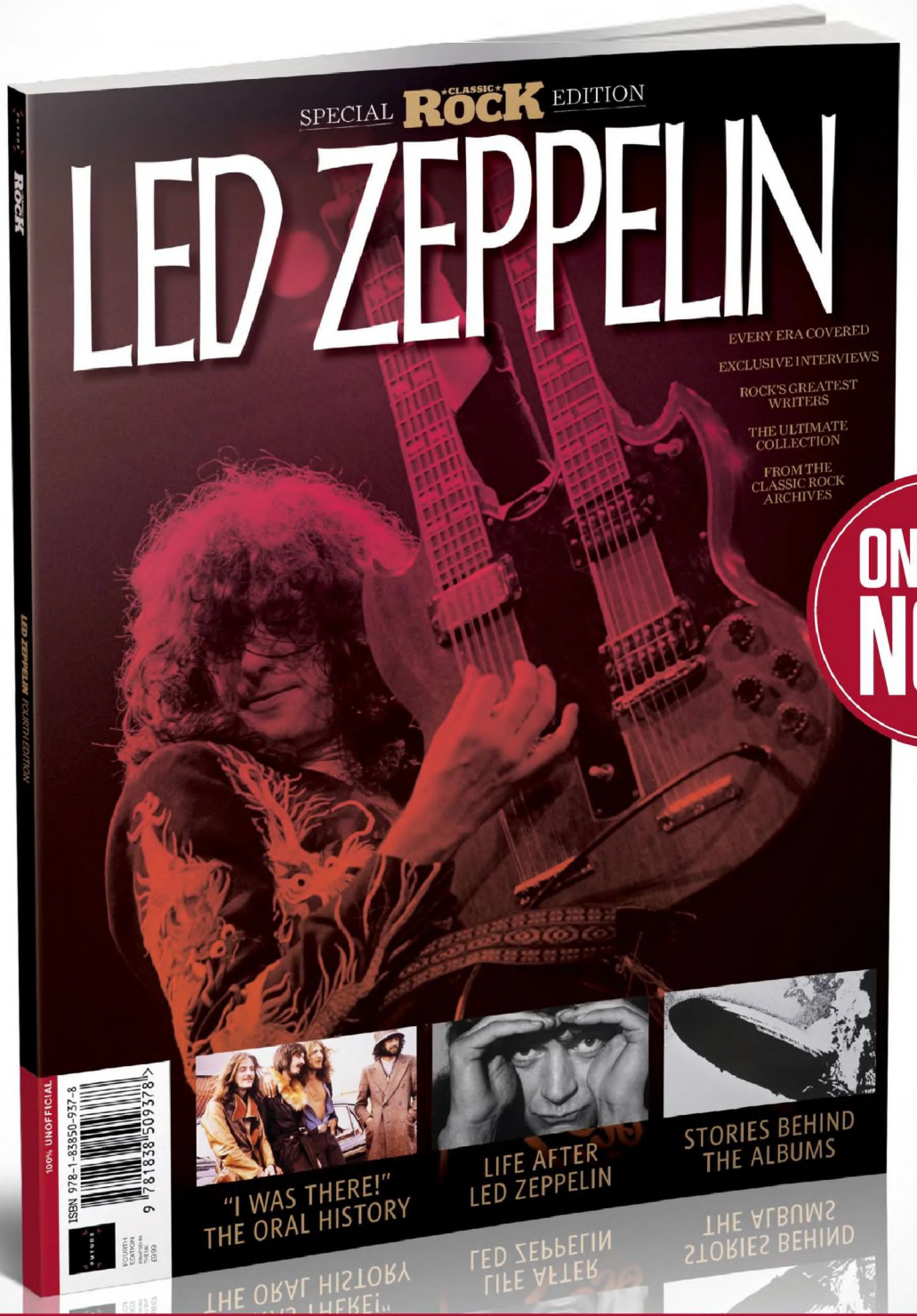

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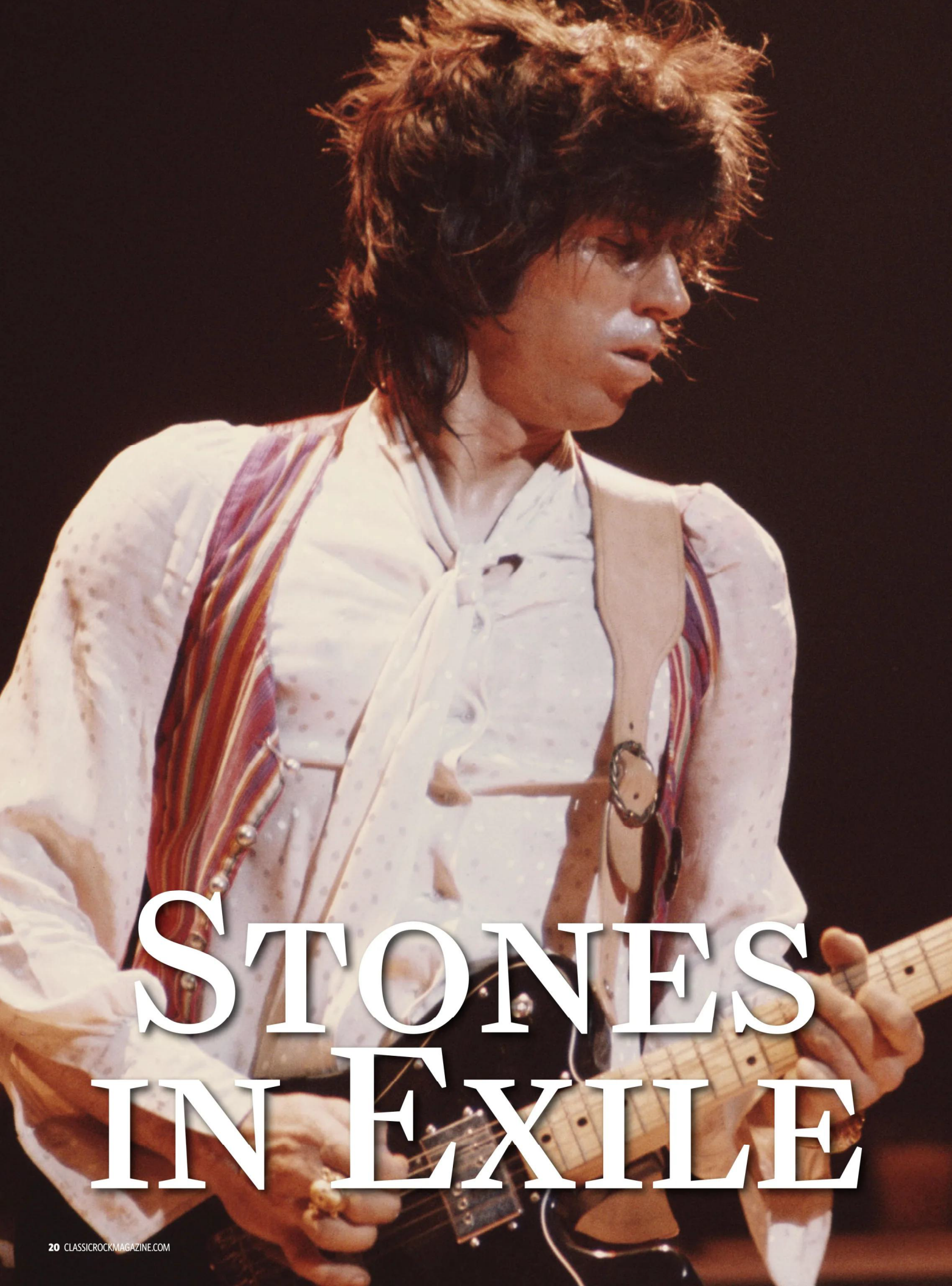


STONES IN EXILE

Keith Richards and Charlie Watts on the fights, drugs and chaos that was the making of *Exile On Main St...*

Words: **Ian Fortnam**

Keith Richards is completely out of control. While barrelling through North London on an intoxicated mercy dash to visit Anita Pallenberg (at Bowden House, Harrow, where she's undergoing heroin detox), Keith swerves to avoid a truck. As he hurtles across a mini roundabout straight into the wall of a neat Wembley abode, his jangled brain considers the potentially catastrophic consequences. Obviously, he's not going to die: mortality's something that only ever happens to the other guy. He is, however, carrying a chemical cargo to gladden the heart of any ambitious cop.

And so, within seconds of his massive Bentley screeching to a halt in the demolished remains of the garden wall, Keith is up, out and frantically disposing of his stash. It's at this point that he's surprised to hear a familiar voice: "Hello Keith, how are you doing?"

It's the Stones' keyboard player, Nicky Hopkins – the man whose garden he's just crashed into.

"My steaming Bentley's in the middle of their rose bushes," remembers Keith, 38 years down the line, "I'm tossing capsules, because I can hear the sirens already and suddenly there's Nicky saying: 'Come inside and have a cup of tea while we wait for the policemen.' I knew then that God was on my side."

And not for the first – or indeed last – time. Keith's crashed his car on so many occasions that even he can't be sure just how many. "You cover a lot of miles; you're bound to bump into things," he shrugs.

"Anyway, we got out of that one: my farewell to England basically, it was only about a week later that we moved out to Nellcôte."

And into exile. ↬

KEITH RICHARDS

My steaming Bentley's in the middle of their rose bushes and I'm tossing capsules cos I can hear the sirens coming.

GETTY

To say that his reputation precedes him is an immeasurable understatement. The nascent art of rock journalism found its vocabulary while grasping for superlatives to describe the man we're about to meet. As rock'n'roll peaked as both a commercial and countercultural phenomenon in the late 60s and early 70s, Keith Richards was the yardstick by which all others were measured.

He was the human riff, the diseased crow-alike that, if he moved next door to you your lawn wouldn't wait around to die, it'd move to a better neighbourhood. Gypsy, pirate, Glimmer Twin, fugitive, Jack Daniel's-driven insect man from the Planet Cool. One week he was the world's most elegantly wasted human being, the next its most stylishly dissipated. More often than not he was simply 'Rock'n'roll Himself'.

But that was then, and while we're ostensibly here in New York City's exquisite Mercer Hotel to revisit those halcyon days when the Rolling Stones, officially the greatest rock'n'roll band in the world, were recording their ultimate masterpiece *Exile On Main St*, we're also here to check out Keith as he is now. We're all aware of the reputation, so what of the reality? With his eighth decade looming, how is 'Rock'n'roll Himself' holding up?

Keith is a caricature made up of certain familiar elements: the rolling gait is surprisingly unmistakable, as are the brown eyes that flash from humorous warmth to soul-freezing danger in a fraction less than a wink. Then there's the single most instantly recognisable suite of jewellery in rock: the handcuff bracelet (a reminder to the one-time jailbird that freedom cannot always be taken for granted) and skull ring (the great leveller; as Keith himself puts it: "Skulls remind us that underneath it all, we are all the same").


GETTY

Mick and Keith were being hounded by the law during the early 70s.

Keith veritably bounces into the room. He's carrying an opaque paper cup that punctuates his every pronouncement with emphatic clunks of ice. It gives every indication of being a soft drink, but it's clearly not. It's an incongruous imposter with a bendy straw. It doesn't fit. The absence of a characteristic whisky tumbler gives the impression that Keith would rather not advertise the fact that he's drinking – would rather give the impression that he's 'just saying no'.

There's nothing surreptitious about his continuing allegiance to the fags though. Yet even after all these years his ashtray skills remain rudimentary. As his arms flail emphatically the fallout's inescapable. As we settle down to spool back through time to 1971, the official Rolling Stones logo Zippo lighter sparks up yet another gasper and seemingly refuelled by an invigorating lungful of fresh nicotine, Keith's away.

"It was called *Exile* because we were basically booted out of England. It was either that or sweep the streets."

It might sound dramatic, but the Rolling Stones were in dire financial straits at the dawn of the 1970s. Their erstwhile manager, Allen Klein, with whom they were currently in ongoing litigation, had misled them into believing that they were far wealthier than they actually were. Consequently, they owed a fortune to the Inland Revenue and, with top rate taxation under the Labour Government running at 93 per cent, were unable to clear enough earnings to pay their back taxes. Keith, then being unsuccessfully busted on a regular basis, took this high rate of tax personally. It seemed like yet another way for the establishment to persecute the Stones.

"They couldn't get you in jail, so they put the economics on you, the old double whammy," he says. "So the feeling within the band was we've got to show them we're made of sterner stuff and prove you couldn't break the Stones just by kicking them out of England. We all looked at each other and said, 'Okay, we'll do it on the lam'."

So the band and their families reluctantly decamped for the South of France. "Well, if it's going to be France, it's got to be the Riviera, pal."

Somerset Maugham liked to call it 'a sunny place for shady people' – it just seemed to fit. Keith moved into Villa Nellcôte, Villefranche-sur-mer. During the war Nellcôte had served as the Gestapo headquarters (there were still swastikas embossed onto the air vents) and as no other suitable recording space could be found in the area, the band chose to record in its basement using the mobile recording studio that they'd previously rented out to the BBC to record sporting events.

"Finally this truck came in handy: a great control room on wheels, but there was a lot of slap-dash improvising because we'd never recorded outside of a studio before and this basement was… well, I can smell it now: every time I look at that cover, I can pick up a certain damp, oily, dusty flavour."

Nellcôte's basement was split into various compartments and the mobile truck was parked outside. Communication between the players, producer Jimmy Miller and engineer Andy Johns was therefore, at best, haphazard. But as the summer of '71 unfolded, the Rolling Stones' extended sessions, sometimes all-day, sometimes all-night, gradually bore fruit.

"A lot of the songs started off with an idea. Mick's playing harp, you join in and before you knew it you had a track in the making and an idea working. It might not be the finished track; you're not trying to force it. As my father used to say: 'Keith, there's a difference between scratching your ass and tearing it to bits'."

Mick meanwhile was often absent from the sessions, attending to his pregnant wife Bianca who he'd married a month previously ("It didn't last long," says Keith. "I knew it wouldn't").

Drugs-wise, when the Stones first arrived at Nellcôte, "Nobody was particularly dirty," says Richards, "but I was probably the dirtiest of the lot… but what else is new?"

Things got rapidly out of hand on the arrival of playboy, dealer and occasional racing driver, Tommy Weber and his 'wedding present to Mick

and Bianca': a kilo of cocaine he'd smuggled through French customs taped under the T-shirts of his two young sons, Jake and Charley. The gift never made it to the happy couple, not surprising considering that it was Anita who'd instigated the plan whilst 'detoxing' back in London with Weber's wife, Puss (who, incidentally, would be dead within the month).

Events escalated yet further when Keith and Tommy Weber decided to spend the day go-karting, and with Keith at the controls of a wheeled vehicle, the inevitable happened: "Oh yeah, I stripped off most of the left side of my back," he says. "I hooked his back wheel and turned mine over. That was an interesting sensation."

It's been suggested that in order to deal with the pain from this back injury, Keith resorted to opiates and the spectre of heroin descended on Nellcôte. "No, that's all bullshit. People like to second guess my drug habits and they don't know what the fuck they're talking about."

Keith's mood changes immediately and he flashes a glance that can freeze the blood in your veins. Ian McLagan (former Faces keyboard player and occasional Stones sideman) once told me that "Keith always had a .38 with him." And how, after his former confidant Spanish Tony Sanchez betrayed his trust by writing his fix 'n' tell *Up And Down With The Rolling Stones* memoir, Keith didn't threaten him verbally, he simply showed him a revolver. A simple reminder: 'what goes around comes around'.

Up until now, Keith has been conviviality personified; a kindly old uncle in a rakishly-tilted, mustard-coloured fedora hat. With his hair newly trimmed of the piratical tchotchkes he'd previously accumulated and finally allowed to fade to a distinguished grey, he gives every indication of being a man who's mellowed and renounced his position as rock's Don Corleone.

But that look, where his right, Kohl-smudged eye widens slightly, his left narrows and his whole body pivots forward shoulder first, is the physical equivalent of producing a concealed weapon.

Say hello to His Satanic Majesty. Now here's the Keef of legend…

"I'm off and I'm on," he leers. "It's no big deal to me. Cold turkey? I spit on it. Oh, agony… It's no fun, but… At that time I was no more out of it than anybody else. Charlie was hitting the Cognac like a motherfucker, Mick loves his wine – but that didn't even occur to us. People did what they wanted to do. It was like, 'Are you going to go into that room and come up with something? If you do that I don't give a damn if you're snorting God.' What fuel you're running on is immaterial, as long as you come up with the goods."

With an emphatic clank of ice Keith settles back, his point made.

> **Keith Richards**
>
> ***People second guess my drug habits. I'm off and I'm on. It's no big deal to me. Cold turkey? I spit on it.***

While Villa Nellcôte had been temporarily occupied by the Rolling Stones and an extended entourage of guests, n'er-do-wells and hangers-on for recording and partying purposes, it was also Keith Richards' home.

Consequently, Keith would occasionally disappear upstairs for hours on end, sometimes at crucial points during recording. Not to conjure up Lucifer over exotic narcotics with Anita (who, it should be noted, the majority of the party were genuinely terrified of), but to set about the task of putting his 18-month old son, Marlon, to bed in spite of the ongoing tumult below.

"Kids can get used to anything," he shrugs.

But it's a pretty strange arrangement…

"Go tell it to the gypsies," he says. "What's so weird about it? What am I going to do? Send him to a prep school in a silly little uniform? This is what dad does. He was my navigator. At five years old he could read a map – to tell me when we're getting near the border, because I've got to dump the shit, *you know what I mean?*"

Ah yes: 'You know what I mean?' Keith's colourful discourse is liberally peppered with these five words, though they've long since evolved into a single almost unintelligible ejaculation – not unlike a lorry changing gear – that punctuates his every anecdote. Like the one about Nellcôte's French chef…

"Big, fat Jacques, yeah, he was a dealer too. Every Thursday he went to Marseille to pick up… [he checks himself and laughs: a fruity death rattle]. ↦

He also blew up the kitchen… some of this is cartoon shit, *you know what I mean?*"

Or Keith's only – as he remembers it – run-in with Monsieur Plod Le Gendarme: "I was with Spanish Tony in Beaulieu, the next town along from Villefranche, and we got pulled over by the harbour master and his bosun. Anyway, they took us into this office. They were big guys and Spanish Tony smells trouble and says: 'Get ready. They're gonna do us.' I said: 'Right, I'll watch your back' and Tony went into action. Talk about Bruce Lee, *you know what I mean?* Tony leapt onto this table, picked up a chair, and put the both of them down. Within two seconds these guys are groaning and going 'Zut alors!' and all this shit. 'Mon Dieu!' 'Sacre bleu,' and other curses in French. I stood on one while Tony finished off the other and we left."

End of story? Not quite…

"A week later there's a knock at the door and there's the Gendarme with the lovely kepi, all smiles, with some papers. They'd filed charges of course, and French courts are weird, you go through this charging structure and it's a totally different system, you're guilty until you're proven innocent over there, which is an interesting twist, *you know what I mean?* Not that it makes much difference in the long run, I've found. Anyway, it all drifted away, but that was my only brush with the constabulary in France."

Do such things usually drift away so easily? Previous reports of the incident suggest that a few signed Stones albums helped to smooth things out for Keith and that Spanish Tony, as the man ultimately wielding the chair, was fined $12,000 in his absence (which Keith paid). Bill Wyman remembers Keith having another brush with the Gendarmerie after his car was in collision (what are the chances?) with some Italian tourists, but hey, who's counting?

Anyway, Keith's side-tracking us: back to *Exile*…

Part of the magic of *Exile On Main St* stemmed from the working relationship that had developed between Keith and fellow guitarist Mick Taylor.

"Brian [Jones] and I would swap roles. There was no defined line between lead and rhythm guitar, but with Mick's style I had to readjust the shape of the band and it was beautifully lyrical. He was a lovely lead player. I loved playing with Mick Taylor. I was probably more shocked than anybody else when he decided he was going to leave. 'What, are you crazy? What d'you think you're gonna do, pal?' And sure enough: nothing."

He clearly thought that he had to match your lifestyle which, obviously, not everybody can.

"I don't know if he thought he had to. He was just sort of drawn into it. It's like a vortex… *ah…hur… hur… hur…* [the most evil laugh of the day so far: like an extended, gasping death rattle that never quite touches the sides]. Don't get too close to the whirlpool, *you know what I mean?*"

One of the most significant visitors to Nellcôte during the summer was Gram Parsons: a kindred spirit of Keith's who harboured hopes that the pair would record a country album together.

"There was an idea – but nothing in concrete," says Keith. "We'd all become very good friends, especially myself and Gram, and I think Mick [Jagger] looked a little bit askance at it. Mick doesn't like me to have anybody around me… And at that time, Mick's regular response to: 'Hey Mick, this is a mate of mine,' was [adopts sniffy, unimpressed Mick voice] 'Hmm, who are *you?*' [a laugh that starts out as emphysema and ends up as a knackered motorbike clearing its carburettor]. You could say either he was being protective or that there was a streak of jealousy there, *you know what I mean?* I'd say yes to both."

And at this point it seemed that the unwritten law was that no members of the Rolling Stones made solo albums. "Yeah, that would have been an absolute no-no at that time. That would mean that you weren't happy with the band. That came later, Mick started that."

Would you have ever made a solo album if that hadn't happened?

"No, of course not… I'm glad I did though, I'm glad Mick forced me to do that because I prefer *Talk Is Cheap* and *Main Offender* to *She's The Boss* [a satisfied chuckle as the ice clanks]. Mick thought it would be easy and found that it wasn't. He didn't quite cotton onto the fact that, yeah he's a good singer, but the important thing was… the Stones. Mick, given his enormous ego, which every lead singer needs, thought: 'Ah, they're just sidemen'… Which led to World War III."

Mick's always seemed to have something of an ambivalent attitude to *Exile*… "Well, that's Mick. Mick's never gonna tell you the truth [long pause, pops the old right eyeball for emphasis]. Who are you to get the truth out of him? To the point where he doesn't know what the truth is, or even if there is such a thing as the truth. There are a whole lot of conflicting emotions and ideas there… You're just the damn singer, man. But what do you expect of guys that have been together for 40-odd years? The whole thing works off of certain abrasions… Pointless fighting is useless, but if certain things come out of conflict, it's worth the fight."

It's the grit that makes the pearl.

"Exactly… and God help the oyster."

> **CHARLIE WATTS**
>
> ***Everyone I admired was either a junkie or an alcoholic. It's not something to be proud of, but it's true...***

"You've seen Keith?" Charlie Watts, the world's most effortlessly dapper human being, sets aside his characteristically laconic, ever-so-slightly detached demeanour for a second and – fully engaged, with eyebrows raised – enquires: "How was he? Well?"

He smiles broadly at the news that Keith is, if anything, very well. In fact, the first adjective that springs to mind to describe his state of health is 'bouncy'. And, with a degree of understatement that surely only he could muster, chuckles: "He's funny, he is."

Charlie Watts, immaculately attired in a gangster-cut, navy blue, broadly pin-striped suit, Cambridge blue, round-collared shirt and Oxford blue, Windsor-knotted tie (complete with pin, naturally), cuts quite a dash.

Keith clearly thinks of Charlie what everybody else thinks of Keith – that he's the heart and soul of the Rolling Stones personified: "I can never say enough about Charlie Watts," Keith had told me a couple of weeks before. "It was the luckiest day for this band and myself personally the day that we got to play with such a drummer. With Charlie I never have to worry where the backbeat is. I mean, hey – if you're talking about rock'n'roll, the drummer is the hidden hero basically."

So what was it that Charlie saw in the fledgling Stones that finally coerced him to join? "A job," says Charlie, somewhat unromantically. There's no old flannel here, not a single scrap of diplomacy, his honesty is disarming, his openness total.

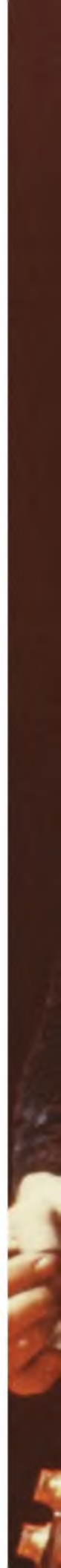
"I was in about three bands when I joined them. It was like whoever came up with somewhere to play, you'd go and play."

Charlie was distinctly unimpressed with the band's decision to move to France in '71. "I was told I had to move and I said 'No, I'm not'."

My suggestion that, as a non-songwriter his need to escape British taxation was probably not as great as that of Mick and Keith (who, then as now, commanded the lion's share of the Stones' earnings) is met with a withering: "It had nothing to do with song-writing, I don't know where you've dreamed that up."

Anyway, once it was explained to Charlie that financially a move to France was the only way forward for the band, he eventually capitulated. Did it ever occur to him that life outside of the Stones – who were not only being forced out of the country by taxation but were also being constantly hounded by the forces of law and order – might have been simpler?

"It never crossed my mind. Keith was really getting the hassle, but then Keith was a stronger drug man than anyone. I wasn't into drugs… I mean, I smoked, but everyone I admired was either a junkie or an alcoholic. It's not something to be proud of, but it's true. That world seemed very glamorous to me. It was the world that I wanted to be in from the age of 13. I didn't want to be a junkie personally, but that's the world I loved. I used to go to the all-nighters at The



Keith's basement room at Nellcôte became a makeshift studio during the sessions for *Exile*

GETTY

Flamingo Club [in London's Wardour Street]. And, though I didn't know it at the time, half the people in there were junkies. That's where I first met Ginger Baker… So Keith suddenly taking a liking to it wasn't a shock to me at all."

Charlie has a vinyl copy of *Exile On Main St* open on the table in front of him, so it should be relatively easy to steer him back to the subject at hand. But as our tête-à-tête takes place in Dean Street, Soho, a series of stone's throws from The Flamingo, Old Compton Street's 2i's Coffee Bar and Archer Street (where as a jobbing jazz drummer pre-Stones Charlie would often tout for work), he's easily side-tracked.

Keith had told me that, with Charlie and Bill Wyman living an hour's drive away from Nellcôte, a lot of *Exile*'s recordings were made in their absence – with (in the case of *Happy*) producer Jimmy Miller on drums and Keith doubling on bass. I put this snippet of insider information to Charlie.

"We played together on *Happy*," he says.

Oh. According to Charlie, rather than being an hour's drive away, he was actually living at Nellcôte at the time.

Keith Richards? Memory lapse? *With his reputation?*

Whatever, Charlie's extremely generous in his praise of Jimmy Miller both as a producer and as a drummer: "I loved Jimmy Miller," he says. "I thought he was the best producer we ever had. Jimmy was a hands-on type of guy. When we played he could never keep still, so he'd always be banging something; a drum or a cow bell [that's him at the start of *Honky Tonk Women*]. But Jimmy was lucky; he had a good band to record back then."

Ah yes, now we're getting somewhere.

So how was working with Bill Plummer?

"Who's Bill Plummer?"

He played stand-up bass on *Rip This Joint* and *All Down The Line*.

"What, on here?" Charlie asks, gesturing toward *Exile*'s cover…

Anyway, moving on. Were you surprised when Mick announced that he was to marry Bianca?

"No."

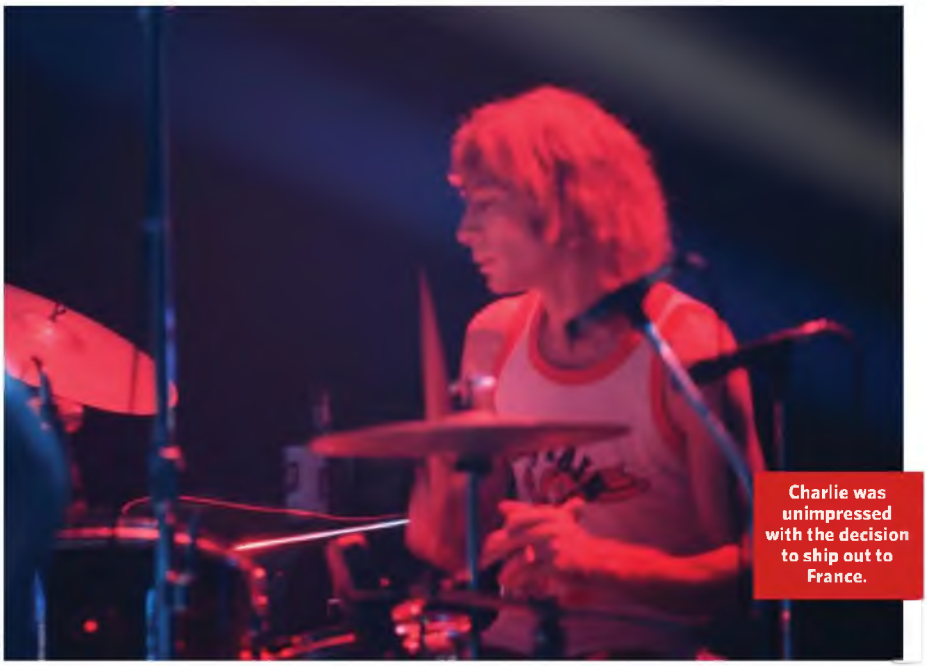
Really? He'd always seemed to be very non-conformist up to that point and then suddenly, out of the blue, he's the marrying kind?

"Mick is a very middle-class boy from Dartford," says Charlie. "Keith is, and was always, much more outside of everything than Mick. Mick was never what he wrote: he was never Satanic Majesties and he was never a Street Fighting Man, but he wrote bloody good songs that created this persona. So for him to marry… It's what people did. I don't think it's ever suited him though. He's never really liked it… But he seems very, very happy at the moment."

While Charlie doesn't mind talking about his summer in *Exile* he'd much rather wax lyrical about the drummers he admired in his youth (Phil Seaman, Earl Phillips), but if he absolutely has to talk about the Stones, this is the period – and indeed line-up – that he remembers with the greatest fondness.

"I don't think Keith is as enamoured of Mick Taylor as I was. It was like having Carlos Santana in the band. For me it was wonderful. Mick would go off, and you'd go off with him. It was like the jazz thing, really. He gave terrific beauty to the

↦



Charlie was unimpressed with the decision to ship out to France.

GETTY

tracks he played on: *Loving Cup* was a good one. For me, that's always been our best and most productive period: that *Exile* era."

"What came out of us on *Exile*," says Keith Richards in a blur of waving arms, jewellery and fag ash, "was what we'd learnt playing America for eight years. We were working an awful lot in America, and learning first hand what we'd only learnt before from records. Just soaking up American culture and realising that, you know… they love an Englishman, if you play it right."

Keith's been playing it right for four decades now: the English rapscallion; exiled from his homeland; trotting the globe; the quintessential lovable rogue; Terry-Thomas with a skull ring.

"Yeah right… 'You bounder!' 'Blast!' all of that." Keith grins, adopting the requisite accent.

It's not much of a stretch, to be honest. Beneath the superficial damage wrought by miscellaneous recreational toxins, Keith's customary enunciation is more that of a charm-laden, public school rotter than a Dartford-encumbered, art school drop-out.

The Keef of legend – the Keef that sells magazines – was partly created by a pre-punk 1970s music press in search of an anti-establishment figurehead. While Keith was occasionally vilified by the red-top tabloids, rock journalism's finest were regularly reinventing him as 'the world's most elegantly wasted human being' while crediting him with a degree of infamy and indulgence that could only ever have accorded him iconic status. He was the Patron Saint of Rock Misbehaviour; the Minister for Unhealth. He sold an awful lot of newspapers.

"They fed us the material and we played up to it, basically," he admits. "You wanna meet Keith Richards? Which Keith Richards would you like to meet?"

Whenever Keith makes a joke it's reported as fact because it makes for good copy and compounds the myth of Keef: Marlon's first words being 'room service', the Swiss blood changes, the snorting of the ashes [Keith greets each of these self-seeded myths with a fruity snigger].

"I enjoy finding out what other people find interesting because from the inside out it's all very amusing."

You're not a serial litigant: the likes of Spanish Tony publish their allegations without fear of a court case. Do you enjoy the notoriety that's been thrust upon you?

"As long as they talk about us who gives a shit? *You know what I me-ahh-ahh-nnng-ah…*" [He drifts off into a bit of a boggle-eyed yodel – ice clanks, ash flies, arms wave – it's classic Keith.]

With Keith long considered the essence of rock'n'roll distilled, there's more than a frisson of déjà vu when you finally meet the real thing: I've never met a band that didn't include at least one counterfeit Keef. But what of the genuine article; who is the real Keith Richards?

"Hey, I'm a family man," Keith soberly asserts, "And I have been since I was 26. I know people always like to make you all very cut and dried and simple: 'Oh, he's a fucking maniac'. *Yanarrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr* [an outboard motor-styled 'you- know-what-I-mean']? And I can be, when I have the time for it, but I'm also growing up. I pace myself. I love my families. I have several – extended. And they all love each other. I'm extremely blessed with my ladies who all, thank God, get along [raps the table three times]. Even I couldn't be that kind of Keith Richards all the time.

"When I'm at home I do as I'm told: 'Yes, darling, no, darling', like any other guy. I avoid conflict as much as possible, especially domestically, but at the same time I know there's a streak in me that given the opportunity will show you what Keith Richards can do [boggles the eye, lurches piratically, clanks, pouts and… relaxes]. But I feel no compulsion.

"I'm not a Keith Moon, who felt he had to top himself every time until he finally did. I'm not a maniac. But when I want a good time, I have one. And I take people with me, because then I find out what I actually did. There are a lot of things that I've done that even I wouldn't believe, except I've got 59 witnesses, and you can't argue with numbers."

Do you still feel, if indeed you ever have, indestructible?

"Not quite, but almost. I've never felt any compulsion to prove it. I never went for this image. An image is like a ball and chain – it's always there and you're dragging it behind you, and people, including myself, are more complicated than that. I can be a real pussycat, *hurhurhurhurhur*. I've never felt driven to live up to this image that they've made of me. That's a mug's game, a sucker shot. But I don't mind using it occasionally… especially if I want to get a reservation."

As we wind down our summit, I reveal to Keith that my Christmas celebrations always commence on his birthday, December the 18th: Keithmas Day.

"It's a real good date," says Sagittarius Keith, who was 66 last Keithmas. "You can't go wrong: half man, half horse and a licence to shit in the street."

I always open my Christmas presents to the sound of Ronnie Spector singing *Frosty The Snowman*, what about you? I venture, in the hope that Keith will reveal a little more of himself.

"I've done several things with Ronnie, very few of them to do with *Frosty The Snowman*." He leers suggestively before quickly throttling back from boggle-eyed lechery to silk-cravat suavity. "She's a very good friend of mine, lives not very far way from me up in Connecticut. A great girl, and in her day… shit… I've been blessed."

And with that Rock'n'roll Himself tips his fedora, clanks his ice, sparks his Zippo and is gone.

He's the best Keith Richards I've ever met, and there's been a few.

> **Keith Richards**
>
> ***I'm a family man. I can be a maniac but I'm also growing up. Even I couldn't be that Keith Richards all the time.***

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Roxy Music
Virginia Plain

It broke most of the accepted rules governing what makes a hit single, yet this song about a painting of a cigarette packet – a cigarette *packet!* – became a genuine rock classic.

Words: **Mick Wall**

It was the song that gave Roxy Music their big breakthrough, and the summer of 1972 one of its defining chart moments. Yet it was a hit single that didn't so much ignore the rules as simply get them arse-backwards: no chorus, a faded-in intro and a sudden ending – the opposite of 'normal' singles. The song's title wasn't even mentioned until the final, dead-stop moment, when singer Bryan Ferry suddenly blurts: *'What's her name? Virginia Plain!'*

"This day and age when you think of singles, they have the formula perfected," says Roxy Music guitarist Phil Manzanera. "Straight into the chorus for the beginning, play the hook, quick verse, back to chorus, repeat until fade. There was none of that with *Virginia Plain*."

A guileful subversion of existing tastes? An arrogant art-rock mission statement, signalling the arrival of a new way of being?

"No, none of that," Manzanera insists. "We just hadn't a clue how to make a single. We'd never done one before."

In typically back-to-front fashion, Roxy had released their debut album two months earlier, in June 1972. Ripe with songs that had no chorus or didn't even reference their titles, and often stopped without warning, it nonetheless managed to clip the edge of the Top 10.

Recording and releasing their very first single in August 1972 was almost an afterthought. "We were told: 'The album's done reasonably well. You should do a single,'" says Manzanera. "We all sort of went, 'Oh, all right…'"

When the band entered London's Command Studios in July, they hadn't even rehearsed the song. "We just turned up at the studio. Bryan played us these three incredibly simple chords on the piano, and we just started messing around with it there and then," says Manzanera.

'We' was the classic early Roxy line-up, also featuring sax and oboe player Andy Mackay, drummer Paul Thompson and the cryptically-named Eno (no one yet knew his first name was Brian) on VCS3 synthesizer and 'treatments', whatever they were. The messing around proved to be extensive.

As well as the stream-of-counsciousness *joie de vivre* of the lyrics (*'Flavours of the mountain streamline, midnight-blue casino floors / Dance the cha-cha thru till sunrise, opens up exclusive doors, oh wow!'*), there were unique sounds: Ferry's vibrato-heavy voice; the sound of a motorbike roaring off into the distance; Eno's Tonka-toy synths; most absurd and beautiful of all, a parping oboe.

"Was there ever a hit single with an oboe in it?" muses Manzanera. "I don't know. But I think the feeling was there should be. No other band at the time seemed to have one."

But then *Virginia Plain* had a lot of things going for it that other bands could barely dream of – not least the sense that someone, somewhere, was having a giant laugh at the rest of the world's expense.

"There were certainly some odd things in it that you couldn't hope for other people to get," allows Manzanera. "For instance, the opening verse…"

To wit: *'Make me a deal, and make it straight, all signed and sealed. I'll take it / To Robert E. Lee I'll show it, I hope and pray he don't blow it 'cos / We've been around a long time / Tryin', just tryin', just tryin', to make the big time!'*

Most people, understandably, assumed Ferry was referring to the Confederate general in the American Civil War. Not so, says Manzanera. The verse had virtually no symbolism at all.

"Robert E. Lee was – and still is, actually – the name of the band's lawyer. So when Bryan sang of taking a deal to Robert E. Lee and hoping he doesn't blow it etc, he was being very literal. As that's exactly what happened when we were offered the deal by Island Records to sign for them."

Even then, Roxy Music had a reputation as musical futurists ushering in a new age. But what's striking about the recording of *Virginia Plain* is just how old-school it was.

Manzanera: "Apart from Brian's synths and various tape machines, which he had pretty much assembled randomly from whatever weird toys came his way, everything else was very much done as-live in the studio. For the sound of the motorcycle we actually had to borrow someone's bike. Then wait till the middle of the night and take it out onto Piccadilly Circus, which is where the studio was, because in those days Piccadilly Circus was fairly deserted at night. Hard to believe now, but true. Then we got someone to start the bike up and rev the engines and finally speed off while we stood there recording it with this big reel-to-reel tape-recorder."

But if it sounds like Roxy were inured to just how great the end result was, don't be fooled.

"Oh, we knew how good it was even as we recorded it," says Manzanera. "We still didn't see ourselves as a singles band even after it became a big hit and we did our first *Top Of The Pops*. Which is why neither *Virginia Plain* nor our next single, *Pyjamarama*, were ever included on the albums. We were a serious band. I remember standing on the stage at *Top Of The Pops*, all of us dressed in our glam costumes, and feeling very superior to whoever else they had on the show that week."

"We hadn't a clue how to make a single. We'd never done one before."

They weren't the only ones who thought themselves and their strange, kinky single superior. When David Bowie launched his *Ziggy Stardust* album and tour that same summer with a plush press party at the Dorchester Hotel, the only record he allowed to be played other than his own was *Virginia Plain*.

There's just one question left hanging: who or what was Virginia Plain? Some far-out, beautiful fox like the ones that used to feature on all Roxy's album covers?

"Sadly, no," replies Manzanera. "Bryan had been an art student and done a number of paintings, one of which was a sort of Warhol-type pop-art painting of a cigarette packet, which he'd called *Virginia Plain*."

So Virginia Plain was a cigarette?

Manzanera laughs. "Well, it was a cigarette *packet*."

How very Roxy Music.

THE SINGLE LIFE

In an era when releasing singles was decidedly frowned upon – even more commercially-minded artists like Rod Stewart and Elton John allowed only one single from their albums at that point, while Led Zeppelin refused to release any singles at all – Roxy Music chose to take the route pioneered in the 1960s by The Beatles and the Rolling Stones and release singles, but simply not include them on their albums.

As a result, while *Virginia Plain* was included on the later US version of their eponymously-titled debut, it remained in seven-inch vinyl form up until the advent of CDs.

"Eventually we gave in, but even then it was only one single per album," Phil Manzanera recalls. "I still rather like the idea of keeping singles and albums separate."

Roxy Music in '72: no other band looked like them or sounded like them.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
August 1972

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK Number Four

PERSONNEL
Bryan Ferry
Vocals, pianette, Mellotron, harmonica
Andy Mackay
Oboe, saxophone
Eno
Synthesizer, treatments
Phil Manzanera
Guitar
Paul Thompson
Drums
Rik Kenton
Bass

WRITTEN BY
Bryan Ferry

PRODUCER
Pete Sinfield

LABEL
Island

LET THERE BE ROCK!

On December 31, 1973, the fledgling AC/DC saw in the New Year by playing their very first gig at a bar in Sydney. Forty years on, the members of that original line-up recall the birth of a legend.

Words: **Johnny Black**

A New Year's Eve birth... Acid-fried lamb... A shopping centre riot... Rucking with Deep Purple... Broken toilets in a London pub... Jamming with Skynyrd... "Who the fuck's Mutt Lange?"

In the early 70s, the Australian music scene was limping like a lame dingo. Slick pop groups peddling three-part harmonies clogged up the charts and the pub scene. But Glasgow-born, Sydney-raised guitarist Malcolm Young wasn't going to let such trivialities stand in the way of his musical dreams. The stubborn 20-year-old enlisted vocalist Dave Evans, bassist Larry Van Kriedt, drummer Colin Burgess and his own 15-year-old brother Angus for a new band named after a label on a vacuum cleaner.

On the last day of 1973, the band made their live debut at Chequers, a dilapidated cabaret bar in Sydney, taking the very first step to superstardom.

Malcolm Young: I got together with a few guys interested in having a jam, and thought, "If I can knock a rock'n'roll tune out of them, we'll get a few gigs and some extra bucks."

Angus Young: Malcolm had been playing on the club circuit, and he said the one thing that was missing was a good, one hundred per cent hard-rock band.

Colin Burgess (drummer): I had been in a very successful Australian band in the sixties called The Masters Apprentices, but we broke up in 1972 so I was at a loose end. A chap called Alan Kissack, who was involved in putting bands together, called me up and told me that Malcolm Young wanted to form a band. Malcolm was the younger brother of George Young, who had been in The Easybeats, Australia's most successful band of the 60s, so I said: "Sure, let's have a go." Even then, Malcolm was very ambitious. He was a hard businessman, wouldn't take no for an answer. We formed the band with Malcolm, myself and Larry Van Kriedt, just a three-piece. Right from the start, it was quite heavy.

Larry Van Kriedt (bass): I was part of the circle of friends of both Mal and Angus. Our main interest and point in common was guitar playing and music. In 1973, I had recently bought a bass and they heard this and wanted me to jam. So I went, and kept going each night after that. We rehearsed a bunch of Mal's tunes and a few covers.

Colin Burgess: We rehearsed above an office building on the corner of Erskineville Road and Wilson Street in Newtown in Sydney. We used to do one Beatles track – *Get Back*. Threw it in just so we could say we did a Beatles track.

Larry Van Kriedt: We had the same room every week on the first floor. Good rehearsals, bad rehearsals, creative moments, sometimes arguments and even fights. It was pretty much Malcolm's vision and he was the driving force behind it.

Colin Burgess: Dave Evans came along a little later, and then Angus.

Dave Evans (vocalist): I'd been with an Australian band called The Velvet Underground, which I must say was not the New York band of the same name. So I saw this ad in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a band looking for a singer in the style of Free and the Rolling Stones, which I was, and when I rang up I found myself speaking to Malcolm Young. We'd never met but we did know of each other. He invited me over that afternoon for a jam, so I went along to this empty office block; it was being renovated.

Angus wasn't in the band yet, so I went in and introduced myself to Malcolm and Colin. It was hot, getting towards summer, and we just jammed on a bunch of songs we all knew. We only did about five or six songs, we were all smiling away, and Malcolm just looked at the other guys and said: "Well, I'm happy if you guys are." Colin and Larry both went "Yep," and I said: "Wow!" We shook

Bon Scott: r'n'roll outlaw.

SHUTTERSTOCK

"I WAS SHOCKED WHEN MALCOLM ASKED ME TO JOIN HIS BAND. I WAS REALLY FRIGHTENED." ***ANGUS YOUNG***

hands and that was it. That night we all went out to celebrate that we had a band.

About a week later, Malcolm informed us that his younger brother Angus had a band called Kentuckee, which was breaking up, so could Angus come and audition for us? By this point, we felt like we were a band, so we just said, "Sure."

Colin Burgess: Actually, Malcolm was a very good lead guitarist, so it seemed strange for him to want to bring in another guitarist, like Angus.

Malcolm Young: It was okay, but I felt it needed another instrument – a keyboard maybe, or another guitar.

Angus Young: I was totally shocked when he asked me to play with his band. I hadn't expected it and I was really frightened.

Malcolm Young: Angus was the player, to be honest. He was always the showman of the two of us when we were kids.

Angus Young: I walked through the door, and there was a drummer, and Malcolm goes, "All right, let's start!" And I'm going, "Wait, isn't somebody supposed to count us in?" He says, "What? This is a rock band. Go!" And so that was how it started.

Dave Evans: At that point we became five rather than four. We'd been rehearsing for a couple of months when Malcolm told us Alan Kissack had got us our first gig, at Chequers night club. This was the number one club in Sydney. I'd played a lot of gigs but never Chequers, so that was great.

Gene Pierson (entertainments manager, Chequers): Chequers, traditionally, had been a theatre-restaurant in the 60s where they'd had acts like Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr, Dusty Springfield, Dionne Warwick, and I was brought in at the end of that era. My job was to get in there and change the format, turn it into a rock'n'roll venue, but the old school was still in charge.

The two guys who really convinced me to put the band on at Chequers were their first manager, Alan Kissack, and their roadie, Ray Arnold, both of whom are now dead. Alan was a humble little man with glasses, but he lived and breathed AC/DC. He was convinced they were going to be the biggest band in the world. He and Ray were great gentlemen, much too nice to be in the music industry. It was Alan's perseverance that convinced me to give them a gig.

Dave Evans: The gig was to be on New Year's Eve, the prime time, and there was a lot of interest in the band because Colin Burgess was in it, and the two younger brothers of the famous George Young from The Easybeats. So there was a lot of anticipation, but we didn't even have a name yet.

↦

Colin Burgess: I'd been around the business for years so I had lots of friends. A lot of people knew me, so they assumed the band would be good because they knew I wouldn't have played with any old rubbish.

Dave Evans: The only problem was that we were expected to do two sets, but we didn't have enough songs. We had a couple of originals, but it was mostly Rolling Stones, Free, Eric Clapton, so to get enough songs, Malcolm said he'd start up a riff, I would announce a name for it, and then we'd make it up as we went along. That suited me fine, because when I was about eleven, me and my sister used to make up songs on the spot. We had a game called Hit Parade where we would just throw imaginary song titles at each other and then make them up. So I knew how to do that. Now, though, we had to come up with a name in a hurry.

At the next rehearsal, Malcolm said that his sister had suggested AC/DC, and I really liked it because it was easy to remember and it gave us free advertising on every electrical appliance in the world. In those days we didn't know it had a sexual connotation. I used to hang out with a few gay guys and I'd never heard them using that term. To us, it was just all about electric current.

Paul Close (audience member): At the time of that gig, I was doing sound and staging for artists around the East Coast. I do recall there was quite a vibe building up before they even came in for a soundcheck on the day. Word had been spreading about them. Their manager had got them a Greyhound tour bus to travel in.

"OUR ATTITUDE WAS THAT WE WERE GOING TO BE THE BEST BAND IN THE WORLD."
DAVE EVANS

The equipment, band and crew all travelled together in it. It was quite a sight to see this big, long bus pull into the rear lane behind Chequers to unload.

Dave Evans: It had been very glamorous in the 50s and 60s but when we played there, it was past its heyday. It was a small venue with a little stage, no dressing room. You got dressed either in the kitchen, or in a little alcove just off the side of the stage. The decor was still very 50s. It had the tables with the white tablecloths, and a dancefloor, and half-moon booths where you could sit. You could tell that it must once have been really cool, and it was still the place to be.

Larry Van Kriedt: It was a late-starting gig. They would usually have three bands on one night. We were the first band to play when we played there. I didn't have a bass amp and we would ask one of the other bands if we could use theirs.

Paul Close: The buzz in the air that night was palpable – a full house and the bar was doing a good trade as the industry people all came in to see this new band.

Gene Pierson: I'll never forget, the first song they did was *Baby Please Don't Go*, which had been a hit for Van Morrison's first band, Them. When I stood out the front, it was the first time I'd ever felt the bass and the drums vibrating my chest. They were deeper and louder than anything else I had ever heard.

Colin Burgess: No one was dancing at the start. Then my brother, Paul, who used to drive us around, he was the first one that got up and started to dance. After that everyone else started and from there I knew the band was going to be a success, no doubt about it.

Angus Young: We had to get up and blast away. From the moment 'Go!' it went great. Everyone thought we were a pack of loonies. You know … "Who's been feeding them kids bananas?"

Dave Evans: Angus didn't have his schoolboy uniform at that stage. We were just in jeans and shirts and stuff. What we did have was absolute energy and a belief in ourselves. Even though we were very young, we were all already professionals. Our attitude was that we were going to be the best band in the world.

Paul Close: They grabbed people by the throat with the high-level energy that has since become their trademark. They were a very tight band that rocked hard, and certainly shook the bubblegum pop people out of their placid little existence.

Dave Evans: Our two sets that night were pretty much a mixture of songs we knew plus a couple of originals, including *The Old Bay Road*, written by Malcolm Young and *Midnight Rockin'*, and the songs we were just making up. No one knew the difference.

Gene Pierson: Peter Casey, the club manager, was an old Greek gentleman who had been running the club in the days of its cabaret-style acts. He pulled the plugs out halfway through a track because he just thought they were too loud. They would get the power back on and twenty minutes later Casey would pull it out again.

Dave Evans: I counted down the New Year for the crowd. Everyone was in a great mood because it was New Year's Eve and the crowd just went off their brains. It was an amazing, fantastic first show, which I will never forget. How could I? It was incredible.

Angus Young: That gig was really wild. It's wild on New Year's Eve anyway but putting what we were doing on top of all the seasonal stuff just made it wilder.

Gene Pierson: After that show, I was able to get them gigs at another important venue, Bondi Lifesavers, and more gigs at Chequers and elsewhere. They developed a big following very quickly. Once Angus got his little school uniform, he was like a man in a trance, and he would climb up on the bars, on the tables, and keep playing the whole time. He was unbelievable. They were like nothing anybody had seen before.

AC/DC: sofa so good.

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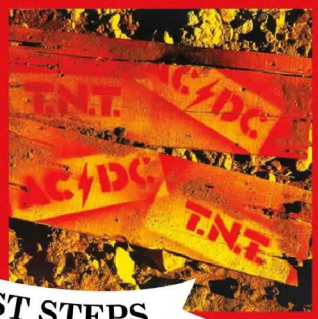


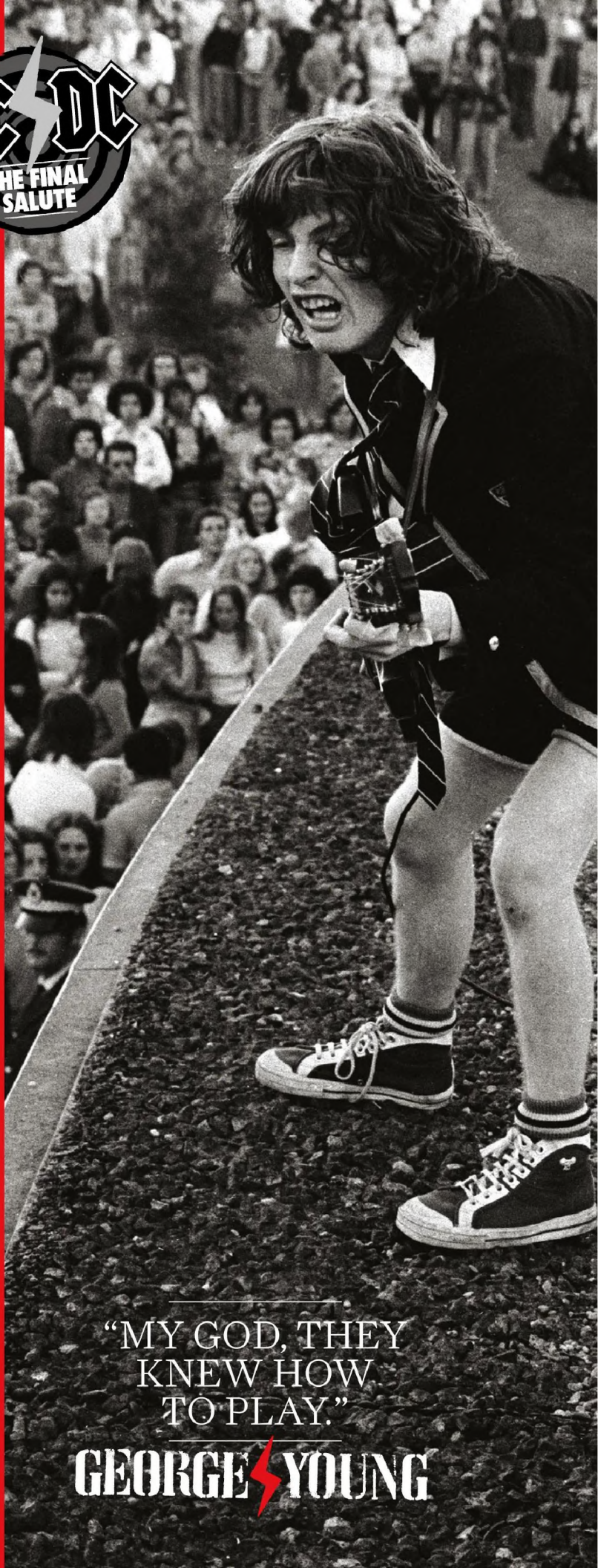
THE FIRST STEPS

HIGH VOLTAGE 1975

T.N.T. 1975

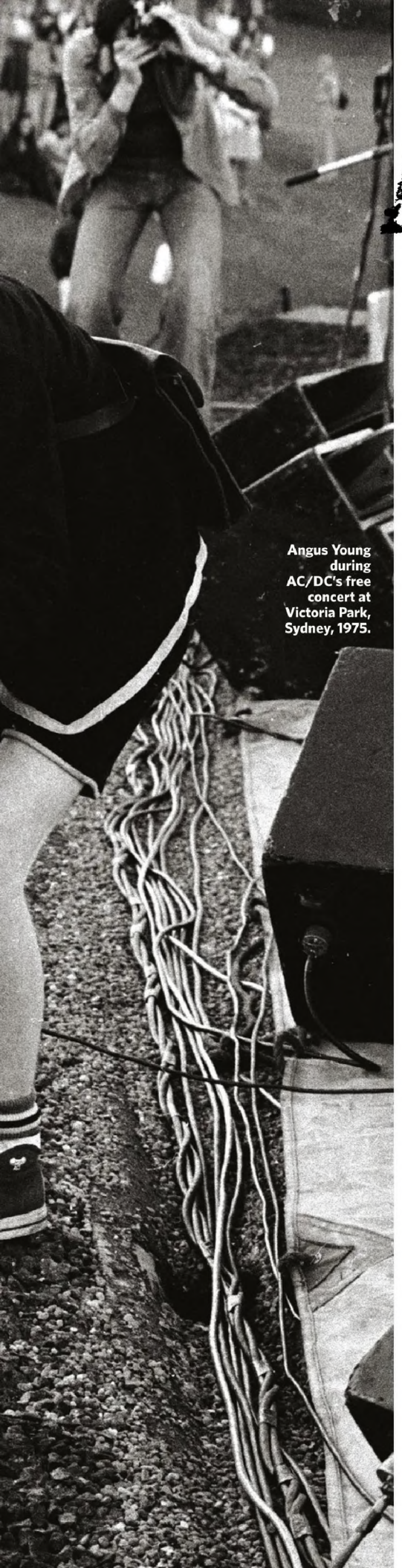
Released only in Australia the original *High Voltage* wasn't anything special, but follow-up *T.N.T.* put AC/DC on the road to fame and success...

Words: **Jerry Ewing** Photo: **Philip Morris/Rex**



"MY GOD, THEY KNEW HOW TO PLAY."

GEORGE YOUNG



Angus Young during AC/DC's free concert at Victoria Park, Sydney, 1975.

Already earmarked by Ted Albert, the main man behind his father's Albert Music company (Australia's leading independent record label and publishing house), as something special, AC/DC were just a year old when they went into Albert's own studios in Sydney to record their debut album.

Formed in November 1973 by the 20-year old guitarist Malcolm Young, the band had spent a year honing their raw, electrifying rock'n'roll around Australia's notorious hotel circuit. With Malcolm's 18-year old brother Angus on lead guitar and Welsh-born, fellow immigrant Dave Evans as singer, a procession of drummers and bassists had passed through as they searched for a solid line-up.

With Evans, AC/DC had recorded the single *Can I Sit Next To You, Girl* at Albert Studios in early 1974. However, by the time they set to work on their first album, eight months down the line, he'd been replaced by their roadie, Bon Scott. With elder Young brother George helping out on drums and bass when needed (along with his fellow Easybeats band member Harry Vanda, he would also act as producer), as well as the now recognised trio of Young, Young and Scott, sometime members Pete Clack and Tony Currenti played drums and bassist Rob Bailey contributed to some tracks.

With glam rock in the ascendency at the time, it is quite clear that *High Voltage* draws its inspiration from an earlier era. The album cover, featuring a dog urinating over an electricity substation – outrageous upon release to the conservative Aussie press, and ramming home the band's sense of anti-establishment – is a far cry from the album sleeves of their glammier peers such as Skyhooks, Hush and Sherbet. The songs have elemental melodies and the boys' way with a backing chorus suggests that the glam craze had some effect on the young AC/DC, but also present is a strong hint of the blues-based hard rock of Free combined with the chugging early rock'n'roll style, something that would swiftly develop into AC/DC's trademark sound.

Having such varied personnel might go some way to explaining the slightly disjointed feel of *High Voltage* when placed alongside the more assured sequencing of later albums like *Let There Be Rock* or *Powerage*. The newly-formed engine room of Malcolm and Angus Young was central to the sound of the record, the brothers' drive and ambition burning through its nine tracks.

Bon Scott had been the band's singer for just two months, but he already sounded like he'd fronted AC/DC forever. Much of this has to do with Scott's wordplay, a key ingredient of the band's appeal since his time with them, and one that continued to loom over AC/DC following his tragic death in 1980. On their debut he hits high points with a cocksure threesome. The first, the salacious *Little Lover*, was developed from a song that Malcolm had written when he was only 14 years old, to which Scott added his ambiguous lyrics. The second, *Love Song*, was originally known as *Fell In Love*, and was written by Malcolm and Dave Evans. The third is the rollicking *She's Got Balls*, an ode by Bon dedicated to his ex-wife Irene, and probably the standout on the record. Only that and *Little Lover* would make the cut when tracks from the band's first two, Australia-only, albums were combined for an album for international release, confusingly also titled *High Voltage*.

Four months later, and with a No.7 album under their belts, AC/DC were back in Albert Studios in Sydney, working on their next record. George Young and Harry Vanda again looked after the production, but by this time the band's line-up had solidified, with Phil Rudd, formerly of Buster Brown, on drums, and Mark Evans, a pal of the band's road manager Steve McGrath, on bass.

And this new-found sense of stability helped mark the difference between the sound of the band on their debut album, and that which would hit home with much more precision on *T.N.T*, its follow-up. Where *High Voltage* sounded like a band taking their first, albeit still electrifying, steps into the world of rock'n'roll, *T.N.T.* not only sent out a strong signal that here was a band to stay for the long haul, but it also gave every indication that here was a group who just might have what it takes to go all the way to the top; the start of the now well-recognised relentless AC/DC boogie machine.

Much of the material on *T.N.T.* (and subsequently on their international debut *High Voltage*) stands head and shoulders above that on the debut. In just a short space of time the band had already come up with what would prove to be evergreen classics: *It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Want To Rock'n'Roll)*, *The Jack*, *High Voltage* and the album's title track, all of which have been staples of AC/DC's scintillating live shows over the past four decades.

By *T.N.T.*, the sound of AC/DC had shifted away from any of the glam pretensions that might have been evident on *High Voltage*, and built further on the hard-hitting blues-rock approach that would characterise their sound henceforth. A further pointer to the inspiration for their driving rock sound shows in the one cover version that sat alongside eight originals: Chuck Berry's *School Days*.

Whichever way you look at it, *T.N.T.* is far and away above *High Voltage*. It sold much better as well, preceded by two singles: *High Voltage* in July 1975 and *It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Want To Rock'n'Roll)* in December. Both these promotional pushes considerably raised the band's profile in their native Australia. A promotional video for *It's A Long Way To The Top*, featuring the band performing with the Rats Of Tobruk Pipe Band on the back of a truck on Melbourne's Swanston Street, proved immensely popular, as did a performance on Australia's national TV music show *Countdown*, with Bon Scott dressed as a schoolgirl and wearing a blonde wig.

Ironically, *T.N.T.* remains the only AC/DC album released in Australia that doesn't have an international version on Atlantic Records, although all the tracks from it eventually appeared on other international releases. Regardless, it is *the* AC/DC album that set the young band on a duck-walking path to worldwide glory and huge commercial success.

Later, a proud George Young would proclaim of his younger siblings: "All of a sudden the kid brothers were still the kid brothers… but my god, they knew how to play. There was no sort of 'Do they have it or don't they have it?' It was obvious that they had something."

Didn't they just…

CHEAP TH

AC/DC
THE FINAL SALUTE

HELLO WORLD!

HIGH VOLTAGE 1976

DIRTY DEEDS DONE DIRT CHEAP 1976

After two Australia-only album releases, it was time to look abroad. A compilation from those two was their first step towards global fame.

Words: **Geoff Barton** Photo: **Alamy**

'Dear Sounds,

'Whilst scanning your pages over the past few weeks I have come across pictures of a rather delectable-looking creature who goes under the name of Angus Young and who is apparently the lead guitarist with an Aussie rock outfit called AC/DC.

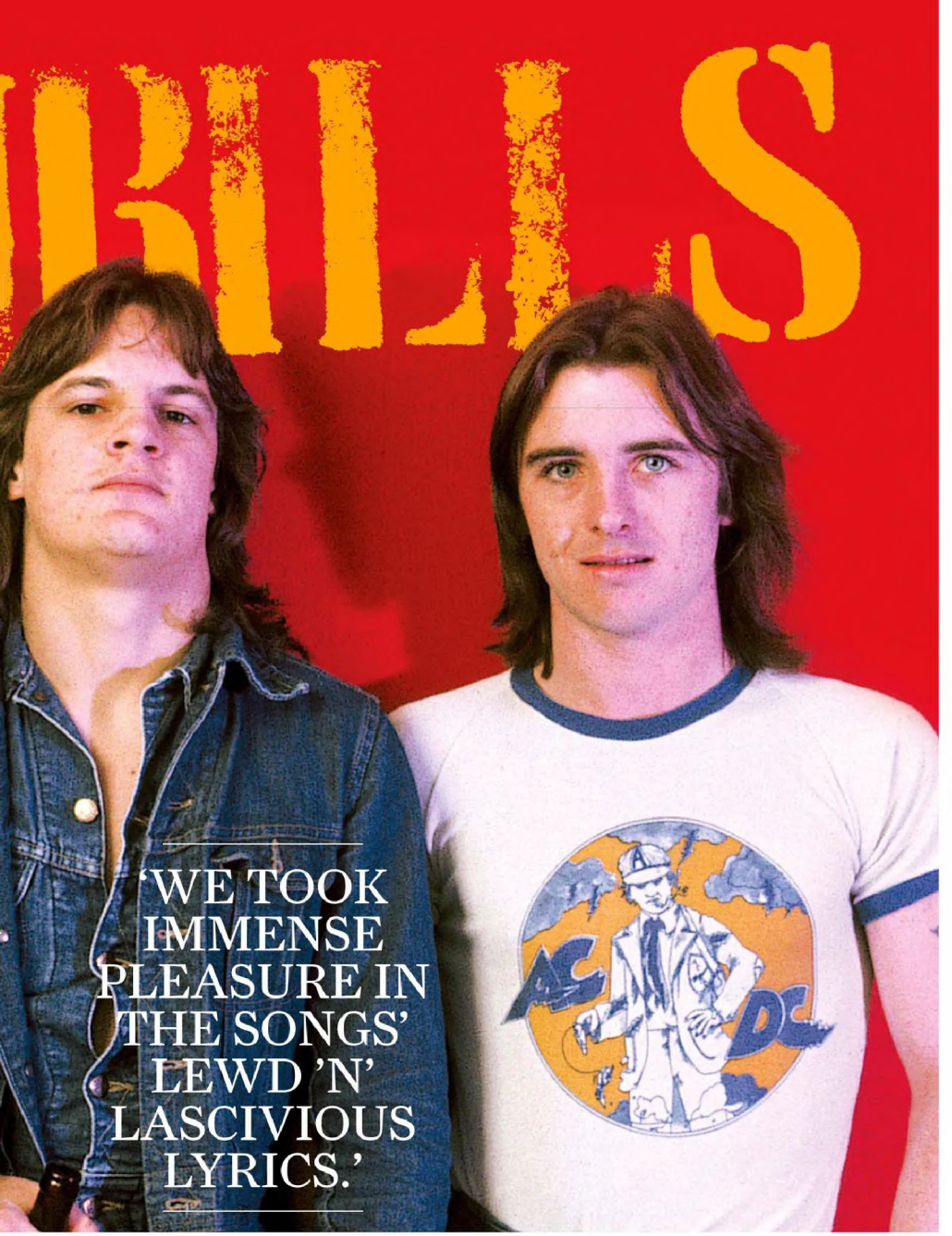
'As an ardent fan of punk rock (and schoolboys), I reckon it to be quite possible that I should appreciate their music and wondered if you could get me any further info on this young man and his sidekicks.

'Surely you're not going to leave me drooling over the photos and not tell me more about Mr Young and co?'

– Jane Hunt, Lowestoft, Suffolk

(Letter published in Sounds, *June 12, 1976 edition)*

In spring 1976, an elite hit squad of journos from ***Sounds*** music weekly – including yours truly – was invited to the London offices of



Atlantic Records to watch a film in the company's in-house cinema. A film! A real-life motion picture! This was heady, exotic stuff. Of course, there were no DVDs, video streams or mpeg files in those days. Not even VHS cassettes. Atlantic treated us to the full-on celluloid experience, complete with old-fashioned reel-to-reel projector chattering away at the back of the room and everything.

Drinks were drunk, smokes smoked and canapés consumed as we watched flickering black-and-white footage of the label's new signing – a motley posse of so-called "Antipodean punk rockers" – performing to an audience of sozzled swagmen in a tumbledown shack on the outskirts of Melbourne, Australia. The Atlantic bods were hoping we'd be impressed by this seamy spectacle, because they wanted to bring the band over to Britain for a series of ***Sounds***-sponsored tour dates.

And were we impressed? Most certainly. We hugely enjoyed the delinquent nature of the infectious, boogie-strewn music; we took immense pleasure in the songs' lewd 'n' lascivious lyrics; we greatly admired the bare-chested machismo of frontman Bon Scott, with his missing teeth and battle-scarred demeanour.

But we had a few misgivings. For starters, we reckoned the bisexual connotations of the band's name – which, we'd learned, was AC/DC – might put people off. (We were journos, not electricians, okay?) We couldn't the stop the words of a 1974 song by Sweet, coincidentally titled **AC-DC**, from buzzing around in our head: '***She got girls/Girls all over the world/She got men/Every now and then***…' Additionally, we thought the hyperactive schoolkid cavorting about in short trousers – a guitar prodigy called Angus Young, purportedly a mere 16 years old – was a bit of an acquired taste. Finally, apart from the band's snot-nosed attitude, and the snot on the lapels of Angus's blazer, we didn't exactly see where that punk-rock tag came from.

Still, we shook hands with the record company toffs and agreed the basics of what would become the 19-date ***Sounds***-AC/DC Lock Up Your Daughters Summer Tour of the UK, to begin on June 11, 1976 at Glasgow's City Hall and end on July 7 at London's Lyceum. Admission was £1 – or 50p upon production of a special ***Sounds*** money-off voucher. Could we have predicted that just a few short years later, these Oz larrikins would be well on their way to becoming the biggest, baddest rock band on the entire planet? Could we heck. At this point they seemed more suited to the compact confines of the Red Cow pub in Hammersmith than the Red Bull Arena…

A month or so prior to our meeting, Atlantic had cherry-picked songs from AC/DC's two Australia-only albums – ***High Voltage*** and ***T.N.T.***, both of which came out in '75 – to create a brand new nine-track 'compilation'. In actual fact, the majority of songs on said offering were from ***T.N.T.***, with only two – ***Little Lover*** and ***She's Got Balls*** – from ***High Voltage***. Even so, the label elected to reprise the ***High Voltage*** title for this, AC/DC's first non-Albert Productions release.

Angus – sticking out his tongue in inimitable style, the point of a bright-yellow lightning bolt seemingly welded to the toe of his right sneaker – featured prominently on the cover of ***High Voltage*** V2 that most of the world will be familiar with. In Europe, however, it had a different cover image: a garish illustration of Bon and Angus in full flight, the former's barrel chest bulging like Popeye's after a marathon spinach bender, the latter depicted as a satchel-slingin' schoolboy with a gasper in his mouth, on the run from matron's clutches.

And the music? Well, the estimable Jerry Ewing has already put in his two-penn'orth on the previous pages. Suffice to say that revisiting ***High Voltage*** for the purposes of this article proved to be an immensely pleasurable experience. The album might be 40-odd years old, but it still crackles with live-wire intensity – pun most definitely intended.

The production, by Harry Vanda and George Young, is crisp and simplistic, in its way every bit as good as Robert John 'Mutt' Lange's more sophisticated knob-twiddlings on later AC/DC diamonds such as ***Highway To Hell*** and ***Back In Black***. And you gotta admire the audacity of including bagpipes on opening track ***It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Wanna Rock'N'Roll)***, AC/DC's Scottish heritage not being widely appreciated at this early point in their career. From ***T.N.T***, complete with Scott's impeccable enunciation of the hookline 'I'm dyna-***mite***', via the endearingly sordid ***The Jack***, to the libidinous ***Can I Sit Next To You Girl***, this was indeed an international debut to savour.

Subtly different versions of follow-up album ***Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap*** were issued in Australia and the rest of the world. For the purposes of this piece we'll concentrate on the latter release, which hit the shops – in the UK at least – late in '76, complete with cover art by Hipgnosis. Bizarrely, ***Dirty Deeds*** wasn't released officially in the US until March '81, as Atlantic execs there had misgivings about Scott's gritty vocal style. They also thought songs such as ***Squealer***, ***Love At First Feel*** and ***Big Balls*** were somewhat crass and tasteless. Which they were. That was the whole goddamn point!

American recalcitrance aside, there's no getting away from it: ***Dirty Deeds*** is a tremendous record, arguably Scott's best with AC/DC. That claim hinges on a song that's atypical for the band: ***Ride On***, the best bluesy ballad you're ever likely to hear.

Normal AC/DC service is resumed with the ripsnorting title track and the mischievous ***Problem Child***. But following Scott's death in February 1980, the desolate, searching spirit embodied by ***Ride On*** took on new meaning and significance. And that's why ***Dirty Deeds*** will always be about ***that*** particular song.

1974 BON SCOTT JOINS:

"WE NICKNAMED HIM ROAD-TEST RONNIE. HE TRIED IT ALL"

Pre-AC/DC, Bon Scott was the acid-gobbling, jellyfish-bothering singer with Fraternity. **Former bandmate John Bisset** recalls the man behind the myth.

When I met Bon he had already joined Fraternity. Bruce Howe, our bass player, arranged it – and then told the rest of us about it. I don't remember the exact first meeting, but I remember he sang Vanilla Fudge's *Take Me For A Little While*.

Right from the very first days he always took an interest in my son. My wife and I used to fight a lot, and Bon was one of the few people who tried to help the situation. One of the first things he did, he came around to our flat and did tricks for my son in the back yard – somersaults and things like that – just to bring some cheer to our family group.

The last six months or so that we were in Australia before Fraternity moved to England, he shared a house with us in Adelaide. I didn't take note of any personal habits, but he did sit alone and play the recorder quite a bit. We did an awful lot of drinking and partying. That was our favourite pastime. Bon was ambitious, but it didn't take predominance over having a good time.

Bon loved that lifestyle. We nicknamed him Road-Test Ronnie; if someone came along with some new acid or new dope, he was game to give it all a try. He wasn't a hippie though, that's a bit of a misunderstanding. There was a lot of vegetarianism around in those days, a lot of the acid culture went that way, but even on an acid trip you'd see him chomping on a leg of lamb.

Bon tended to make friends wherever he went. We did a tour of country towns in South Australia. In one town there was a big pier, and kids were daring Bon to jump off it because a swarm of jellyfish had come in. Bon nonchalantly climbed to the highest point of the pier and bombed right into them. I don't think he got stung at all.

After I left Fraternity in 1973 I didn't see Bon again until, I think, 1978. I went back to Adelaide and went to Fraternity harmonica player Uncle's [John Ayers] place and Bon was there. I heard Bon was getting picked on in pubs. It was one of the prices of fame – he used to enjoy going to the pub and making friends, but that was all a thing of the past. Now there were stupid, jealous guys who just wanted to beat him up.

The last time I saw Bon was when AC/DC were in London in 1979, and Bon said he'd leave five tickets at the Hammersmith Odeon for me. Afterwards I went around behind the Odeon and by chance Bon came to the backstage door. He invited me in for a drink. He was just the same. He was still friendly, and he introduced me to Angus Young. Then their manager came and rounded them up and put them in a limo, and I stood and waved as they drove off. That was the last time I saw Bon.

1975 AC/DC IN OZ:

IT'S A LONG WAY TO THE TOP...

...if you wanna rock'n'roll. And in Australia, AC/DC were taking the first steps up that ladder. Cue riots, dust-ups and urine-filled turkeys.

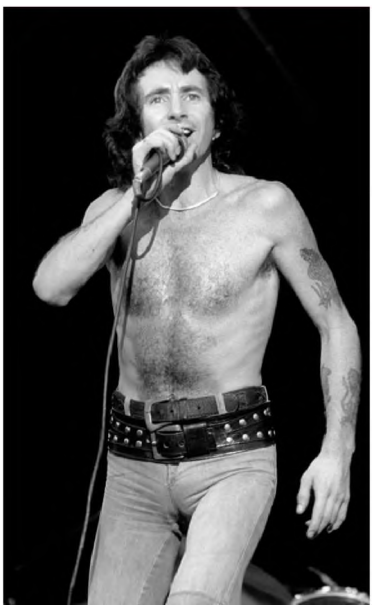
Words: **Murray Engleheart**

Angus Young was sitting at the back of AC/DC's tour bus when a local Australian promoter climbed aboard and plonked himself down a few seats away. It was December 1975, and the promoter wanted to chat about the band's stellar rise in their homeland over the past 12 months.

As the promoter talked, the 20-year-old guitarist remained silent, making the conversation decidedly one-sided. The reason for Angus's poker face became apparent after a few minutes when a young female fan, who had been kneeling out of sight in front of him, suddenly appeared. Shooting the promoter a withering look, she casually made her way off the bus.

If nothing else, the young lady was living, breathing, head-turning proof that this skinny kid in a schoolkid's uniform and his no less rough-arsed bandmates were finally proper rock'n'roll stars in Australia.

"I HAD AC/DC, MY ROAD CREW, GEORGE YOUNG AND MYSELF IN A MAJOR BRAWL WITH DEEP PURPLE'S CREW AND MANAGER."
MICHAEL BROWNING



AC/DC had begun 1975 as scrappy underdogs. They may have found the perfect frontman a few months earlier in Bon Scott, but they were still finding their feet and their audience. After a year of playing in Sydney, the band's new manager, Michael Browning, decided that a change of scenery was needed. Browning relocated the band to Melbourne, a few hundred miles away.

Melbourne had been the centre of the Australian music scene in the late 60s and early 70s. Its crowds were hard, broken-nosed bruisers who worshipped the raw, mega-watted power of such tough bands as Billy Thorpe And The Aztecs and Lobby Loyde & The Coloured Balls. The city's tough spirit and attitude mirrored AC/DC's own. It was a perfect match.

GRAEME WEBBER

Browning found the band a house in Lansdowne Road, St Kilda – the city's red-light district. Unsurprisingly, there was a brothel nearby. It quickly became party central for the band and locals alike. The police were regular visitors, until they worked out that partying was the occupants' sole 'crime', and became more interested in whether they could play some of the instruments strewn about the place than in executing search warrants.

In January, new drummer Phil Rudd joined the band after a jam in the hallway at Lansdowne Road with everyone in their underwear. Three weeks later, AC/DC – with Angus and Malcolm Young's brother George on bass – drove to the outskirts of Melbourne to play the Sunbury festival in front of 45,000 people.

Set up in 1972 as Australia's Woodstock, Sunbury was more about beer down throats than flowers in hair. Deep Purple topped the bill in 1975, although the locals weren't going to give them an easy time. Billy Thorpe pulled in every spare amp in Melbourne to sonically outdo the headliners.

But a volume war wasn't the only battle at the event, after AC/DC discovered they were due to play in the early hours after Purple had stripped the stage of their gear. They weren't impressed. Michael Browning gave the order to attack, and Bon and the Young brothers' pit-bull genes kicked into action.

"I had AC/DC, my road crew, George Young and myself in a major brawl with all of their crew and manager," recalled Browning. "A full-on brawl in the middle of the stage."

When the dust had settled, the band packed up and drove back to Melbourne without having played a note. A peace-making offer to perform the following day was less than politely declined. AC/DC had made their point.

In February, AC/DC released their debut album, *High Voltage*, on the Albert label. It had been recorded the previous November in Sydney, after the band had opened for Black Sabbath at the Hordern Pavilion, and produced by Harry Vanda and Angus and Malcolm's elder brother George Young, the former Easybeats duo who would produce every AC/DC album up to *If You Want Blood You've Got It*. At this point the band had no fixed rhythm section, so George Young and Rob Bailey shared the bass playing, while Tony Currenti, of The 69ers, did most of the drumming.

The album's front cover was a statement of intent: a cartoon dog pissing on an electrical sub-station, while a pair of crushed and discarded beer cans were a visual call to arms for an underclass of rock fans who were sick to death of the intellectual glam of Skyhooks and the bubblegum teen pop of Sherbert, the two biggest home-grown bands of the time.

The music on *High Voltage* was no less in-your-face, not least *She's Got Balls*, a song about Bon's ex-wife. Ironically, the first single was the one track on the album that didn't have balls, the hippyish, hearts-and-flowers *Love Song (Oh Jene)*. Tellingly, it was the rollicking cover of Big Joe Williams's *Baby, Please Don't Go* on the B-side that people picked up on instead.

It was the latter song that AC/DC were invited to perform on TV show *Countdown* a month later, by which time they'd brought in 18-year-old bassist Mark Evans (who had unwound after his audition by getting into a fight with a bouncer at a nearby pub). *Countdown* was a tame Sunday evening teen pop show, presented by Ian 'Molly' Meldrum. Little did he know that his Sunday evening was about to be upended.

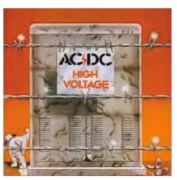
The band ran through the song at rehearsals, then Bon disappeared. Only at the last possible minute, as taping was about to begin, did he re-emerge – dressed as a schoolgirl.

"Bon thought: 'Well, if we come along and be who we are, he [Meldrum] will just walk away [thinking], 'Oh yeah,

➔

Above: playing Sydney's Victoria Park, Sept. 1975.

Left: Bon Scott shows off his 'ink'.



PHILIP MORRIS/REX FEATURES

ho hum," recalled Angus. "But when Bon showed up like that, he just went nuts."

Australia had been put on notice that there was a great rock'n'roll band in their midst. Subsequent appearances on *Countdown* only raised AC/DC's profile. Suddenly doors were opening that had been closed up to that point. The band were invited to play at Melbourne's Festival Hall, alongside arty-farty types Split Enz and headliners Skyhooks. AC/DC were always going to stand out on such a highbrow bill, but Bon wanted to ensure their set would be remembered.

"He got a rope and swung across the PA system," said Angus. "He cleared it [at rehearsals]. Then when we were doing the gig, he forgot that all the kids were going to stand on their chairs and he went straight into the crowd. They tore all his clothes off."

In June 1975, *High Voltage* was certified gold. Such was AC/DC's growing success that they were able to move out of Landsdowne Road into the Freeway Gardens Motel, a slightly better class of establishment for the ongoing debauchery. (It was there that Bon met a huge, red-headed Tasmanian woman named Rosie. But that's another story entirely.)

Despite all this, AC/DC were still way below the likes of Skyhooks and Sherbert on the ladder of success. Their turf was still Melbourne, and the character-building grind of up to four gigs a day, seven days a week. Malcolm and Angus took it on the chin, unshakeable in their belief that the big time was within their grasp. The band's live shows were ferocious, with Angus leaping fearlessly into audiences and forcibly making floor space for himself by spinning madly in a circle while lying on his side, turning souped-up Chuck Berry licks into dense sheets of sound.

In late August they were booked to play a series of four lunchtime concerts at the Myer department store in the heart of Melbourne. Thousands arrived for the first show, and the event was shut down after two songs. In just a few minutes, the place had been wrecked and thousands of dollars' worth of merchandise had been stolen.

They may have lost out on a lucrative engagement, but the carnage was AC/DC's coronation in Melbourne. A free concert in Sydney a few weeks later, promoted with a radio ad featuring the punchline "AC/DC – they're not a nice band" was an ear-ringing success, and another city fell under the wheels of their speeding juggernaut.

Natural-born brawlers, it was inevitable that AC/DC would clash with rival bands. In October they grudgingly played *High Voltage* at the King Of Pop awards. In the backstage hospitality area, Bon filled a turkey with champagne and guzzled it down. A few minutes later, Sherbert singer Daryl Braithwaite walked into the room and accepted Bon's offer of a few swigs from the turkey – not knowing that the AC/DC man had just pissed into the bird.

In November 1975, just over a year after Scott joined the band, AC/DC began their first national tour. It would stretch through to the following January. During that time they released the landmark, bagpipe-led single *It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Wanna Rock'N'Roll)*. The title was pulled straight from Bon's lined exercise book.

"He called it toilet poetry," said Angus, "but it definitely was an art form, and he took pride in that."

The song was taken from their second album, *TNT*. Released in late December, it heralded the real arrival of AC/DC. Unlike their slightly premature debut, this record had an identity and a singular focus. As well as the cautionary tale of *It's A Long Way To The Top*, it also covered on-the-job training (*Rock 'N' Roll Singer*) and the occupational pitfalls along the way (*The Jack*). It also definitively established Bon Scott's persona via *Live Wire*, *The Rocker* and the title track.

One of those who was impressed by the album was Phil Carson, head of Atlantic Records in the UK, who signed the band to a worldwide deal on the back of it.

The promotional campaign for *TNT* included a pair of red underpants sent to the media, with a black-and-white sign over the crotch that read: 'Dynamite?' It perfectly encapsulated manager Michael Browning's bad-boy marketing principle. Moreover, it worked, cementing the band's position as Australia's number-one hellraisers.

Not that they were content to cosy up to the press. At a reception to celebrate the sales of their two albums, the band spent much of the evening looking for Al Webb, a journalist for *Juke* magazine who had written a less than complimentary piece. Webb's colleague, Frank Peters, spent the night trying to avoid the lynch mob. Eventually Malcolm cornered him. Grabbing Peters's shirt, the guitarist informed him that he was "fucking lucky" that he wasn't Webb.

Fittingly, AC/DC's breakthrough year ended with fireworks, albeit the wrong kind. The band were due to play a New Year's show in Adelaide. Through no fault of their own, they took the stage late and the power was cut. *Countdown* host Molly Meldrum handed Bon his bagpipes, and the singer was carried on a fan's shoulders into the crowd – who then trashed the stage.

The past 12 months had been a huge success for AC/DC. But as they looked out at the chaos, they knew that Australia still felt like a small and restrictive place. Within a few weeks they were ready to board a plane bound for Britain.

Don't look down: Angus risks life and limb for rock'n'roll.

BOB KING/GETTY

Murray Engleheart's book AC/DC: Maximum Rock And Roll is available now via Aurum Press.

"BON GOT A ROPE AND SWUNG ACROSS THE PA SYSTEM. HE WENT STRAIGHT INTO THE CROWD. THEY TORE ALL HIS CLOTHES OFF." **ANGUS YOUNG**

1976 AC/DC IN BRITAIN!

LOCK UP YOUR DAUGHTERS!

In April 1976 AC/DC played their very first UK gig at a pub in West London. *Classic Rock*'s **Malcolm Dome** was in the front row.

The Red Cow was an unpretentious West London boozer-cum-venue, with a reputation for supporting young bands. The action took place at the back of the pub, in a sweatbox of a room with an official capacity of 250 and toilets that were in a constant state of disarray due to a stream of people clambering in through the windows to avoid paying to get in. It was here, on April 1, 1976, that AC/DC played their very first show outside Australia.

At the time, the British music scene was in a state of flux. Pub rock was thriving, though punk was beginning to assert itself. A look at the Red Cow's listings for April 1976 shows what was going on at the grass-roots level: Bees Make Honey, among the best of the pub rockers, were playing, as were Ian Dury & The Blockheads. Some gigs cost 50p to get into, others were free.

AC/DC's British debut was one of the latter. Their two albums, *High Voltage* and *TNT*, were only available on import in the UK and any buzz was confined to the country's more clued-up rock fans. The band may have been stars back home in Oz, but there was work to be done overseas.

DILIP BARNAT/GETTY

Their label, Atlantic, knew it had to start small. They put the band in a shared house in Richmond, South London, which would be their base for the next few months. And it was why they'd booked the low-key Red Cow for their first UK gig.

As was standard, the band played two sets, with a brief interlude in between. Before the first set, their prospects looked unpromising. Barely 30 people were in the back room – a mix of fledgling punks, student types and the odd long-hair, the usual mix for the time. Nobody really knew what to expect as the band ambled on stage. Angus was instantly the focus of attention. Word was out that he dressed as schoolboy, but tonight he actually *looked* like a 12-year-old who had skipped homework to play.

As soon as they launched into *Live Wire*, all bets were off. The set was short – just seven songs – but it was instantly obvious that the band were a cut above the usual pub rock fodder. Afterwards Bon came to the bar, chatting to a few of us who had hung around. He even bought everyone a drink – or rather got them gratis from the bemused barman – then disappeared with two girls.

By the second set, word had got around and the place was packed. The band clearly thrived on the audience's buzz, and their own energy levels rose even further. By the end, any worries about Britain being a tough nut to crack had evaporated.

Such a flying start gave the band a huge injection of confidence. Later that month, they embarked on the legendary Lock Up Your Daughters pub tour, complete with nightly Angus lookalike competitions. They spent most of 1976 on the road, graduating to small theatres and halls, such as the Lyceum Ballroom in London. The interest around them snowballed, helped by the fact that they attracted the attentions of both punk and metal fans.

The band's last UK gig of that year was in Oxford on November 15, after which they returned to Australia for a triumphant homecoming tour. The naysayers who had said they'd come back with their tails between their legs had been proved wrong. The only way for AC/DC from here was up.

1977 AC/DC MEET SKYNYRD

"WE PARTIED DOWN."

One hot day in 1977, AC/DC and Lynyrd Skynyrd jammed together in a Jacksonsville, Florida practice room. Skynyrd guitarist **Gary Rossington** recalls their mutual admiration society.

We all loved AC/DC, so when they played in Jacksonville we went to the show, of course. After the show we met 'em backstage and had a few drinks – you know how it goes. With all bands there's a rivalry, but when we met those guys we really hit it off. We were kind of alike – ratty little guys with attitude.

I don't remember if Allen Collins, our guitarist, and Ronnie Van Zant, our singer, were with us. Those guys had kids then, so they stayed home a lot. But Leon Wilkeson, our bass player, was single. So was I. We liked having a good time. And after I went home to this new house I just bought, Leon showed up and he'd brought the guys from AC/DC with him. The house was on a river and had a long dock, and we all went out there and got drunk and barely made it back in. We talked and talked till daylight. We just partied down, man. And the next day we took 'em to see the little studio we just had built, a practice room about the size of a two-car garage. I think all of the guys from both bands were there. So we ended up jamming with them, and Kevin Elson, our mixing guy, recorded it. I don't know what happened to that tape but I'd love to hear it now. We might have jammed on *Sweet Home Alabama*, I think.

CHRIS WALTER/PHOTOFEATURES/GETTY

Lynyrd Skynyrd: jammed with AC/DC on Sweet Home Alabama.

Jamming with them was so cool. Both bands had really just made it and we were celebrating all that hard work. We were both big-drinking bands, as everyone knows from the stories. So yeah, we tied it on.

Ronnie and Bon Scott had a great mutual respect. Not just for singing but for writing. They were great storytellers. The way they both wrote was so simple and yet so cool.

When Bon died, that was such a bummer. The same thing had happened to us with Ronnie. It was horrible. It changes everything. The singer's the frontman – that's the band, in people's eyes. We got Ronnie's brother, Johnny, because he sounded like him and looked like him and he was part of the family. And for AC/DC, they were hurtin' when Bon died. But they found a guy to replace him and it worked out great, God bless them.

I wish we could do a gig together now. That would be such fun. I wish they would read this and call. We had a blast with them. We were the same kind of band – they were cocky Australians, we were cocky southern rebels. Those were some good times.

Iggy And The Stooges
Raw Power

Stooges guitarist James Williamson looks back at this proto-punk ass kicker that opened many a show circa '73 – and says what he thinks of the Guns N' Roses version.

Words:
Greg Prato
Photo:
Getty

Although now considered hugely influential, when *Raw Power*, The Stooges' third album, was originally released in 1973 it was largely looked down upon by mainstream rock. With its barely containable youthful energy and a Tasmanian devil on vocals, the album would serve as a blueprint for the punk revolution that was only a few years away.

"The songs on that album have survived multiple/dubious mixes, the test of time – everything," remembers James Williamson, Stooges guitarist and co-writer of all the songs on *Raw Power*. "They still rock, and people still like them… what else can you say? I think that's a testimony to the songs."

By 1971 the Stooges were shot, having collapsed due to drug addiction and an indifferent record label. Singer Iggy Pop had retained latter-day Stooges guitarist James Williamson, and the duo sought to form a new band far away from the group's home base of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

"We got a record deal with Columbia, and Jim [Iggy] had signed with MainMan Management – which was David Bowie's management," Williamson recalls. "We came over to London with the idea of forming a new band, to make the record. But we ended up not really finding the kind of guys that we were interested playing with. So we brought over the Asheton brothers [guitarist Ron and drummer Scott] who had been in the Stooges with us, and moved Ron over to bass guitar – which is something he used to do when I first met him. So we 're-formed The Stooges', if you will."

With the Stooges officially back in business, Williamson and Pop produced a flurry of songwriting. But their new label was unimpressed.

"It's a convoluted story, in terms of our finding material for the album, because the management team wasn't accustomed to our style of playing, so they kept rejecting all the songs that we wanted to record. Generally, the way we worked between Jim and I was that I would come up with a riff, we'd get together and he'd come up with lyrics, and then we'd go back and forth and mould a song out of that. Generally speaking, I wrote those riffs in my room on an acoustic guitar. And *Raw Power* was like that. It was fortunate for us that the MainMan Management team got distracted trying to break David Bowie in the US, so they quit telling us we couldn't do stuff, and we went into the studio and made the album."

The title track might be one of The Stooges' best-known songs, but don't ask Williamson to explain what the lyrics are about. "I have no idea," he laughs. "I don't know what any of these lyrics are about."

Now armed with *Raw Power* and a set of other equally powerful tunes, The Stooges set out to lay down the tracks that would become the *Raw Power* album. And soon the album found itself linked to MainMan's top artist. "David Bowie was producing a lot of bands back then, like Mott The Hoople and so on. And they made overtures to us [about Bowie producing *Raw Power*], but we just kind of pretended we didn't hear them.

Recording-wise, we did that ourselves with an engineer from Columbia, in CBS Studios in London. That was my first album, so I didn't know anything about recording, really, and the other guys in the band weren't really that technically proficient. But we certainly had a lot of our own ideas. I'm told that the levels on that recording aren't very good, especially on the bass and the drums. We probably messed it up. We did a mix that we thought was acceptable, but when we went to deliver it to MainMan for the CBS release they thought that it wasn't. Then they got Bowie in to remix it."

Soon after, the songs were 'Bowied' back in the US. "First, Jim came over to Los Angeles, then I came over. I think I was there for most of it. Bowie was on tour in the US then, so he had to do it fairly quickly. Like I said, it was my first album, so I wasn't going to be too critical in the studio. Bowie had done a lot of albums, so we figured he knew what he was doing. But the problem was this was not a Bowie style of music – it wasn't tune-y or anything that he usually does. So I think he didn't really understand the music, and he put a real arty overlay on it. There's been a lot of criticism about it over the years, but you've got to give him credit that nothing sounded like it before or since."

On the ensuing tour in support of *Raw Power* the title track was the set-opener, and with good reason, says Williamson. "It lends itself to opening up, where the guitar can start out, and the bass and drums can drop in as the members of the band get their gear, and then Iggy can come out and do his thing. Playing that riff over and over again, it's a nice way to get things going. It was always a good riff. I think it still is. We just played São Paulo [Williamson recently rejoined The Stooges], and we opened the set with *Raw Power*. It's just a rockin' song, with a lot of energy."

"They still rock, and people still like them... what else can you say? I think that's a testimony to the songs."

Raw Power remains one of The Stooges' most ferocious rockers, but does Williamson favour it over the other tracks on the album?

"I don't know. I think that's certainly a good one. *Search And Destroy* has now become a classic song, and I think *Gimme Danger* is kind of an 'epic song,' if you will. I like so many of them; *Shake Appeal*. We're going to do them all in London."

Over the years, quite a few Stooges-influenced bands have covered their songs, including Guns N' Roses, who tackled the title track from *Raw Power* on their all-covers album *The Spaghetti Incident*. What does Williamson think of GN'R's rendition?

"Let's just say I preferred the Chili Peppers' cover of *Search And Destroy* to what Guns N' Roses did with *Raw Power*," he says diplomatically. "But I was really happy about the royalty cheques [laughs]!"

LONDON CALLING

Despite living in England for an extended period around the time of *Raw Power*, The Stooges played only a single show, at King's Cross Cinema in London in 1972, during that stay.

"Two things about that show stand out," says James Williamson. "First of all, how many people that either were there or said they were there who would shape so-called punk rock – the Sex Pistols, the Clash, and all these different bands that would be formed. Secondly, kids in England were just completely mortified by this guy jumping in the audience and this assault of music. In fact it was so severe that MainMan never booked another gig in London for us."

THE FACTS
RELEASE DATE
February 1973
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
Parent album *Raw Power*, UK No.44 (1977)
PERSONNEL
Iggy Pop
Vocals
James Williamson
Guitar
Ron Asheton
Bass
Scott Asheton
Drums
WRITTEN BY
Iggy Pop/James Williamson
PRODUCER
David Bowie for original 1973 release, Iggy Pop for 1997 reissue
LABEL
Columbia

Iggy: raw power indeed.

Strat-ospheric: Ritchie Blackmore.

Deep Heat

Ian Gillan, **Roger Glover** and **Ian Paice** reflect on **Purple**'s rise, fall... and modern-day resurrection.

Words: **Geoff Barton**

Prime-time Purple: Lord, Glover and Gillan.

GETTY X3

Forty-one years of Deep Purple. Forty-one years of astounding sounds, amazing music… and an album, *In Rock*, that defined the heavy-rock genre along the way.

Forty-one years of bitter in-fighting, divided loyalties, hirings, firings, wranglings, sour-faced recriminations… and unceasing antagonism between guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and singer Ian Gillan.

Forty-one years, crammed full of everything from amp-trashing antics to Royal Philharmonic indulgences; from extended improvisational ramblings to short, sharp musical shocks; from *Flight Of The Rat* and *Fireball* to fame, fortune and funk-rock.

Forty-one years and eight significantly different Deep Purple line-ups.

Forty-one years and a grand total of 14 members travelling through that goddamn revolving doorway.

Forty-one years…

Hang on a minute. With Purple, nothing is ever quite as it seems. Although they formed in 1968, they split in 1976… and then regrouped eight years later. So, with the best will in the world, that's not really what you'd call an unbroken period of longevity. Forty-one years of Purple? Take away eight of those years and call it 33, then. Or, if you discount the period when Joe Lynn Turner was their frontman, as many people do, you could even reduce that figure to a round 30.

Sheesh! As you can tell from this somewhat mangled introduction, Purple's history is a minefield. (And we're not just talking about the one laid by Blackmore, in the hope that Gillan might be stepping his way…)

To try and make sense of it all, we talked to three key Purple players: drummer Ian Paice, bassist Roger Glover and Gillan himself. These are Purple's most consistent characters over the years: Paice has the distinction of being part of every single variant of the band, while Glover and Gillan joined Purple Mk II just as the pop-tinged 1960s ended and the progressive rock-flavoured 1970s began.

While both Glover and Gillan have enjoyed extended periods apart from Purple, they – together with Paice – are currently active in the modern-day version of the band. What's more, neither Paice, Glover nor Gillan shows any sign of slowing down, even though each is in his 60s these days. But hey, that's more than enough of this pesky numbers game…

We chatted to each of the three separately:

"We weren't interested in drugs. We preferred a pint of bitter or a scotch and Coke." – Ian Paice

Paice in his imposing country pile near Henley-on-Thames; Glover and Gillan in their plush suites in Blakes Hotel, Mayfair, just prior to Purple's one-off appearance at the London Motor Show this past July.

With the aim of covering as many facets of Purple as possible, we started by asking Paice about his memories of the band's earliest incarnation.

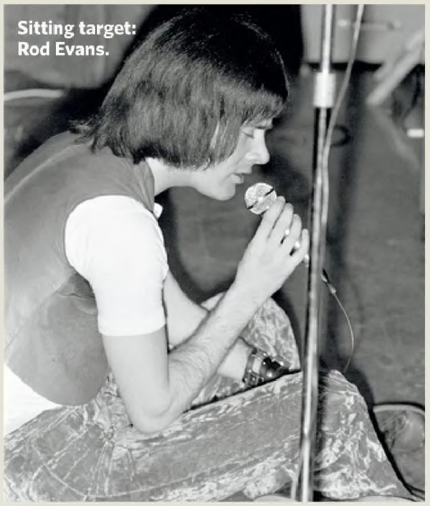
"What happened was, once the first album [*Shades Of Deep Purple*] was released, it got fairly well received over here in Britain. But then of course *Hush* [Purple's cover of the Joe South song] became a big hit in America. It got to No.4 in the chart, I believe, so the whole focus of the band was over there in the States. The first Purple line-up didn't actually get to play too many gigs in Britain."

Despite Purple's initial US success, Ritchie Blackmore became twitchy and restless. (Now ↦

MADE IN THE SHADES

Mk I: How The Searchers' Chris Curtis helped found a fledgling Deep Purple.

Words: **Peter Makowski**



Sitting target: Rod Evans.

In 1967 an enterprising businessman by the name of Tony Edwards was becoming jaded with running the family clothing empire. Inspired by fellow Dragon, Brian Epstein, Edwards formed a management company – HEC Enterprises – with business partners John Coletta and Ron Hire. All Edwards needed now was a band to promote.

It was by chance that he met Chris Curtis, former drummer with The Searchers. A flamboyant personality with a penchant for mind-bending substances, Curtis convinced Edwards that he could put a money-spinning supergroup together. Curtis went about enlisting the services of guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and keyboardist Jon Lord, two musicians he had toured with previously on gruelling 1960s Hamburg club circuit.

Originally Curtis's idea was for the band to be called Roundabout and just feature the triumvirate of Blackmore, Lord and himself, and have a revolving-door policy of guest musicians. But this plan soon unravelled, as did Curtis's fragile state of mind. Shortly after Curtis disappeared, leaving Blackmore and Lord with an embryo of an idea and a financial backer.

Tired of session work and playing formulaic music, Blackmore and Lord proceeded to form a band that would share their more experimental and open-minded approach. It's interesting to note that one of the first musicians they enrolled, drummer Bobby Woodman, left in disgust, describing their new sound as being "nothing more than circus music".

A replacement soon followed in the form of Ian Paice, who just happened to tag along with vocalist Rod Evans when he went for an audition (both were members of the same group, Maze). Bassist Nicky Simper, who had previously played with Blackmore in original shock rocker Screaming Lord Sutch's Savages, completed the line-up.

Forever practising and moving forward, Blackmore's musical ambitions outgrew Purple Mk I's abilities and soon Simper and Evans were discarded, to make way for the more popular, credible and iconic Mk II line-up.

ON YOUR MARKS

Purple Mk II: flared trousers, afghans, greatcoats, patchouli oil... and that was just the audience.

Words: **Neil Jeffries**

Purple Mk II had a mature fanbase.

For almost exactly four years, from the summer of 1969 to June 1973, Deep Purple were in their prime.

In that spell Blackmore, Gillan, Glover, Lord and Paice made four studio albums – *In Rock*, *Fireball*, *Machine Head* and *Who Do We Think We Are!* – and knocked out a pair of non-album Top 10 singles, *Black Night* and *Strange Kind Of Woman*. Which means in addition to these two classics, this purple patch (pun very definitely intended) saw them write and record *Speed King*, *Child In Time*, *Fireball*, *Highway Star*, *Smoke On The Water*, *Lazy*, *Space Truckin'* and *Woman From Tokyo*. Those are the ultimate 10 reasons why this was the best line-up. No other line-up could point to 10 songs that even come close.

When, after years of rumour and public demand, the five of them re-formed and took to the stage at Knebworth on an emotional and rain-sodden June day in 1985, eight of those 10 songs were given an airing.

Therein, though, is the flaw to claims that Mk II was all-conquering: the reunions. *Perfect Strangers* in 1984 was a damn fine record, too – well worth the wait, equal to expectations and on a par with the quartet of long-players mentioned above. But its follow-up *The House Of Blue Light*, released three years later, was half-cocked. And a second re-formation to make and promote *The Battle Rages On* (1993) was spectacularly ill-advised. You could hardly blame them for trying, though, given all that had gone before.

The halcyon days of Deep Purple were sparked by the recruitment of Ian Gillan and Roger Glover, band-mates in Episode Six. Glover was an excellent bass player and a fine songwriter but it was singer Gillan who really gave Purple the star quality the first line-up had lacked. In between some innovative hair-swinging and conga drum-bashing interludes, he mixed a disarming charm with vocals for which the term 'silver-throated screamer' hardly did justice. His call-and-response

Gillan: the 'silver-throated screamer' in his element.

GETTY X3

where have we heard that one before?)

Paice: "Ritchie was unhappy with our singer, Rod Evans. Rod was a great ballad singer and he could certainly hold a tune, but what he couldn't do was sing rock'n'roll. Ritchie wanted something more urgent and abrasive. As for our bass player, Nicky Simper, he didn't seem interested in driving us forward. It got a bit depressing listening to him go: 'Well, it's not as good as it used to be…'

"We saw the limitations of the Mk I line-up. If you listen to the first three albums [*Shades Of…*, *The Book Of Taliesyn* and *Deep Purple*], it's a band striving for an identity. It's trying to be Vanilla Fudge, it's trying to be Cream… it's not really sure what it is. That's because the chemical make-up of the five people involved wouldn't allow it to do anything totally new. It needed a kick-start. It needed somebody with a different focal point, which is what Ian Gillan had. So we nicked him from this band called Episode Six – and as a bonus, we got Roger Glover as well."

Glover takes up the tale: "Mick Underwood [Episode Six drummer] told me he'd had a call and some guys were coming down from Deep Purple to have a look at me and Ian. Episode Six played a gig in this club and these two shadowy figures arrived. I remember being rather scared of them. They were very dark, broody sort of villains. I felt they were from another world, not mine."

These 'shadowy figures' turned out to be Blackmore and Jon Lord. Purple's keyboard player.

"I've never listened to any of Mk III's albums. What are they called? *Burn* and... *Strongbow*, is it?" – Ian Gillan

Gillan recalled: "Roger hadn't heard of Deep Purple before, but I most definitely had. These guys were respected musicians who knew where they were going. This combination of Ritchie and Jon and Paicey was exciting stuff; it travelled well. It was a bit corny, I suppose, the *Hush*, *Kentucky Woman* and *River Deep, Mountain High* side of the band, but that

kind of approach was their route to success."

Glover: "Gillan called me up, told me he was leaving Episode Six and said: 'Come with me to meet Jon Lord.' Jon played us a demo of a new song, *Hallelujah*. He asked me: 'What do you think, is it a hit?' I said: 'I don't know, it could be.' Jon said: 'Well, we're recording it tonight. Do you fancy playing on it? Of course, we'll pay you!' Session fees back then were £12 for a three-hour session. That was £2 more than I earned a week. So I said: 'Fine, I'll do it!'

"I went down to Kingsway studios, and that's when I met the rest of Purple. My overriding impression was that they were all wearing new clothes. I'd got no socks on; I'd got string holding my trousers up! They were crappy old trousers. They had no hems, they were loose and ragged at the bottom. And Purple had all this beautiful, gleaming equipment: tons of Marshall stacks and a wonderful Fender Precision bass propped up in a corner. It was Nicky Simper's bass. I was told: 'Oh, Nicky can't come, so you can use his gear…'"

Gillan: "Roger made such an impression that Purple decided to give him the full-time gig, as well as me. Roger resisted at first, because he thought that if he left Episode Six the band would fold up completely. Well, Episode Six's days were done. We'd missed the boat."

Thus was the Mk II line-up of Purple born. Glover banked his 12 quid and *Hallelujah* was released as a single in July 1969. Unsurprisingly for a track full of swooping, church-like chorals, it wasn't a hit. Trust the *X Factor* to change that. For Purple, it was back to the drawing board…

Gillan: "I don't think anyone realised it at the time, but with me and Roger, Purple didn't just get a singer and a bass player – they got a songwriting team, and that really helped them establish a direction."

Glover: "I used to stay round Ian's house and we'd write stupid poems together. We'd lie there in the dark – on single beds, I might add – and just do word-play fun and games. I suppose in many ways it was our training. We were feeling each other out and trying to understand songwriting. I think we wrote lots of songs about monkeys and lions."

Paice: "We chose Roger because he played totally different to Nicky. Nicky played in the style of the era he'd come from [the 1960s]. Roger was a hippy and still is a hippy. You put a Bob Dylan record on and he's in absolute heaven. Meanwhile, Ian's voice allowed different musical construction. It wasn't a predetermined thing that we were going to make a heavy rock record, it just came out that way. Bands don't have much of a choice. You are a collective and you can only be one thing, you know."

"*In Rock* was loud and harsh and fierce and aggressive. It was dangerous and fresh." – Roger Glover

But first, Purple had to get *Concerto For Group And Orchestra* out of their system.

Glover: "I remember me and Ian's first meeting at Purple's Newman Street offices in London, where we signed our contracts and officially became part of the band. One the management guys said: 'One of the first things we'll be doing is working at the Albert Hall with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.' I said: 'Really?!' The guy said: 'Yeah, Jon Lord has written this album and we'll be doing it in September [1969].'"

Despite being described by one leading music paper of the day as 'pseudo classical drivel', *Concerto…* "was a remarkable feat, really," Glover opined. "But it really got up Ritchie's nose that Jon was being hailed as the main composer and leader of Purple. That's when I quickly became aware of the politics of the band. The more publicity *Concerto…* received, the more resentful Ritchie became. I think it galvanised him into proving his point that he wanted

continued on page 50

Purple... with strings attached.

duets with Blackmore's Strat in *Strange Kind Of Woman*, or his solo vocal gymnastics in *Child In Time*, set this line-up apart from the bluesier incarnations that preceded and followed.

And never forget, this version of Deep Purple shone despite existing during a golden age for heavy rock. They were on the circuit and in the charts even though in competition with the likes of The Who, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin in *their* pomp.

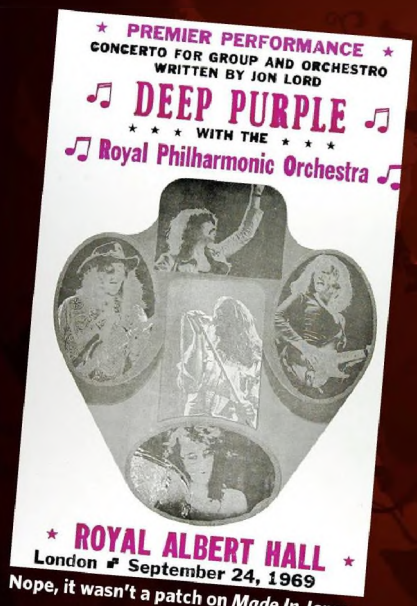
Unlike Townsend, Page and co, the Purps never got to play mega gigs at outdoor sporting arenas, never headlined Madison Square Garden, and certainly never starred in a film. No, Purple were more like Sabbath – a band of the people touring incessantly on the college and town/city hall circuit, earning their crust the hard way. It brought them great respect, too.

Through it all, Deep Purple remained the epitome of underground. The band made Glover the butt of their jokes and called him "the stinking hippy" but he was only mirroring the majority of their audience – clad in flares, afghans and greatcoats, reeking of roll-ups and patchouli oil.

In the process – again more like Sabbath than Zep, the 'Oo, or The Rolling Stones for that matter – the Mk II line-up got big without ever getting massive. Their tragedy was that their workload emphasised personality clashes, Blackmore sacked Glover and Gillan, and so having honed the formula for world domination the famous five never got to exploit it…

But at least they recorded it for posterity in 1972's *Made In Japan*, its title an ironic reference to the number of imported goods flooding the UK from the land of the rising sun. No need now to apologise that over four sides of vinyl it had only seven songs, that one was 20 minutes long while another was largely a drum solo…

Indeed not! After a confusing and largely forgettable first live recording (1970's *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*) Deep Purple Mk II hit paydirt with their second. Recorded mainly at two shows in Osaka but also parts of a third in Tokyo's famous Budokan, it towers over almost every other in-concert double album ever made and no serious record collection of the 70s was complete without it. That remains true over 30 years later and is something no other Purple line-up has ever been able to match.



POSTER: REDFERNS

Nope, it wasn't a patch on *Made In Japan*.

Purple: Glenn Hughes in, no Rodgers, Glover out

PURPLE GET FUNKED!

How Mk III *Burn*-ed brightly, then came to a tempestuous end with *Stormbringer*.

Words: **Peter Makowski**

'Stormbringer... cocksucker... motherfucker!' Many Deep Purple fans are probably unaware that this is the message that greets them on the opening title track of the band's difficult ninth studio album. Backmasked and played in reverse – although it didn't influence any rednecks from Buttmunch, Ohio to go 'postal' in the local shopping mall – it was indicative of a new era for a band who were about to undergo their fourth line-up change in four years, and could have also been Ritchie Blackmore's critical appraisal of this much troubled release.

"I think *Stormbringer* was a good record but I don't think it's an appropriate follow up to *Burn* [the first album from Purple's Mk III line-up]," admitted David Coverdale in a recent interview with *Classic Rock*, "I think *Come Taste The Band* [the debut album from Purple Mk IV] was more of an appropriate follow up."

Both *Stormbringer* and *Come Taste The Band* are controversial releases that were met with divided opinions, testing the patience of even the most loyal Purple fan. The latter, with the introduction of new axe slinger, Tommy Bolin, was rejected due to the almost feral loyalty of Blackmore fans.

Stormbringer was a different kettle of controversy and to understand its creation and impact we must turn back the clock to the dissolution of Purple Mk II in 1973.

When Ritchie Blackmore played his final show with Ian Gillan in Osaka, he knew what lay ahead in the future and was so excited at the prospect of creating music with new blood in the band that he postponed work on a solo album that was to feature Elf, a band that recently supported Purple.

Unbeknown to the press and fans, Gillan had already tendered his resignation earlier that year, and the group had found prospective replacements for him and Roger Glover (who had been fired).

Glenn Hughes was already making a name for himself as a dynamic vocalist/bassist with Trapeze, who were on the verge of breaking the States. A recognised frontman, Hughes was shocked when he was told that his role in Purple would be primarily as bass player. At the time the band were headhunting Paul Rodgers and the thought of playing with his "favourite white singer" prompted Hughes to join. When this fell through (due to Rodgers's commitment to Bad Company) Hughes stayed on, anticipating an opportunity to expand his role, although Blackmore was determined to find a lead singer – which he did with the so-called 'singing salesman from Redcar', newbie David Coverdale.

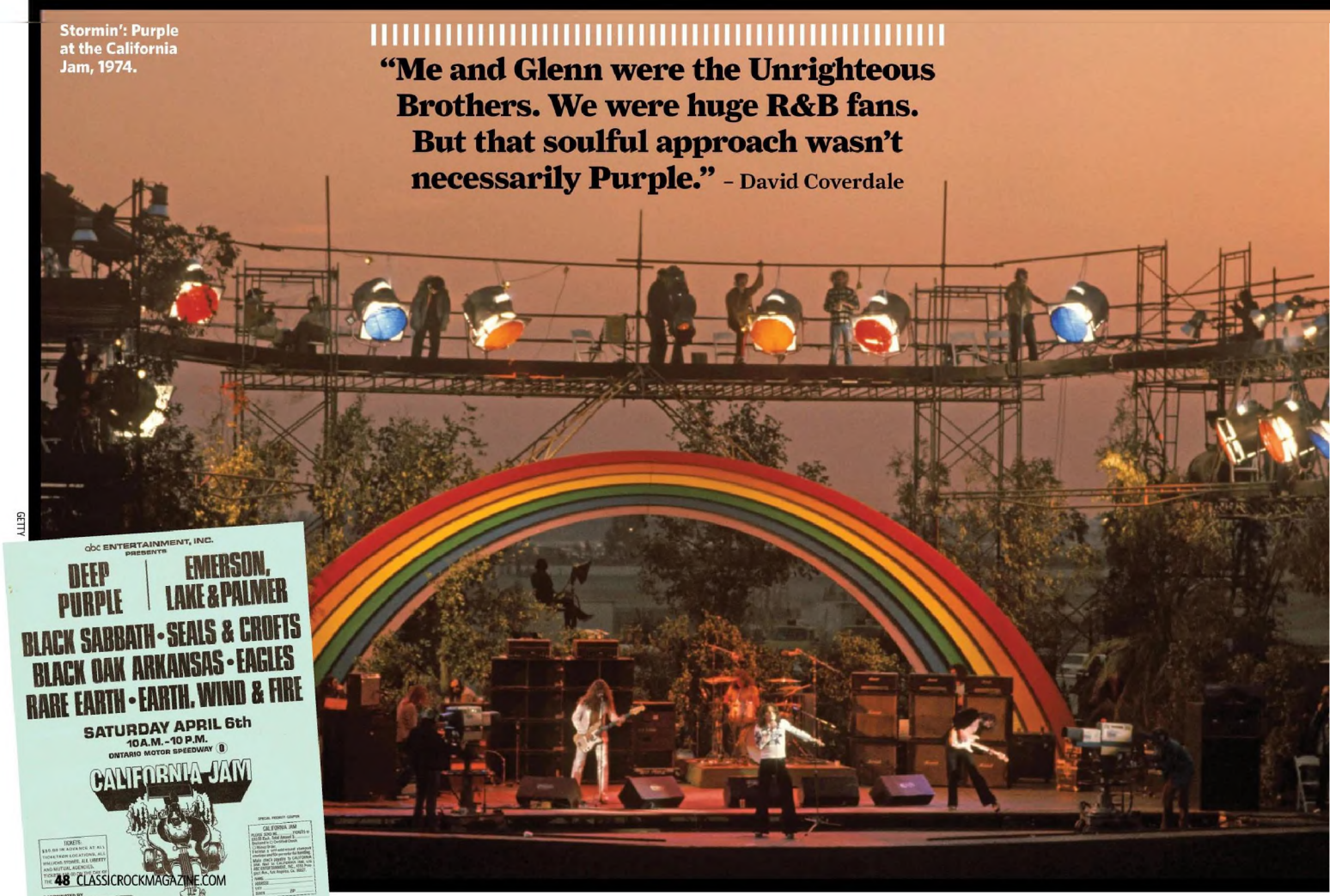
"Ritchie was always adamant about having a deeper, bluesier voice *à la* Paul Rodgers," recalls Hughes. "It wasn't that we were out to find a soundalike, but we actually did. I don't think David ever talks about his being influenced by Paul Rodgers but you cannot fail to be influenced by him if, like him, you're a singer from the north of England, in the same age group."

The new crew in the line-up that produced the *Burn* album was fresh, willing and eager to please the notoriously temperamental, genius guitarist, and Coverdale acknowledges playing the role of disciple. "I was in awe of Ritchie's gift. I am an immense Hendrix fan and here I am sitting next to someone who can play that stuff."

Inspired and fired up, the band undertook a short tour of Europe in December 1973, kicking off in Copenhagen, playing a set that featured virtually the whole of *Burn*, four months prior to its release. It was risky enough to unveil a new band, but to play almost all new material seemed suicidal. Fortunately the gamble paid off and over the next year Purple achieved new heights of success. The work of the previous two line-ups was beginning to pay off.

"With *Burn* we cleaned up," says Coverdale. "You could hear a collective sigh from the management, because they were concerned about the changes, which is understandable."

Elated by Purple's newfound success, the management put the band to work and the



Stormin': Purple at the California Jam, 1974.

GETTY

inevitable arduous tours followed.

Straight after a British tour the band, now tax exiles, found themselves in Clearwell Castle. This was the same location where they rehearsed *Burn* and introduced the new line-up. It soon became apparent that a lot had changed since those heady, happy-go-lucky days. Both Coverdale and Hughes had established themselves in the hierarchy and proved their worth in series of spectacular live performances, including the legendary California Jam in 1974 which made them overnight millionaires.

Blackmore was at a particularly low ebb, having to deal with a very messy divorce with his wife, Babs, and was unhappy with the direction the band was going in, with its introduction of funkier elements or what he called 'shoeshine music'.

Regarding Ritchie's attitude, Hughes says: "It hurt me because he knew I had become friends with Stevie Wonder, Luther Vandross and Herbie Hancock. It was embarrassing, because I have a lot of celebrated African-American musician friends. I don't know how Ritchie feels about making this *faux pas*, [but] it still doesn't cut it in today's new world.

"Me and Glenn were the Unrighteous Brothers," adds Coverdale. "We were huge R&B fans. Glenn was more comfortable being soulful, but that wasn't necessarily Purple."

Unlike with *Burn* there was virtually no material prepared for the new album, save for the bare bones of the title track, *Stormbringer*. Contrary to popular belief, the name wasn't pillaged from the Michael Moorcock book, which Coverdale denies ever reading... although he curiously admits to finding a copy underneath his bed at home long after the track was recorded.

'IS THAT BLACKMORE IN DRAG?'

When *Classic Rock* uncovered this gem of a picture (above) that was mooted to be an alternative cover idea for *Stormbringer*, we just had to put our deerstalkers and investigate. Was this true? Was there another title? Who was that, er, lady?

"Fucking hell! I'm positively delighted that we didn't end up using that one!" exclaimed a startled Coverdale at seeing the photo. He then went on explain its origins: "Ritchie saw some signs that said 'silence' outside hospitals in Germany and thought it would be funny to call the album *Silence*, using the 'hush' sign. I don't know about the boiler though - is that Blackers in drag?"

"I wrote two songs to please Ritchie, which was the science fiction poetry of *Burn* and *Stormbringer*," says Coverdale.

Another bone of contention reared its ugly head around the question of royalties.

"After *Burn* for the first time Ritchie said: 'I'm not splitting everything five ways'," remembers Coverdale. "That was greeted with great outrage by the guys who were not particularly composers. I think this was one of the things that contributed to Ritchie leaving the band. And then of course he put something together [Rainbow] where he totally controlled the show. Controlling Purple wasn't quite that easy."

With friction and resentment brewing, Purple moved to Munich's Musicland studios to start recording *Stormbringer*. Immediately Blackmore found himself at loggerheads with the rest of the band. First when he tried to persuade them to include a cover version, *Black Sheep Of The Family* – one of his favourite songs by cult Vertigo act Quatermass. (This song would in fact appear on the first Rainbow album.) The next conflict was down to a song which has since become a classic.

"Ritchie was furious that nobody was buying the idea of *Soldier Of Fortune*," recalls Coverdale, still exasperated by the event. "They didn't like it because it wasn't balls to the wall."

Ever the diplomat and still finding his place in the band, Coverdale managed to straddle both sides of the fence between Hughes and Blackmore. This has since proved beneficial as due to his many songwriting credits he recoups the majority of the royalties from *Stormbringer*.

"It was an album of compromise," explains Coverdale. "It was a situation where Glenn's a very powerful personality and I was much more confident of my situation, although I was still emulating everybody else as I had no schooling in how to behave like a naughty rock star."

Glenn Hughes was in his element. As Blackmore faded into the background, the bassist came to the fore with a series of compositions like *You Can't Do It Right (With The One You Love)*, *Holy Man* and *Love Don't Mean A Thing*. A song that sounds as if it came straight out of the Muscle Shoals studio, *Love Don't...* was written on the band's private plane, Starship, with a street busker from downtown Chicago. Hughes was fortunate enough to play the song in the studio to one of his musical heroes, Stevie Wonder.

Hunk rock: David Coverdale.

GETTY X2

PURPLE'S UNKNOWN VOCALIST

DEEP PURPLE are a five-piece band again. After months of rumours and speculation about who would join Deep Purple as lead singer in place of Ian Gillan, the band announced the new man this week.

He is David Coverdale, who has been singing around the Northern clubs with various professional and semi-pro bands for the last five years, and who, until he signed with Purple, was working in a boutique in Redcar.

Last week, David had joined the rest of the band — Jon

A PURPLE MK III REUNION? "COUNT ME IN," SAYS METALLICA DRUMMER LARS ULRICH


Lars: available

With such a rapid rise and demise, the Deep Purple Mk III saga has always had an air of unfinished business about it. There have constantly been rumours regarding a reunion.

In separate interviews David Coverdale, Glenn Hughes and Jon Lord have all intimated they would be up for it, and all parties have recently been in contact with Ritchie Blackmore.

In fact the only block to the band re-forming could be Ian Paice who, as a member of the current Purple, would probably find it difficult and uncomfortable to get involved.

But there is a solution in the form of Metallica's suave sticksman, Lars Ulrich, who would be more than happy to 'do a Grohl' and deputise on drums for a one-off event.

A hard-core Purple fan, Ulrich saw Purple Mk III at their first show, at the KB Hallen in Copenhagen in 1973. "That was the gig where in a newspaper article the day after, Coverdale was talking about puking in the toilets before the show, he was so fired up with nerves," Lars recalled. "I was all of nine years old."

Lars still admits to being a big fan of *Stormbringer*. "*Soldier Of Fortune* and *The Gypsy* have aged well. I hope that one day Metallica will do a version of one of those songs; James Hetfield could sing *Soldier Of Fortune* beautifully."

And as for the reunion?

Ulrich: "I know there's talk about the fact that if they got Coverdale, Hughes, Lord and Blackmore together, then they just need a drummer. I'll volunteer myself for that [laughs]. If they need a drummer, David Coverdale has my number."

Hughes says: "He touched my face and said: 'You sure you are a white boy?' To be acknowledged by your spiritual mentor was, and still is, nirvana. And I'll tell you something funny: Blackmore's funky on *Stormbringer*. It's a fucking funky album."

One is quite certain that Blackmore doesn't echo those sentiments and you can audibly hear his apathy in *Hold On*, which features a guitar solo that sounds more like a sedated version of his hero Albert Lee.

"It's just not Deep Purple," says Coverdale. "I sat with Ritchie as he played the solo. He was talking to me, just holding one finger on the bass string. He didn't give a monkey's arse about it and that was uncomfortable for me. The big songs for me and Ritchie were *Soldier Of Fortune*, *Lady Double Dealer* and the title track."

By the time the album got to the mixing stages Blackmore had totally lost interest and went back home, leaving Ian Paice and producer Martin Birch to lay down the finishing touches.

Receiving mixed reviews and a lukewarm reception from the fans, in one interview Blackmore promised that the next album would be heavier – but this wasn't to be, and halfway through a world tour he decided to call it quits.

No one was surprised, least of all Hughes.

"We knew Ritchie was leaving," he sighs, "and let me say this for the record, when he gave his notice in I wanted to leave too. I was thinking: 'What's the point?' Now there's another guy gone and it's Ritchie Blackmore, god of the guitar along with Page and Beck, the holy trinity. It was David Bowie, who was living at my house, who convinced me to stay."

Coverdale is probably right in saying that *Stormbringer* isn't a Purple album. But that doesn't stop it from being a fantastic collection of songs (with the exception of *High Ball Shooter*, which is only redeemed by a volcanic organ solo) but unfortunately it proved to be the undoing of the band. Coverdale succinctly sums up the demise of Purple Mk III in three words: "Women and publishing." Or should that be: '*Stormbringer, cocksucker, motherfucker!*'?


Roger Glover: 'crappy old trousers' just out of shot.

GETTY

continued from page 47 Purple to go in a completely different musical direction.

"That's why *In Rock* [the follow-up to *Concerto*…] is such a tough album. There was nothing like it at the time. It was balls to the wall. The VU meters in the studio were constantly in the red – that's what I'll always remember. It was a feeling of playing your instruments to the utmost. Loud and harsh and fierce and aggressive. It was dangerous and fresh. It was my coming of age, if you like."

Ian Gillan, meantime, was just happy to be riding the Purple rollercoaster. "I didn't realise what was going on. This is the point, when you're doing an interview, that you realise you've got no anecdotes. Nothing's happened yet. Take *Speed King* [*In Rock*'s opening track], for example. I just blurted out any old Elvis Presley, Little Richard and Chuck Berry catchphrases I could think of that fitted, then I made up the chorus. *Speed King*, incidentally, is about fast singing. It's got nothing to do with drugs."

Released in June 1970, *In Rock* – together with the single *Black Night*, strangely not included on the album (Glover, wryly: "I'm sure that was a business decision by management") – gave Purple Mk II their breakthrough. *In Rock* got to No.4 in the UK chart; *Black Night* to No.2.

"Blackmore was starting to push for total dominance and Gillan wasn't having any of it." – Ian Paice

Purple's co-managers – Tony Edwards and John Coletta – grabbed the opportunity and worked their band to the bone, both on the road and in the studio. In hyper-quick succession, Purple rattled out another big hit single – *Strange Kind Of Woman* ('71) – and the albums *Fireball* (also '71), *Machine Head* ('72), seminal live offering *Made In Japan* (also '72) and *Who Do We Think We Are!* ('73).

Paice: "All of a sudden I had lots of money and a car. I'd never owned a car before. Purple had the pick of the juicy things in life, although we never really touched drugs. We all came from a drinking culture; that's what we did for our buzz. There were lots of misconceptions, because for a time there was a drug called Deep Purple. It was a pill of some kind. But we weren't interested in that shit. We preferred a pint of bitter or a scotch and coke."

Strangely, neither Gillan nor Paice regard *In Rock* as Purple Mk II's pivotal album.

Gillan: "*Machine Head* is the pivotal one because it ties up all the loose ends. It was a turning point. Purple weren't an underground band any more and the press was bemused by us. We weren't a Led Zeppelin or a Black Sabbath – those bands were easier to understand – and we weren't the 'pop' Purple of the late 1960s. We were pretty much taking out own route and carving our own course, and that used to infuriate people."

Paice: "I'd place *Made In Japan* over *In Rock* every time. *Made In Japan* is probably the best live rock'n'roll album ever made. As a *tour de force* of innovation and living on the edge, together with great playing and a fantastic sound, nothing comes close. It's a wonderful documentation of a bit of history. You know, I probably played 100 drum solos that year – and the one on *Made In Japan* is the best. It could easily have been another night but we didn't record it. Everything just seemed to come together right for that record."

According to Glover, the first serious divisions in Purple Mk II began to occur when "we disappeared down in the country" (The Hermitage in north Devon, to be precise) to begin work on *Fireball*.

"A couple of bitter arguments broke out between Jon and Ritchie, and I found myself being the intermediary. Gillan disappeared into a bottle of whisky for most of that session. Ritchie was a mysterious presence. A thorny one. He was always ready to express his barbed wit and do outrageous things."

By contrast, Glover reckoned: "We were in pretty good shape for the next album, *Machine Head* – despite the obvious situation with the Swiss casino burning down and having to make the record in the corridors of Montreux's Grand Hotel [as documented in *Smoke On The Water*]. We pulled together as a band and I remember it being quite a happy time." ↦

Deep Purple's 25 maddest moments

1 Rock'N'Roll Circus nightclub, Paris, October 1970: as Ian Gillan went to sit down, Ritchie Blackmore pulled away Gillan's chair. Blackmore: "What I didn't realise was that behind us was a big drop of about 15 feet and Gillan fell down – crunched his head... After that he was never the same."

2 The Mk II line-up got together in the studio in 1970 to write a hit single but the inspiration didn't flow. They went round the corner to the pub – the Newton Arms, near Kingsway, London – and returned to the studio pissed. They immediately laid down their biggest hit: *Black Night*.

3 The rest of Purple barely talked to Roger Glover during tour dates in 1973. Glover had been ousted from the band but nobody had bothered to tell him. Glover was left to drink alone in hotel bars, wondering why he was being cold-shouldered...

4 Tommy Bolin injected himself with inferior-grade heroin in Jakarta, Indonesia, December 1975. Bolin lost the use of his left arm and couldn't play anything other than simple chords. This meant Purple were effectively without a guitar player for their Japanese tour. Purple were daft enough to issue the recordings anyway, as the *Last Concert In Japan* album.

5 At a gig in Wembley, current Purple keyboardist Don Airey interrupted his solo to play *I Do Like To Be Beside The Seaside*. Hmm. That must be that well-known holiday resort, Wembley-On-Sea...

6 Shortly after the Mk II line-up split, the press picked up on strategically placed 'leaks' that Paul Rodgers would replace Ian Gillan. So, er... Rodgers didn't.

7 Ian Gillan, speaking in an interview with Charlie Steffens of knac.com, December 2006: "Ritchie Blackmore? No, I don't talk to him at all. That asshole – I will never speak to him again, as far as I'm concerned. He turned into a weird guy and the day he walked out of the tour was the day the clouds disappeared. It was the day the sunshine came out and we haven't looked back since. There are certain personal issues that I have with Ritchie. Nothing I'm going to discuss publicly, but deeply personal stuff. As far as I'm concerned, the divorce came a long time ago. I never want to see or hear of him again."

8 Ritchie Blackmore, speaking on Swedish TV, October 1993: "One of these days I'm going to attack Ian Gillan in a back alley. He's bigger than me. He's probably a better fighter. So I'm going to do it with a few friends of mine. Probably Swedish. And we'll beat him up. But he won't know it's me."

9 Arriving at a gig in Sydney in May 1971 to soundcheck, Purple discovered the 'Marshall' amps provided were locally built cabinets containing just one useless speaker horn. The band threw a strop and told the promoter they wouldn't play. The promoter told them they would – or they'd have their legs shot off. And so they did – sounding terrible and nailing the cabinets together to stop them vibrating across the stage.

10 Original vocalist Rod Evans actually toured America in 1980 with a band called Deep Purple. He was sued successfully by Purple's management – and reportedly lost the rights to his Purple royalties as a result. As Jon Lord said years later: "I only blame Rod for being silly. He should've known it was going to be difficult to get away with a fake Purple. After all – he was doing it in public."

11 Merchandise sold on a recent Purple tour included a *Machine Head* T-shirt with Blackmore's face missing from the album design. According to some, Blackmore's management sued Purple for use of his image on the shirt. According to others, Purple simply don't want to be associated with Blackmore any more.

CHRIS WALTER

12 Purple were secretly rehearsing with Ian Gillan and Roger Glover while still doing live dates with Rod Evans and Nick Simper. Simper is, apparently, still angry to this day about the presumed subterfuge.

13 Thoroughly pissed off with the monsoon-like weather, Ritchie Blackmore wore wellington boots on stage for Purple's big comeback show at Knebworth in 1985.

14 More on that ill-fated trip to Indonesia in December 1975: One of Purple's road crew, Patsy Collins – also Tommy Bolin's bodyguard – was killed in a six-storey fall down a service elevator shaft at the band's hotel in Jakarta.

15 Then at a Purple concert the following night, Indonesian police armed with machine guns, truncheons and a pack of Doberman pinschers waded into the audience, injuring over 200 people.

16 Purple were due to close the show at the Plumpton festival in 1970 – but Yes turned up late, forcing Purple to take the stage first. Anxious for Purple not to be upstaged, Ritchie Blackmore instructed his roadie to set fire to his amps, hoping to damage the stage (with, allegedly, the ultimate aim of burning the whole damn thing down) and thus prevent Yes from performing. Luckily, a rival roadie for The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band was on hand with a handy fire extinguisher.

17 *Smooth Dancer* (a track from Purple's 1973 *Who Do We Think We Are!* album) contains lyrics by Ian Gillan that reference Ritchie Blackmore in all but name: *'Black suede, don't waste your time on me/Black suede, I sense your mockery/I tried to go along with you/But you're black and I know just what to do.'* (At the time, Blackmore's uniform of choice was black suede.)

18 The instrumental *Coronarias Redig* was originally supposed to have vocals by David Coverdale. But Coverdale fell asleep in the studio after a night's hard partying. "The band's revenge was to take my camera and cover me from head to toe in Scandinavian hard-core porn magazines," Coverdale recalled. "When I got back to Redcar I took in my film to be developed at the local chemist – and of course my reputation was ruined. It was obviously me, and it was obviously porn."

19 Deep Purple got their name from a song by Bing Crosby, a favourite of Ritchie Blackmore's *grandmother*. Other names under consideration included Orpheus, Fire, Concrete God and Sugarlump.

20 Purple's *Burn* album closes with an instrumental, *A200*, which – it turns out – is a code for 'critter cream ointment'. "If you're unfortunate enough to catch the critters [crabs] wandering about your nether regions, that's the stuff you had to put on it," said Ian Paice. "If you happened to get a little bit of infestation, that would be the stuff."

21 Ritchie Blackmore staged a séance at The Hermitage in north Devon, during the recording of *Fireball*. Roger Glover recalled: "I was lying in bed at about three in the morning, when an axe smashed through my door." The mad axe-man turned out to be Blackmore. Glover grabbed a handy chair leg, found the guitarist hiding in a darkened part of the house and "stopped mercifully short of clubbing him to death". Blackmore and Ian Paice's girlfriend, Wendy, were conducting a séance in the next room. Glover said: "It had apparently taken control of their senses. Or maybe mine."

22 *Mitzi Dupree* (a track on Purple's *The House Of Blue Light* album) is about an 'entertainer' Ian Gillan once encountered – a woman who employed her nether regions to fire ping-pong balls with unerring accuracy. Gillan was understandably smitten by Ms Dupree, singing: *'I miss you, I love you, Mitzi Dupree. My darling Mitzi Dupree.'*

23 During Purple's 1972 US tour Ritchie Blackmore was taken ill with hepatitis. He was replaced in the band first by Al Kooper – even though Kooper was, by his own admission, "a keyboard player who only dabbled on guitar" – and then by Randy California of Spirit fame.

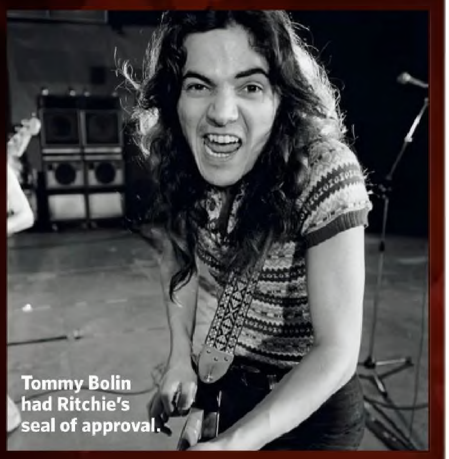
24 During Purple's tour of Texas in February 1976, two drug pushers pursued Glenn Hughes from city to city. Whatever happened to them? "One guy's in jail for life," Hughes divulged. "I flew him and his wife first-class to Hawaii. I bought his wife a white Steinway piano. I thought I was paying them back for being so nice to me. The next thing I knew the guy's been busted supplying another band. The other guy? He's dead – he OD'd."

25 *Concerto For Group And Orchestra*. Yes, it's about time we drew a veil over that one.

TASTE TEST

Some people call Mk IV Purple's darkest hour. Don't you believe it...

Words: **Geoff Barton**



Tommy Bolin had Ritchie's seal of approval.

Deep Purple without Ritchie Blackmore? In the immortal words of John McEnroe: "You cannot be serious."

Nevertheless, in winter 1975, with hotshot American guitarist Tommy Bolin taking the place of the Man In Black, Purple Mk IV kicked off their one and only world tour.

Caustic commentators in the music press portrayed Bolin as a flamboyant Yankee interloper. But Blackmore, to his credit, wished Bolin well. As he told this writer in summer 1975, while promoting his new band, Rainbow: "Tommy is good. He's one of the best. He can handle a lot of stuff, including funk and jazz. I think they'll probably be very happy with him."

Unusually, Blackmore was proved wrong on this particular occasion. Purple Mk IV's one and only studio album, *Come Taste The Band*, received unexceptional reviews and their global trek got off to a shaky start, with lacklustre – occasionally disastrous – performances and apathetic audience responses.

Billed as 'the best new guitar player in the world' but harbouring a deadly heroin addiction, Bolin more often than not failed to deliver.

Ian Paice, who was part of the Mk IV line-up, said: "When we finished *Come Taste The Band* I was very happy. But when I analysed it, I thought: 'This is nothing like Deep Purple.'"

It all went tits-up at the Empire Theatre, Liverpool, on March 15, 1976. With Blackmore fans baying for Bolin's blood, Purple's new guy recoiled and froze during his solo. Purple imploded to the sound of hisses and catcalls.

Roger Glover, who had been ousted from Purple some years earlier, saw Mk IV play Wembley Empire Pool a couple of days before. "It was awful," he said. "I was acutely embarrassed."

But time is a great healer. These days the Mk IV era of Purple is more revered than ridiculed.

Tommy Bolin was found dead from a heroin overdose on December 4, 1976 in a hotel room in Miami. A little over a year earlier, he had told this writer: "I think people are going to love *Come Taste The Band*. It's more sophisticated than the old Purple stuff but I don't think that'll matter. The kids are more clued-in than they used to be, so I think it'll be accepted. Highly. Very highly."

And in the end it was.

On to *Who Do We Think We Are!*, Purple's seventh studio album and the Mk II line-up's swansong – at least until its regrouping in '84.

Gillan: "The title of the album was in response to all the shit reviews we'd been getting. One music journalist was so scornful of our approach he asked: 'Who do they think they are?' That infuriated us, so we decided to turn it on its head."

Glover: "We recorded *Machine Head* in hotel corridors in the cold and damp, so for *Who Do We Think We Are!* we decided to go to a villa in Italy for three weeks in the summer. A very nice idea, but we never got any work done. We spent most of the time waiting for Ritchie to turn up, because he insisted on staying in his own house. Ritchie wouldn't arrive until 5:30 in the afternoon, by which time the rest of us had given up. We'd be out lounging by the pool. We only completed two songs there: *Painted Horse*, which we didn't end up using, and *Woman From Tokyo*."

Eventually, Purple decamped from Italy to Germany to finish *Who Do We Think We Are!*

Glover: "It was painful. Ritchie had switched his evil eye to Gillan and the division between the two was there for all to see. Purple as a band has always… I was going to say 'thrived', but that's not the right word – but then again, perhaps it is – on the terrible clash of personalities between Ritchie and Ian. By *Who Do We Think We Are!* we had become a fractured family, really. There was lots of stupid stuff going on, on stage. Ritchie wouldn't play an encore unless he thought the audience deserved one. He used to say: 'I'm going to punish them.' Ian had his own roadie and transport, and so did Ritchie. It was childish. Beyond childish."

Eventually it all became too much for Gillan and he handed in his resignation. Separately, Blackmore looked set to quit too, taking Ian Paice with him.

Gillan: "I was very kind and gave Purple nine months' notice. I didn't get on with the management at all; I had big fights with John Coletta and Tony Edwards. I think they were quite happy to see the back of me."

"Glenn Hughes is still copying Stevie Wonder. I can't call him a bona fide member of Deep Purple." – Ian Gillan

Glover: "In January '73 I got a call from Purple's managers. They wanted to meet with me and Jon Lord. They said: 'Ritchie's going to leave and he's probably going to take Paicey with him. Oh, and Gillan's already written his letter of resignation.' So that just left me and Jon. The managers said: 'We think there's a future for Purple. If you can persuade Paicey to stay, we'll get a new guitarist and a new singer, and we'll carry on.'"

But that vision was turned upside-down shortly

Working for the Yankee dollar: Ian Paice.

REDFERNS/GETTY X3

FRIENDS REUNITED?

The Mk II line-up got back together not once, but twice. Was this wise?

Words: **Paul Ging**

Within moments of any Purple fan whacking the needle on the old side one of the MK II line-up's comeback album *Perfect Strangers* and being assailed by the colossal thrust of *Knocking At Your Back Door*, it was clear that Purple were back and firing on all cylinders.

Live, the band also restated their claim to greatness and capped this initial phase of their return with a rain-sodden but triumphant appearance at Knebworth in June '85 in front of 80,000 fans.

But if *Perfect Strangers* is analogous to the passionate shag of a reunited couple, its 1987 successor, *The House Of Blue Light* – right down to its self-referential title – represents the recurrence of routine, rows and why they split up in the first place.

Blackmore seems to be operating on auto-pilot, sounding more like one of his legion of pale imitators. While *Bad Attitude* – inspired by the resurgent fracture between Gillan and Blackmore – is a thunderous opener, the generic 80s radio rock of *Call Of The Wild* and several others is unlistenable compared to the glories of their comeback effort.

Following an unhappy world tour and lacklustre live album, it was announced in 1989 that Gillan had left again. "Does anybody really care?" asked many in response. It was a salient point.

Ritchie apart, rank-and-file dissatisfaction with their direction and record company pressure for the most celebrated line-up to reunite for the band's 25th anniversary meant Gillan returned in '93, re-writing chunks of what would've been Joe Lynn Turner's second Purple set and releasing *The Battle Rages On*. While clearly superior to *The House Of Blue Light* and providing one still-ongoing live favourite in the form of the excellent title track, it was clear that Mk II's special chemistry was gone for good.

Yet the Mk II (b) and Mk II (c) reunions are an essential part of the ongoing Deep Purple story. Because without both the initial, triumphant revitalisation of the band and the fractious '93 alignment, the re-revitalisation of the band with Steve Morse could never have happened.

An apt title, all told.

afterward, when a bemused Glover found himself ostracised from Purple.

Glover: "I confronted Tony Edwards in his hotel room in Jacksonville, Kentucky. I said: 'I'm not leaving here until you tell me the truth.' Edwards shrugged: 'Well, they want you out of the band. Ritchie's agreed to stay but only if you leave.' Unbeknown to me, they'd been checking out this other bass player, Glenn Hughes. I said: 'Why wasn't I told earlier?' Edwards said: 'Because we wanted you to finish the tour.' And make them tons of cash into the bargain, of course.

"So I resigned – which was a stupid thing to do, because if I'd let them fire me I could've sued! Later, Ritchie told me: 'By the way, it's not personal, it's business.' At least he was being honest. That's partly why I had no qualms about hooking up with him again a few years later, in Rainbow. So I didn't blame Ritchie but I did blame Jon, and Paicey to an extent. I guess I had to blame someone."

"Ritchie was a mysterious presence. A thorny one. He was always ready to express his barbed wit." – Roger Glover

The rise and fall of Purple Mk III – featuring David Coverdale and Glenn Hughes alongside Blackmore, Lord and Paice – is documented in detail on pages 42 to 44.

Glover offered his perspective on Purple's third incarnation: "I saw them play Kilburn State Gaumont in 1974. It was a very uncomfortable, very painful experience for me to see David, and especially Glenn, in the line-up. Purple were the biggest band in the world at the time, and all of a sudden I wasn't part of it. I was persona non grata."

Gillan: "I've never listened to any of Purple Mk III's records. What are they called? *Burn* and… *Strongbow*, is it? I've got no interest in them. It's like seeing your girlfriend with another guy.

"As for Mk IV [when American guitarist Tommy Bolin replaced Blackmore], I listened to their *Come Taste The Band* album but that wasn't really Purple in my book. I've got no problems with the performances, I just don't think it's Purple at all. Glenn Hughes is one of *the* most naturally talented musicians but he's still copying Stevie Wonder to this day, so I can't call him a bona fide member of Deep Purple. The Mk III and IV line-ups were full of talent, but you know you can spend £100 million on football players and you won't necessarily get a good team."

With regard to Tommy Bolin's wayward talent, Paice reflected: "Tommy could be an absolute genius, but that probably happened one show in 20. If Tommy got his hit and it was good, and he slept well and the sound was right, and his equipment didn't break and the audience was nice, and the sun shone between 1pm and 2pm… then, yeah, he ◆▸


I'm Davey. Fly me.

Might just take your lager...

REDFERNS/GETTY X3

was great. But the chances of that happening on a regular basis were very remote. It could go from the sublime to the absolute worst end of ridiculous. Then Glenn got involved in similar stuff to Tommy, which is no secret. Quite often it would come down to blackmail: 'Score this stuff for us or we won't go on stage.' That's what killed it in the end."

After plenty of extra-curricular activity – Blackmore with Rainbow; Gillan with the Ian Gillan Band and Black Sabbath; Glover with Rainbow and record-production duties; Paice and Lord with Paice Ashton Lord and Whitesnake – Purple Mk II reconvened in 1984.

Gillan: "It took a long time to set it up, but we all came back as changed people. Everyone returned full of confidence. Having said that, I was still drinking far too much so I can't remember very much about it at all. On reflection, I suppose everyone stood alone, really. There wasn't that sense of camaraderie that we'd had before. The difference was that it was five individuals, not five mates, you know?"

Paice: "That period was great fun. The first time we were in a room together there was a feeling of 'we can actually do this'. There were smiles all the way round – even from Ritchie and Ian."

Glover: "Me and Ritchie were in Rainbow, quite happily going along. But Rainbow reached a sort of plateau; it never got beyond that. Ritchie said to me one day: 'There's something about Ian Gillan's voice, isn't there?' I said: 'What do you mean?' Ritchie said: 'Well, people seem to like it…'

"When all five of us eventually regrouped in Vermont, Canada, it was actually a magical time. All the enmity and fractious behaviour went out of the window. We got talking and we all felt the management had overworked us, and that's what contributed to the demise of Purple in '73. A good management should've said: 'Look, lads, you've worked really hard, why don't you take six months off and recuperate?' But that didn't happen."

However, the novelty of Purple Mk II's comeback wore off quickly. Almost inevitably, trouble started brewing. But as to the precise nature of the trouble… it seems that that would be telling.

Gillan: "Things went on during that re-formation period that will never, ever be published in your magazine. They were so awful that I could never speak of them publicly. They were too incredibly awful. I was angered and disgusted, that's all I'll say. So, anyway… [long pause] …it didn't go all that well, let's put it that way. It had its ups and downs."

A brace of studio albums resulted from the Mk II reunion: *Perfect Strangers* and *The House Of Blue Light*.

Gillan: "*Perfect Strangers* was about the best we could come up with at the time. Having been off the scene for a while, some of it was quite good. Having said that, however, I was frankly embarrassed with [title track] *Perfect Strangers* when I first hear the guitar riff. It's so derivative.

"There's some good material on *The House Of Blue Light*, but for me it's an album that hasn't got a spirit. I'd put it very much in the same bag as *Who Do We Think We Are!* It's a collection of good songs and good performances, but nothing more. To be honest, I don't look back on the 1980s with any ◆▸

LYNNCH MOB

The knives were out when Joe Lynn Turner joined for Mk V's *Slaves And Masters*.

Words: **Dave Ling**

Given that Joe Lynn Turner had been in Rainbow with Ritchie Blackmore, awarding that band a more transatlantic, merchandisable sheen, the New Jerseyite's December 1989 arrival in Deep Purple was eyed with suspicion by just about everybody.

However, bassist Roger Glover, who had snorted, "Absolutely no way!" when Blackmore raised the singer's name, was at least one individual who gave the idea a chance.

"Roger ended up saying: 'This is gonna make things so much easier; we've got a guy who can improvise and actually sing'," recalls Turner.

Controversially, Turner then volunteers one claim further: "Pound for pound, song for song, I think that *Slaves And Masters* , the album I sang on, was the last great Deep Purple record. To me, it's the final one that sounds like Deep Purple. It still has that cornerstone of Blackmore's guitar. Later on they became a bit watered down and convoluted."

The All Music Guide website calls *Slaves And Masters* 'consistently disappointing', slamming the writing as 'weak and pedestrian' and claiming that the band were trying to sound like Foreigner.

"Bullshit!" responds Turner to that verdict on the record's quality, though he'll admit that taking the band into more commercial areas was the goal of both Blackmore and manager Bruce Payne.

"But you know what?" he states. "People often tell me they've listened to that album again and enjoyed it far more than they expected. My joining the band caused an emotional knee-jerk reaction. There were a lot of Joe Lynn Turner haters. Hard-core Purple fans wanted Gillan, but meanwhile Ritchie didn't want Gillan – something had to give. In his interviews now, Ritchie calls *Slaves And Masters* one of his favourite Purple albums, and he means it."

Back in 1990, Turner told *Kerrang!*: "If I hear the Deep Rainbow thing again I'm gonna puke." And despite being the sole band member to have claimed a co-write on each of *Slaves And Masters*' nine songs, that critical description still riles him.

"The implication that Purple became the Ritchie and Joe show was annoying," he baulks. "What are they now, Deep Dregs? Or the Ian Gillan band in disguise? Come on..."

Turner calls the current Purple 'Deep Dregs'.

Jon Lord: only a moustache stood between him and Keith Emerson.

THE LORD'S WORK

It wasn't all Ritchie's Strat, you know. There was also that howling Hammond organ...

Words: **Neil Jeffries**

In Deep Purple everything began with a Hammond organ, its Leslie speaker horn spinning. Never mind the howling dog, listen to the start of *Hush* – the song that launched the band.

And, until he retired from the band in 2002, Jon Lord's was fundamental yet under-rated. Many others have come and gone but from the classic *Child In Time* to less celebrated songs such as *Pictures Of Home* Lord was the most distinctive part of the Deep Purple's signature sound.

Lord's 'classically trained' credentials were of paramount importance to his foil on the other side of the stage, Ritchie Blackmore. The guitarist would, of course, drive Lord to distraction for half his adult life demanding telepathic understanding, unswerving loyalty and first-rate musicianship – all at the same time.

Lord's keyboards therefore gave him the freedom to play soloist and showman without Purple's hard-driving sound falling apart. Witness Lord's work under the riff of *Highway Star*. But Lord was a brilliant soloist himself (both on stage and in the studio), earning a devoted following all in an age when keyboard players were stars in their own right. A droopy moustache may have trailed Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman in terms of image, but its owner easily matched them in technical ability.

And let's not forget *Smoke On The Water*. Legendary as a guitar riff but underpinned throughout by Mr Lord. He was always very proud of that.

During a break in our interview at his country pile in Henley he appeared on a balcony holding a child's toy piano in one hand and playing that riff with the other. After a couple of bars he joked, with a sweep of his arm: "It paid for all this, you know!" Sadly, he ducked back inside before the photographer could capture the moment...

Blackmore vents his frustration after yet another Gillan barney.

great affection. I didn't enjoy that decade much."

Glover: "When the Mk II reunion was first mooted I went back and listened to a couple of Purple bootlegs. I realised what a brilliant band we were. We sounded dark and dangerous. It wasn't a cabaret show by any means, it was right on the edge. You never quite knew what was going to happen next. We'd get into jams and we wouldn't know how to get out of them. Then somehow we'd find the groove again, and we'd be off."

Gillan: "Much has been made of the so-called spontaneous side of Purple, but one thing I can tell you with absolute confidence is that Ritchie was not, is not, a great improvisational guitar player. Live, he rehearsed every little thing that he played. We used to do these little interchanges with my vocals and his guitar. One night I thought: 'This is getting very boring, we've done the same thing six times in a row.' So I changed it around and Ritchie lost it completely. He went mental.

"Ritchie is probably the most articulated guitarist I've heard in my life. He's an unearthly gifted musician; his fingers are so nimble. I don't quite know when he stopped developing as far as guitar playing is concerned. It might be because his background is in showmanship – don't forget he used to play with Screaming Lord Sutch. Ritchie liked to throw his guitar around and that tended to overshadow the technique side of things."

Returning to the subject of the Mk II reunion, Glover adds: "There's a couple of really great songs on *Perfect Strangers*, but we spent more time in the pub than we did in the studio. As the producer I was actually concerned about that, but no one would listen to me. I'd say: 'Right, let's go back to the studio.' The others would say: 'Fuck off, Roger!'"

Paice: "For the first year, the whole *Perfect Strangers* run was fantastic. It started to go pear-shaped with *The House Of Blue Light*. Again, Ritchie was starting to push for total dominance, and Ian wasn't having any of it. The rest of us went along with the flow but we did ourselves no favours. Because by doing nothing, we allowed Ritchie to cement his hole."

Gillan: "I got fired. I was banging my fist on the table, complaining about our touring schedule. We weren't doing anything except playing the same old circuit. Ritchie wouldn't go to Japan, he wouldn't go to Russia, he wouldn't go to South America. But my complaints fell on deaf ears because Ritchie had assumed control."

There followed arguably the most bizarre period in Purple's history when Joe Lynn Turner – a slick American frontman who had previously worked with Blackmore in Rainbow – was brought in to replace Gillan.

Paice: "Joe was never the right guy for Purple, but you know what? He was the only guy out there who could sing. I will not have one bad word said against him, because he bought us some time."

After a single album with Turner – 1990's *Slaves And Masters* – Gillan returned for 1993's *The Battle Rages On*.

Gillan: "A couple of years had passed by. I was exceedingly happy just pootling around. Then some dirty tricks were pulled to force me back into Purple. I said: 'I'd rather slit my throat than ever work with those bastards again.' But people I loved

MODERN-DAY PURPLE: FROM BAD TO MORSE

Arguments and bust-ups? No sir, not in today's band.

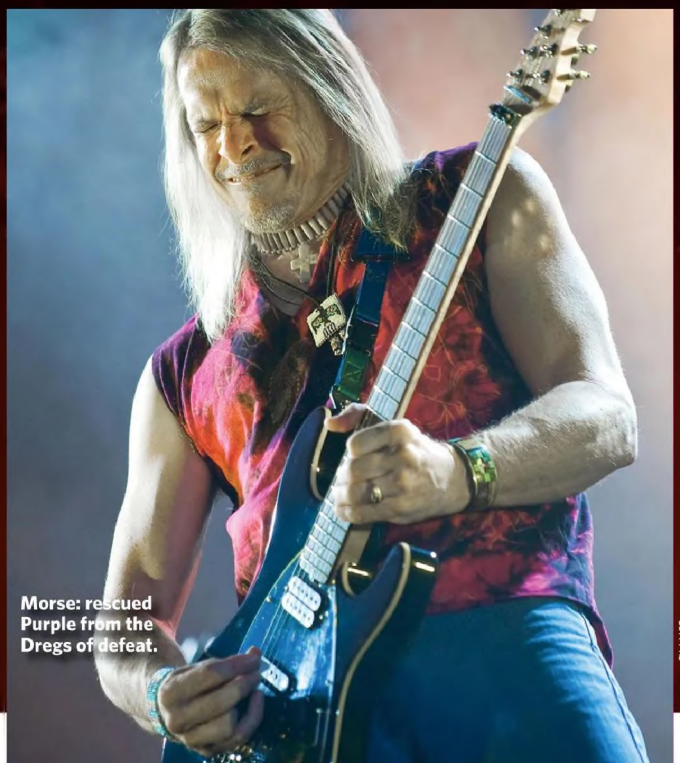
Words: **Malcome Dome**

It's easy to dismiss the post-Blackmore period of the modern-era Deep Purple as meaningless and inconsequential. However, not only is this grossly unfair but also somewhat misleading, painting a picture of the band as being dependant on one man – and a guitarist who'd lost interest in the house of Purple a long time before he finally left.

If anything, Blackmore's departure at the end of 1993 lit a fire under vocalist Ian Gillan, bassist Roger Glover, keyboard player Jon Lord and drummer Ian Paice. The remaining members of Mk II might have faced an uncertain future, but met the challenge head on.

Famed American guitarist Joe Satriani came in for both Japanese and European tours, adding his own style to the band's well-trodden songs. Only record-contract complications prevented him from joining on a permanent basis; we'll never know quite what he'd have brought to a long-term relationship. But his replacement was to prove an inspirational move, being none other than Kansas/Dixie Dregs master Steve Morse.

The new man added an extra dimension to the band, something captured superbly on the 1996 album *Purpendicular*. Not only was this considerably more diverse than anything they'd ever attempted – in its way, this was as revolutionary for Purple as had been the more funk-oriented groove of *Burn* – but the five-piece rose to the challenge with a verve and dynamic they'd



Morse: rescued Purple from the Dregs of defeat.

GETTY X3

Happier days? Ritchie on stage with Rainbow.

and respected told me it'd be the right thing to do, and to grow up and deal with it. They said: 'Just don't let Ritchie get to you. Just stick to your guns and don't get wound up.'

"Ritchie hated that I was back in the band. It all came to a head in Helsinki [on November 17, 1993]. We had a meeting in the dressing room and we learnt a few, shall I say, home truths about Ritchie from [Purple manager] Bruce Payne. So that night there were a few tears… and then suddenly it all turned around. There was a determination to carry on. We decided to continue with the tour without Ritchie. We got Joe Satriani to pick it up in Japan and everyone's confidence returned."

Notwithstanding Gillan's comments, the official line is that Blackmore resigned some weeks prior to the Helsinki show, on October 30.

Glover offers his viewpoint: "To start off with, there was some argument about the songwriting. We used to share everything five ways but Ritchie felt he wasn't getting enough credit. I suppose it was fair enough from his point of view. But that attitude did eventually destroy the band. I was relieved when Ritchie decided to in leave the middle of the following Fall."

Paice: "It was delicate. Ian and Ritchie tried to make it work, but eventually Ritchie's emotions got the better of him. He tried to retake his crown but it didn't work. When Ritchie can't get his own way he becomes destructive. There was absolutely no joy in the band at all. Ritchie was incredibly difficult to work with. Playing drums in Purple was becoming a job, and that's why I hated it more than anything else."

Gillan: "We all have fond memories of having Joe Satriani in the band. I'll tell you why. It was because we'd been unshackled. Paicey had been put through torment, like Ritchie insisting that he play along to a click-track. A click-track for Ian Paice?! Give me a break. So Paicey had lost all his confidence and was playing like shit. I was singing like shit; I was straining for every note. I couldn't speak when I came off stage. So, yeah, having Joe on board, however briefly, was a breath of fresh air."

With Satriani unable to commit full-time, Purple appointed their fourth and possibly final guitarist: ex-Dixie Dregs/Kansas man Steve Morse, who joined on a short tour of Mexico in November '94.

Glover: "When Steve Morse arrived I saw everyone climb out of their 10-year depression. Jon started playing better than ever. Paicey became Paicey again – he wasn't just this plodding drummer doing his job. He became fiery and inventive. And Gillan just went nuts, coming up with loads of ideas. All of us just blossomed."

After the turmoil of the Blackmore years, life in the modern-day Purple has been remarkably stable – the only blip being the retirement of Jon Lord in 2002. Lord played on *Purpendicular* ('96) and *Abandon* ('98) before Don Airey stepped in for *Bananas* ('03) and *Rapture Of The Deep* ('06).

Glover reflects on Purple's epic career: "It's a destiny, it's a family, it's… my life. People ask me: 'How have Purple lasted so long?' I honestly don't know the answer to that, but I think it's something to do with the fact that we're a very natural band. There's no pretence. We're just musicians doing our jobs… playing loud, aggressive, exciting music for sure, but still musicians first and foremost."

"I will not have a bad word said against Joe Lynn Turner. He bought us some time." – Ian Paice

Gillan: "Purple will continue to forge ahead. But my first time on stage with them at the Speakeasy in London is still the greatest gig I've ever done. I've played to a lot of fantastic crowds, huge numbers of people in exotic places, but nothing will ever beat playing in front of 40 people at the Speakeasy."

Paice: "How would I sum up Purple's career in a nutshell? That's easy. From cottage industry, to multinational giant, to lunatic asylum."

not shown since *Perfect Strangers*. Songs like *Ted The Mechanic*, *Somebody Stole My Guitar* and *The Aviator* told of a band reborn. With Blackmore gone, Deep Purple re-discovered the joy of creating new music.

Moreover, throughout the late 1990s and into the new decade, this Mk VIII incarnation was again playing to big audiences. Sadly, Deep Purple were in decline prior to Blackmore's final exit. Audiences were dwindling and the band had reacted with a sense of resignation and indifference, which suggested they were unable to halt the slide. Now, Morse gave them a much-needed boost, not only as a musician, but also as a personality who complemented the defined roles of the more established members of the band.

'With Ritchie gone, Purple had such a positive vibe. They re-discovered the joy of creating new music.'

In 1998, they released the altogether harder *Abandon*. They did an intriguing re-working of *Bloodsucker* from *In Rock* (here titled *Bludsucker*), and overall went for a sound which reflected their live approach. Like *Purpendicular*, this sold remarkably well, especially in areas of the world where the older, more venerable Purple had failed to make their mark. This, in turn, was because the band now had such a positive vibe; they wanted to tour everywhere.

Over the next four years, Purple were a constant presence on tour, playing arenas and stadia across the globe, attracting older fans but also a new, younger generation who had become acquainted with the band's legend through the approbation and acclaim of modern heroes. What the kids saw was not a one-time great now living in the past, but a fully fledged behemoth capable of going toe-to-toe with anyone.

In 2002, Jon Lord decided to retire from Purple; he no longer felt able to tour with such vigour. His replacement seemed almost inevitable, namely Don Airey, a man who'd worked with Rainbow and Ozzy among many others. Airey came into the band with Lord's full approval, able to carry on his predecessor's tradition, yet also adding his own flourishes. Airey was encouraged to be his own man, in the same way as Morse had been. The result has been that Mk VIII has scarcely faltered.

In 2003, Purple released *Bananas*, followed two years later by *Rapture Of The Deep*. Both albums paid due homage to the past, yet also proved there was a lot more about the new band than nostalgia. It says much that *Rapture Of The Deep* is the biggest-selling Purple album since *Perfect Strangers* – who says this band are now living on past achievements?

Since the release of that last studio album, Purple have been constantly touring, forever extending their schedule, as demand takes them around the planet. Right now, Purple have probably never been more stable. Any recent line-up changes have happened only due to logistics, rather than major temperamental disruptions; amicable departures were the norm as opposed to violent dismissal. And the fact that this period of the band has taken them smoothly through 15 years (and counting) says much for the cohesion, focus and shared vision they now have.

Status Quo

Forty-Five Hundred Times

It was the song that threw a spanner in the songwriting partnership of Parfitt and Rossi, but it took on a life of its own and remains an essential live favourite. They even extended it for royalty.

Words: **Dave Ling**

It may not have been a hit, but *Forty-Five Hundred Times* is one of Status Quo's best songs. Recorded for 1973's *Hello!* album, it rapidly became a cornerstone of their live shows in a much expanded form. But it's also the track that effectively ended the songwriting partnership of Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt – the former has even said that he hates the song. But despite its turbulent beginnings, today it stands as a Quo connoisseur's favourite, and the musical embodiment of the classic Frantic Four line-up.

By 1973 the band had put their faux-psychedelic beginnings far behind them, and had established themselves as one of Britain's pre-eminent rock bands. The previous year's *Piledriver* album found Quo perfecting their no-nonsense boogie, though they weren't averse to stretching their wings when the mood took them. *Forty-Five Hundred Times* was one such occasion.

Rossi and Parfitt had begun work on the track during pre-production for *Hello!* – in an unusual location.

"It was first worked on at my first mother-in-law's house," Rossi recalls. "We were trying to write a song with three movements, like we later did with *Slow Train* [from the following year's *Quo* album], among others."

But the pair soon discovered a tendency to over-complicate matters. As a result, *Forty-Five Hundred Times* would be the last time just the two of them worked together on songs – they would collude in future, but always with another writer as well.

"Each time we thought we'd got something right, Rick would try to improve it and we'd lose track of where we were. It was like pulling teeth. Which is among the reasons why we stopped writing together."

A triumph of light and shade, the song begins with a gentle intro before accelerating into a no-holds-barred dandruff-shaker. The lyrics bemoan the lonely existence of an individual who craved to be seated at *'a table for two'*.

"Rick and I were in a Yankee phase at the time, hence the song's title," says Rossi. "In real English it would've been called *Four Thousand Five Hundred Times*. Which doesn't quite work, does it?"

The song was hammered out at top volume in the band's old haunt of IBC Studios in London's Portland Place, with the band – Rossi and Parfitt plus bassist Alan Lancaster and drummer John Coghlan – sitting in a circle around the amps. With the band themselves producing it, no one batted an eyelid when the finished song ended up running close to the 10-minute mark.

Parent album *Hello!* gave Quo their first No.1, but it was live that *Forty-Five Hundred Times* took on a life of its own. If ever a song summed up the band's 'take it or fuck off' appeal, this was it, and it quickly became a fan favourite. On stage it was often jammed out to twice its original length, sometimes more; when the Coghlan-less band played it at Birmingham NEC (in front of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, no less) it was almost 22 minutes long.

"Each time we thought we'd got it, Rick would try to improve it and we'd lose track of where we were. It was like pulling teeth."

"The first part of the song was the song, but we'd make the extra bits up," says Parfitt. "Night after night we would just read one another; there was almost a sense of telepathy between us. You'd just know when to get softer and then take it somewhere heavier. It was incredible. You'd be swept away by this roller-coaster of music. The only way to end it was to nod: 'Shall we finish it here?'"

As Alan Lancaster recalls, on some nights the band got a little too carried away and messed things up.

"There were subtle changes, so we would have to discipline ourselves to sit on the groove," he says. "I always enjoyed the sense of danger, it's what makes a good live concert. If you go to a tennis game, then you look out for unforced errors, don't you?"

In 1991 Status Quo re-recorded *Forty-Five Hundred Times* during the sessions for their *Rock 'Til You Drop* album, this time with an extra verse and four additional minutes of music (the results later appeared on an expanded edition).

"We were trying to make the song current for that incarnation of the band," says Rossi. "Whether or not we were successful in that… well, probably not. Musically speaking, it will have been tidier than the original – the playing would have improved. But, as we discovered on the reunion tour, that's not really what it's all about. After doing it live again three years later we went: 'What the fuck's this extra verse all about?' And we got rid of it."

Alan Lancaster is the song's biggest cheerleader within the band. The bassist regrets that on this year's reunion tour the Frantic Four cut the song down and segued into *Rain*.

"I didn't like doing it that way because those two songs have different grooves," he says. "Should we do it again, then I'd rather we play the full-length version."

Surprisingly, Rossi agrees. Before the reunion tour, he told *Classic Rock* that there was "absolutely no fucking chance" of the band playing an extended version of the song. Today he's mellowed on the subject.

"When it was first written, protracted arrangements were hip, man," he explains. "We ended up cutting it down because today people want a three-minute fix. Or so we thought. We've talked about doing more Frantic Four shows next year – one last bunch. If that happens, then we're going to take the salient bits [of the longer version] and put them back in again. I'd love to do the full version of *Forty-Five Hundred Times* – completely indulge myself and play guitar all night and bore the pants off people."

FRANTIC FOUR: WHAT'S NEXT?

"To me, the Frantic Four tour was a fucking mess," Francis Rossi grimaces. "Spud [John Coghlan] was unfit and kept slowing down, and Alan Lancaster has his own problems, so it was extremely hard work for me and Rick.

"Sometimes it was so sloppy that I just can't see why the fans loved it," Rossi continues. "I'm glad that they did so, but for the life of me I can't pretend to comprehend why, other than it's all about nostalgia. And that's not really what motivates me.

"The bottom line is that we could have rehearsed a little more, and I think that we will do so next time. I had a really hard time on that tour. However, there's something in me that says: 'Let's do it again and see if we can do it better.'"

GETTY X 2

The Frantic Four: forty-five hundred yards of denim.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
September 28, 1973, on the *Hello!* album

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
Not released as a single

PERSONNEL
Francis Rossi
Lead and various guitars, vocals
Richard Parfitt
Second and various guitars, piano
Alan Lancaster
Bass, vocals
John Coghlan
Drums, various percussion
John Mealing
Guest pianist

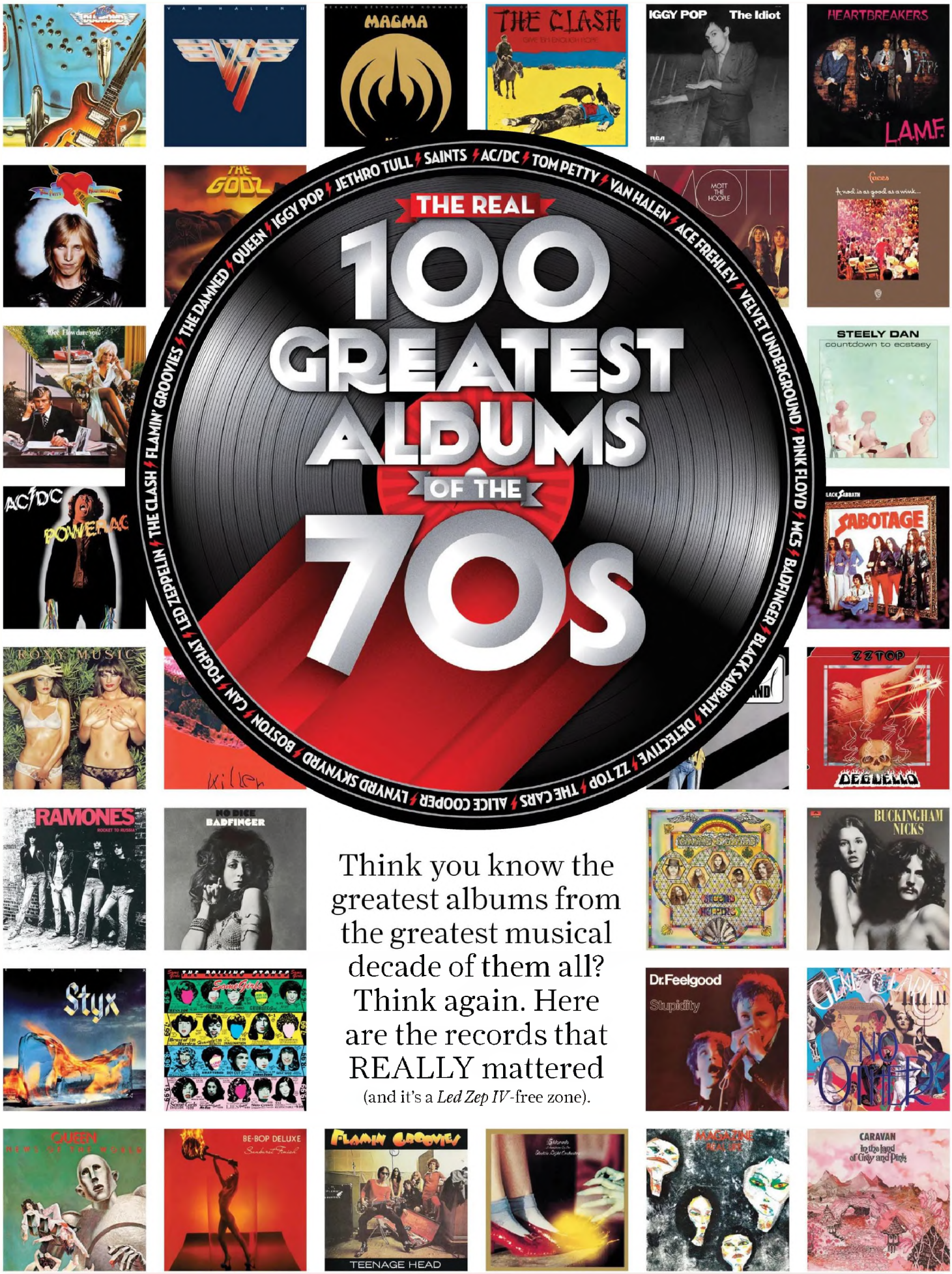
WRITTEN BY
Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt

PRODUCER
Status Quo

LABEL
Vertigo

CELEBRATE THE GREATEST ROCK BAND OF ALL TIME

Uncover four decades of dirty deeds, riff raff and rock 'n' roll damnation from the makers of Classic Rock magazine. From the mystery of Bon Scott's death to behind the scenes anecdotes, this is the complete AC/DC story



Words: Paul Brannigan, Geoff Barton, Mark Blake, Malcolm Dome, Paul Elliott, Ian Fortnam, Paul Henderson, Rob Hughes, Jo Kendall, Paul Lester, Dave Ling, Dave Lewis, Kris Needs, Chris Roberts, Henry Yates

Welcome to our epic rundown of the *Real* 100 Greatest Albums Of The 70s – the true connoisseurs' choice. The rules are simple:

1. ONE ALBUM PER BAND Yeah, we know Zeppelin, AC/DC, Bowie and the rest made enough great albums between them to make up the entire list, but that would be boring. We're giving the other guys a chance.

2. DON'T PICK THE MOST FAMOUS ALBUMS Does the world need to read about *Paranoid* again? No. These are the unsung classics and hidden gems. So expect the unexpected.

3. JUSTIFY IT Why should you care? Well, we're about to tell you.

All clear? Good. Now walk this way...

IN FOR THE KILL!

BUDGIE

MCA, 1974

The fourth album from the Welsh trio of bassist/vocalist Burke Shelley, guitarist/vocalist Tony Bourge and drummer Pete Boot was a ball of proto-metal energy. Tracks such as *Crash Course In Brain Surgery* and *Zoom Club* had a quirky yet effective groove, cementing Budgie's reputation with successive generations of metalheads. At the time, Budgie weren't deemed to be cool, but this album was a powerfully convincing message. **MD**

What they said at the time: *"There's nothing here to fire the imagination, only to pulverise it. It's full of spastic, lurching riffs and juvenile vocals."* *Melody Maker*

CLEAR SPOT

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART

Reprise, 1972

After pushing rock as far as it could stretch, Captain Beefheart sought success by hooking up with Doobies producer Ted Templeman. Together they fashioned *Clear Spot*'s concisely listenable but still uniquely alien gumbo fury – climaxing with the mind-blowing *Big Eyed Beans From Venus*. But it still didn't sell. **KN**

What they said at the time: *"It feels good to know that Beefheart has finally come into his own as a flat-out, full-throttle rock'n'roller."* *Creem*

NORTHWINDS

DAVID COVERDALE

Purple, 1978

The second solo album from David Coverdale was a lot closer to rootsy blues and soul than anything he had done with Purple. It was the template for where Coverdale would go in the early blues-rock days of Whitesnake, but it was overlooked at the time due to a lack of promotion. **MD**

What they said at the time: *"Eight chunky rock songs that range from ballads to rockers. [Coverdale] sings with conviction and plenty of husky firepower."* *Record Business*

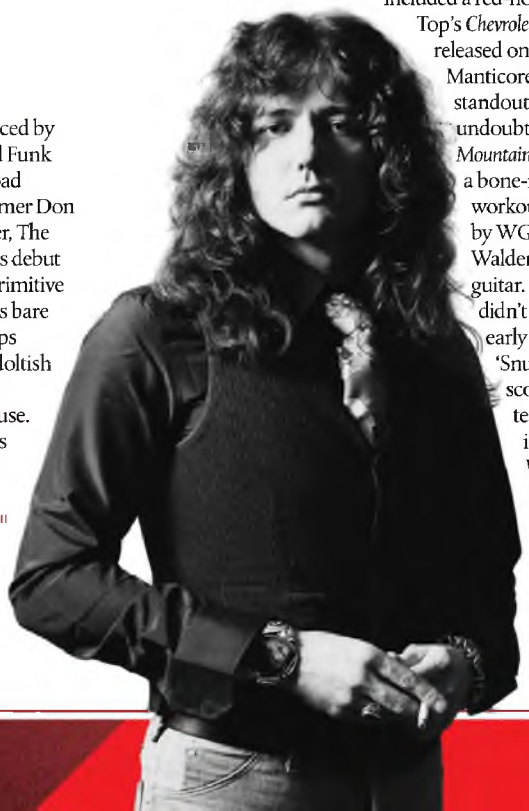
THE GODZ

THE GODZ

RCA, 1978

Produced by Grand Funk Railroad drummer Don Brewer, The Godz's debut was primitive American hard rock stripped to its bare bones. Guitarist Eric Moore's chops dominate, while the endearingly doltish biker anthem *Gotta Keep A Runnin'* made Twisted Sister sound like Muse. They try to tell us that rock'n'roll is dead – but Godz's rock'n'roll ain't dead. Not by a long chalk. **GB**

What they said at the time: *"People have compared them to Grand Funk but I reckon they're better, tighter, more in the traditional vein of good-old, kick-ass rock."* *Sounds*



David Coverdale: *Northwinds* was the template for early Whitesnake.

MËKANÏK DËSTRUKTÏƉ KOMMANDOH

MAGMA

A&M, 1973

Three albums in, drummer/composer Christian Vander took his French ensemble to the limits of prog-jazz eccentricity. You didn't have to understand Vander's mythic language of Kobaïan to get this symphonic sci-fi saga – the explosive polyrhythmic melding of Swingle Singers, Carl Orff and metal sufficed. The album was produced by former Yardbirds/Stones impresario Giorgio Gomelsky, and it also birthed the cultish prog subgenre of Zeuhl. **JK**

What they said at the time: *"Listening requires a lot of mental adjustment, a rethink about musical values… this is music of the spheres."* *Melody Maker*

STRAY DOG

STRAY DOG

Manticore, 1973

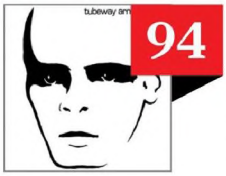
Texans Stray Dog were an oddity, insofar as they managed to enjoy the simultaneous patronage of ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and ELP's Greg Lake. This rabid debut album included a red-hot cover of the Top's *Chevrolet* and was released on ELP's own Manticore label. The standout track is undoubtedly *Rocky Mountain Suite (Bad Road)*, a bone-raw heavy blues workout that's fuelled by WG 'Snuffy' Walden's incendiary guitar. But the Dog didn't live up to their early pedigree, and 'Snuffy' snuck off to score music for television shows, including *The West Wing*. **GB**

What they said at the time: *"Their mongrel sound just gets more beat-up and mangy by the second."* *Sounds*

TUBEWAY ARMY

TUBEWAY ARMY

Beggars Banquet, 1978



Gary Numan's debut set out the DNA of 1979's hottest act – a fascination with Philip K Dick, chronic social dysfunction and Ziggy storytelling – and slathered impressive guitar work over primitive synth-punk. **JK**

What they said at the time: ***"Simple and savage future projections."*** NME

TAGO MAGO

CAN

United Artists, 1971

With its unintelligible lyrics, free-form structures and epic grooves, *Tago Mago* was never likely to turn Can into chart sensations. Yet its abstract brilliance and hallucinogenic art-rock signalled a bold new form of German expressionism. **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"I don't get the impression that there's any deep sense of the spirit of rock and roll in the music."*** *Melody Maker*

NO OTHER

GENE CLARK

Asylum, 1974

1973's Byrds reunion afforded Clark a solo deal with Asylum. Alas, the label failed to appreciate this country-rock masterpiece with metaphysical lyrics and psychedelic gospel overtones, and didn't promote it. **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"A refinement of all Clark has done with The Byrds and as a solo artist."*** *Sounds*

III

SANTANA

CBS, 1971

Santana went the full Chicano monty with *III*, enlisting a 17-year-old Neal Schon to atomise scorching rock licks across free-flowing cross-rhythms. *Everybody's Everything* was the high point on this *Billboard* No.1 album. **JK**

What they said at the time: ***"You don't just listen to Santana; you get inside the rhythm and participate."*** *Rolling Stone*

90 LEGS DIAMOND

LEGS DIAMOND

Mercury, 1976

Often described as the American Deep Purple – primarily due to Michael Prince's flamboyant Jon Lord-style keyboards – California's Legs Diamond were actually more streamlined and cocksure than their Brit counterparts, while preening frontman Rick Sanford owed more to Robert Plant than Ian Gillan. When, on *Satin Peacock*, Sanford crooned, *'Kiss me if you miss me, but don't mess up my hair,'* he unwittingly summed up the anguish of the forthcoming hair-metal generation. **GB**

Q&A

How do you view Legs Diamond's debut album now?

Michael Prince (guitar/keyboards): I'm still very happy with it. It's a good, raw-sounding record. It's no holds barred. We got Derek Lawrence to produce it, who did the first three Deep Purple albums. Kiss wanted to cover one of the songs on the record, *Satin Peacock*, but we wouldn't let them.

Legs Diamond shared management with flamboyant glam-metallers Angel. How did you create your own image?

We started dressing like gangsters, in pinstripe suits and hats. [The group named themselves after infamous 1930s gangster Jack 'Legs' Diamond.] Our singer, Rick Sanford, used to come on at the start of the show and pull out a gun. It didn't have real bullets in it, obviously, but he used to fire it straight at the audience. I don't think you'd be able to get away with that today...

Your last record came out ten years ago. Is the band dead and buried?

There are diehard fans out there who keep asking us if we're going to do a new album – and the answer is yes. Rest assured, Legs Diamond ain't done yet.

NEXT

SENSATIONAL ALEX HARVEY BAND

Vertigo, 1973

They didn't call him 'Scotland's Tommy Steele' for nothing. In the post-Elvis era, Steele was the textbook 'all-round entertainer'. With Jacques Brel chanson, bullish Gorbals swagger, vintage rock'n'roll panache, arch musical theatre notes and embryonic electronica, *Next* saw Harvey deliver in every which way. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"Thank Christ, somebody is doing something a little unusual – with depth, style and the balls of a rampant rhino."*** *Sounds*

COUNTDOWN TO ECSTASY

STEELY DAN

ABC, 1973

Dan's second album is the connoisseurs' choice. Becker and Fagen brought jazz cool and rapier intelligence to bear on LA vacancy with all the melodic malice they could muster. **PL**

What they said at the time: ***"Fagen and Becker have a gift for weaving songs out of American place names, fragments of conversations and fag-ends of dreams."*** *Let It Rock*

ELDORADO

ELO

Warner Brothers, 1974

ELO's fourth album saw mainman Jeff Lynne add conceptual weight as he moved from prog to pop. UK audiences were still fazed by the orchestral flourishes, but America embraced it: *Can't Get It Out Of My Head* was their first US Top 10 hit. **PL**

What they said at the time: ***"The heavy strings and choral backings serve as effective filters, enhancing the dreamlike atmosphere of composer Jeff Lynne's storyline."*** *Rolling Stone*

Season's end: Styx, with John Curulewski (centre).

EQUINOX

STYX

A&M, 1975

Was a Tommy Shaw-less Styx unthinkable? Pah! This album featured the guitarist's predecessor, John Curulewski, and it was a masterful hybrid of fustian pomp and searing hard rock. From the splifftastic *Light Up*, via the emotion-packed *Lorelei*, to the buccaneering *Born For Adventure*, here Styx came of age, paving the way for more lauded classics such as 1977's *The Grand Illusion*. **GB**

What they said at the time: ***"Pomp rock lives… run to the hills!"*** *Sounds*

GOOD SINGIN' GOOD PLAYIN'

GRAND FUNK RAILROAD

MCA, 1976

The world rejoiced when Grand Funk Railroad – archetypal exponents of dullard American blue-collar hard rock – split in '76. But then something totally unexpected happened. Frank Zappa persuaded them to re-form and make this LP, which bizarrely mixed avant-garde *Freak Out!* sensibilities with trademark GFR bludgeon. Zappa produced – and even played a scintillating guitar solo on *Out To Get You*. The Railroad never sounded so Funkin' good. **GB**

What they said at the time: ***"For the first time on record you can hear Grand Funk Railroad… and they're fantastic, f-a-a-a-ntastic, with an 'F' three times taller than you!"*** *Frank Zappa*

SUNBURST FINISH

BE-BOP DELUXE

Harvest, 1976

Guitarist/vocalist Bill Nelson's decision to bring in keyboard player Andy Clark for the band's third LP was a bright move, resulting in a near-perfect balance of busy art-rock and proggy ambition. This hook-heavy collection produced a UK Top 30 hit with *Ships In The Night*. **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"The sci-fi fantasies of Bill Nelson translated into rock make a comfortable alternative to much of today's drivel."*** *Melody Maker*

NO DICE

BADFINGER

Apple, 1970

For just a heartbeat, Brit melodicists Badfinger seemed tailor-made to replace The Beatles, with the Pete Ham/Tom Evans partnership cranking out solid-gold pop-rock like *No Matter What* and *Believe Me*. The ubiquitous *Without You* endures – it's been covered by over 180 artists – but the band's tragic early demise probably stopped *No Dice* entering the pantheon. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"It's as if John, Paul, George and Ringo had been reincarnated as Joey, Pete, Tom and Mike of Badfinger."*** *Rolling Stone*

DETECTIVE

DETECTIVE

Swan Song, 1977

We agonised long and hard whether to include Silverhead or Detective in our list, both being fronted by decadent rock toff Michael Des Barres. The former band operated at the hooligan end of the glam-rock spectrum; the latter enjoyed the patronage of Led Zeppelin and purveyed a massive *Kashmir*-style sound. So Detective it is, then. If you're unfamiliar with their work, investigate the track *One More Heartache* where Des Barres proved he had lungs as big as a brace of barrage balloons. **GB**

What they said at the time: ***"Echoes of Led Zeppelin rampage through the whole record."*** *NME*

HOW DARE YOU!

10cc

Mercury, 1975

Uncompromised by predecessor *The Original Soundtrack* and its monster hit *I'm Not In Love*, 10cc's fourth album – and last with Godley and Creme before they left to conduct their own musical experiments – was bursting with multi-faceted, degree-level compositions that left lesser bands eating their intellectual dust. Who else could craft a pop smash out of a plane crash (*I'm Mandy Fly Me*), knock out a breezy ode to dictatorship (*I Wanna Rule The World*), or turn frigidity into 20s tea-dance fun (*Iceberg*)? As complex and intriguing as the Hipgnosis sleeve that housed it. **JK**

What they said at the time: ***"Blazingly bright, brashly witty… trains of thought unimaginable for a rock'n'roll band."*** *Phonograph Record*

Don't Hang Up: 10cc's Kevin Godley dials in for the last time.

SPLIT

GROUNDHOGS

Mercury, 1975

Grungy, aggressive and proundly inventive, this fourth album saw the increasingly smooth path which the British blues pack was taking in the early 70s and ran away in the opposite direction. In doing so, it helped reinvent Tony McPhee as one of the most radical and experimental musicians around. By their third album, *Thank Christ For The Bomb*, the Groundhogs had carved out a reputation as a progressively-minded blues band. But it would be the follow-up that came hurtling out of left field. The album's central theme was McPhee's brush with drugs – he calls it his "mental aberration". After gathering himself, he put together some songs, playing the role of mad scientist, wresting ever-weirder noises from his hand-made amps and instruments, encompassing melodic folk-blues to Beefheart-esque experimentalism. **JK**

What they said at the time: ***"Probably the most intersting thing, musically and lyrically, that the group have done so far."*** *NME*

DESOLATION BOULEVARD

SWEET

Kama Sutra, 1971

Until wresting their destiny from songwriters Chinn & Chapman, Sweet were well known for making bubblegum 45s. *Sweet Fanny Adams* saw them become a fully fledged hard rock band capable of holding their own with just about any of the era's more credible names. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"Sweet stood to lose much in making this album. Had it failed they'd have looked extraordinarily silly, but they haven't."*** *Disc*

TEENAGE HEAD

FLAMIN' GROOVIES

Kama Sutra, 1971

Boasting a similar dynamic to the Stones' *Sticky Fingers* album of the same year, Frisco's Groovies went head to head with 'The Greatest Rock 'N' Roll Band In The World' at the peak of their powers – and according to Mick Jagger, made the better record. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"The best American album I've heard this year… Teenage Head is close to being the best hard rock album ever released by an American rock group."***

The Rag

LIVE

FOGHAT

Bearsville, 1977

An early example of the phenomenon known as 'big in the States/minnows at home', Foghat formed in London following the break-up of Savoy Brown in 1970, and included some of the latter's members. But it was blue-collar America that went berserk for Foghat's high-intensity boogie-rock, driven by some of the most incendiary slide guitar that you'll ever hear, courtesy of Rod Price. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"An album so brash that it makes Kiss sound like a folk act."*** *Circus*

PARCEL OF ROGUES

STEELEYE SPAN

Chrysalis, 1973

Following the departure of folk mainstays Martin Carthy and Fairport Convention's Ashley Hutchings, Steeleye signed with manager Jo Lustig for his deft elevation of Pentangle and Ralph McTell. Their second album under him married traditional songs to a theme of Robert Louis Stevenson's adventure novel *Kidnapped*, but walloped up the rock element to change the band's direction – and fortune – for good. **JK**

What they said at the time: ***"Old songs poured so full of vibrant electricity that they damn near burst."*** *NME*

THE CARS

THE CARS

Elektra, 1978

Merging synths and guitars, The Cars' debut album pretty much nailed the skinny-tie new wave sound in the US. The slick production burned like ice on the hits *My Best Friend's Girl* and *Just What I Needed*. **CR**

What they said at the time: ***"The fashionable cheekbones and slightly synthetic, clean, seen-it-all-before stance of a group who could go all the way. Or park it here."*** *NME*

H TO HE, WHO AM THE ONLY ONE

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Charisma, 1970

The songs here were themed around the notion of isolation, and the music reflected this feeling. As on previous albums, VDGG took almost perverse artistic risks, resulting in poor sales and mixed reviews. But their prog stock has risen over the years. **MD**

What they said at the time: ***"Van Der Graaf Generator should be one of the groups most likely to succeed in 1971."*** *Record Mirror*

ARGUS

WISHBONE ASH

Decca, 1972

The album that topped *Sounds* readers' poll at the end of '72 wasn't Purple's *Machine Head*, Sabbath's *Vol. 4*, or Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*, but *Argus* by Wishbone Ash. A beguiling, melodious mix of heavy rock, prog and folk, and with some nifty twin-lead guitar playing that was groundbreaking for the time, *Argus* was steeped in English mysticism. Its ambience was enhanced by the enigmatic sentinel depicted on its Hipgnosis cover, even though the photo was actually taken in Provence, France. **GB**

What they said at the time: ***"With debts to The Who, Traffic and The Beatles as well as to Yes, Argus's songs are loaded with energy and overall good feelings."*** *Rolling Stone*

DON'T LOOK BACK

BOSTON

Epic, 1978

Unfairly overlooked in the stampede to praise their multi-platinum-selling debut, *Don't Look Back* was no mere tatty replica of it. Although guitarist/mastermind Tom Scholz later moaned of being hurried in its completion – despite a thousand hours of studio time – the results topped the US *Billboard* chart – something that its predecessor failed to do. **DL**

What they said at the time: ***"Don't Look Back isn't a departure from, but a consolidation of, the sound introduced on Boston's dazzling first album."*** *Rolling Stone*

CHICAGO II

CHICAGO

Columbia, 1970

Energetic double album that takes in free jazz, hip-shaking R&B and an *Abbey Road*-like six-song suite. Slipping down the back of the sofa of time as they evolved into soft-rock giants, punchy rocker *25 Or 6 To 4* is a reminder of the band's raw live power. **JK**

What they said at the time: ***"Each recording develops into virtually uncharted territory… Basie with the broad appeal of Cole Porter."*** *Disc*

Supertramp: spiritual ruminations and radio-friendly art rock.

FREE AT LAST

FREE
Island, 1972

70

Having split the previous year, 1972's reconstituted version of Free offered a more muted alternative to their usual hard-rocking blues. The songs were thus more reflective and exploratory, typified by the burnished beauty of standouts *Guardian Of The Universe* and *Little Bit Of Love*. **RH**

What they said at the time: *"They've decided to re-channel their energies into simple straight-ahead compositions on a par with* All Right Now *for the future."* *Rolling Stone*

BRIDGE OF SIGHS

ROBIN TROWER
Chrysalis/Capitol, 1974

69

Robin Trower was always more in thrall to American blues than to the British boom, and the epic stylings of *Day Of The Eagle* and *In This Place* helped *Bridge*… stay in the US chart for 31 weeks. On the flip side, it didn't set tills ringing on home turf. **HY**

What they said at the time: *"Trower admits to drawing his inspiration from Jimi Hendrix… in coherence and flash, his solos bear comparison with his mentor's."* *Rolling Stone*

(I'M) STRANDED

THE SAINTS
EMI, 1977

68

Coming up at the same time as the Ramones in New York City, Brisbane's Saints honed a similarly loutish punk bludgeon of their own. Banging out their debut in two days wasn't a problem for 'the most primitive band in the world', and *(I'm) Stranded* blurred by in a slack-jawed firestorm of bullish machismo. Slouching into London as the punk wars raged, they couldn't even be arsed to get a haircut. **IF**

What they said at the time: *"Albums of this power and velocity are pretty rare. It's like having your hair burned off with a flame-thrower."* *Zigzag*

CRIME OF THE CENTURY

SUPERTRAMP
A&M, 1974

67

Five years before Supertramp's world-conquering *Breakfast In America*, they prepared the ground with this suite of fabulous songs about growing up and loneliness. A mix of spiritual ruminations and radio-friendly art rock, *School*, *Rudy* and hit single *Dreamer* were also purpose-built for hi-fi buffs looking for something new after *Dark Side Of The Moon*. **MB**

What they said at the time: "Crime Of The Century *has the makings of a monster."* NME

FORCE IT

UFO
Chrysalis, 1975

66

Force It was UFO's second album to feature Michael Schenker as guitarist, continuing a growing sense of sophistication. That two-thirds of its songs would become staples of the band's live act says pretty much everything. **DL**

What they said at the time: *"Michael Schenker can play guitar as scalding as the hot tap, or as icy as the cold one."* *Sounds*

SPECTRES

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT
Columbia, 1977

65

Spectres was raised in the shadow of Blue Öyster Cult's *(Don't Fear) The Reaper* and its parent album *Agents Of Fortune* – and it's remained there ever since. *Godzilla*'s homage to a radiation-mutated Japanese monster became a staple of every BÖC 'best of', but the rest was largely overlooked. It's a shame, as *Spectres* offset its knuckleheaded riffs with great melancholy and a dramatis personae comprising suicidal lovers (*Death Valley Nights*), vampires (*Nosferatu*) and a fetish-loving motorcycle gang (*Golden Age Of Leather*). Plus any album that includes the lyric, *'Oh no, there goes Tokyo/ Go go Godzilla,'* deserves a blue plaque. **MB**

What they said at the time: *"Each song is a small masterpiece of form and composition.* Spectres *has no flaws."* NME

TED NUGENT

TED NUGENT
Epic, 1975

64

In later years, the Nuge would become infamous for the various axes he had to grind. Back in '75, with his first album as a solo artist after splitting The Amboy Dukes, it was all about how he could grind that one axe, his Gibson Byrdland. With this album, Nugent was transformed into a guitar hero. *Stranglehold* set the tone, an eight-minute jam with a mind-blowing solo. *Motor City Madhouse* had a manic intensity. And on swinging tunes such as *Hey Baby* and *Just What The Doctor Ordered*, Nugent reached deep into classic American rhythm and blues. **PE**

What they said at the time: *"If they'd had Nugent at Jericho the fracas could have been over immediately. He makes some acceptably horrible noises."* NME

STREET HASSLE

LOU REED
Arista, 1978

63

Released at the zenith of Lou's titanic media-unfriendly belligerence, *Street Hassle* was a Metropolitan masterpiece wrapped in a multifaceted 'fuck you'. At its heart was a never-bettered, career-defining title cut – a gritty urban triptych reminiscent of Hubert Selby Jr. and John Rechy's inner-city prose, driven by a mantric cello figure that simply wouldn't let up. Elsewhere, Reed baited the forces of liberalism with *I Wanna Be Black* and delighted in cocksure self-parody with *Gimmie Some Good Times* and *Dirt*. **IF**

What they said at the time: *"[Title track] Street Hassle at least shows that Reed still cares and can still do it. The rest runs the gamut from amusing one-liners to flaccid cocktail workouts and unredeemed self-indulgence."* *Sounds*

THE INNER MOUNTING FLAME

MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA

CBS, 1971

It's very difficult to explain now just how jaw-dropping and head-spinning *The Inner Mounting Flame* sounded when it landed in 1971, seemingly from a galaxy far, far away. At times loud, heavyweight and in-your-face with its controlled cacophony of virtuosic guitar, bass, drums, synthesiser and electric violin, occasionally achingly melodic and pacific, it was truly groundbreaking. An easy first listen it certainly was not. But with Mahavishnu's outrageous debut album, jazz rock had truly arrived, the term 'far out' was redefined, and a new mountain peak had appeared on the musical landscape. **PH**

What they said at the time: *"Its coherence and control comes as a shaft of light on the muddied and confused. The effects of this remarkable album will be far reaching."* *Melody Maker*

LITTLE QUEEN

HEART

Portrait, 1977

Before they re-emerged in the mid-80s in *Dynasty*-style shoulder-pads and choking clouds of hairspray, Heart played folky hard rock and dressed like they were on their way to Robin Hood's wedding. Their 1976 debut *Dreamboat Annie* is considered to be the pinnacle of this era, but the smarter money's on the second one, *Little Queen*. There's Ann Wilson's cut-glass voice and sister Nancy's elegant guitar on the title track and the ballad *Treat Me Well*. But mainly there's Heart's greatest song: the riff-heavy *Barracuda*, in which they somehow make the titular fish sound as life-threatening as Jaws. **MB**

What they said at the time: *"Why don't they just let go? They did on* Dreamboat Annie*… I don't know. I just know I'm disappointed."* *Sounds*

COUNTRY LIFE

ROXY MUSIC

Island, 1974

Somewhere between Roxy Music's critically esteemed first flush and their rakish 80s pop years came *Country Life*. This middle-period Roxy LP is now remembered as much for its risqué sleeve as the music inside. Assisted by Brian Eno's replacement, the similarly spectral looking violin/keyboard player Edwin 'Eddie' Jobson, *The Thrill Of It All*'s hard pop, the prog-meets-Bertolt Brecht oompah *Bitter-Sweet* (where Bryan Ferry sings in guttural German) and *Casanova*'s club-footed funk rock were all brilliantly odd. It's clear proof that Roxy Music's endemic strangeness didn't just evaporate after Eno left the band. **MB**

What they said at the time: *"To fashion an album filled with relatively straightforward love songs that come out sounding like the Decline of the West is no mean feat."* *Rolling Stone*

CAPTAIN LOCKHEED AND THE STARFIGHTERS

ROBERT CALVERT

CBS, 1971

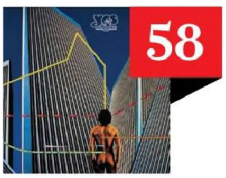
Calvert's manic imagination was fuelled by an undiagnosed bipolar disorder, which helped him conceive one of the decade's most outlandish concept albums. Not just a prog rock concept odyssey, but a gleeful *Monty Python* meets *Catch 22* middle-finger to the powers-that-be. It takes the concept of *The Right Stuff*'s foolhardy courage and icy reserve and turns it on its head, with tracks like *Ejection* or *The Right Stuff* described as crucial to Hawkwind's genre by Nik Turner. The satirical proto-anarcho-punk masterpiece was an influential work on everyone from the Dead Kennedys to Monster Magnet. **AM**

What they said at the time: *"It seems an almost inconceivable incongruity that such a well-spoken nattily turned-out young man should be connected to those wild, hairy lads in Hawkwind."* *NME*

GOING FOR THE ONE

YES

Atlantic, 1977



Received wisdom advocates that Yes's golden age lasted up to 1972's *Close To The Edge*, after which they forgot how to write songs until 1983's *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*. In fact, Yes rediscovered their songwriting stimulus on *Going For The One*, an album of bookish prog rock with proper tunes. The title track *almost* bordered on conventional rock'n'roll, the epic *Awaken* balanced singer Jon Anderson's prayer for spiritual enlightenment with a captivating melody, and it all came packaged in a punk rock-defying triple gatefold sleeve. Still the best Yes album nobody talks about. **MB**

What they said at the time: *"One great track and four interesting ones. I hope they're itching to get back into the studio and feed the inspiration."* *Sounds*

RUN WITH THE PACK

BAD COMPANY

Island, 1976

Bad Company's third album didn't fly as well as the two before, and it failed to deliver another big hit like *Can't Get Enough* or *Feel Like Makin' Love*. But it deserved better. *Live For The Music*'s primitive swagger is irresistible; *Silver, Blue & Gold* and the title track are a study apiece in subtlety and melodrama. **MB**

What they said at the time: *"All those supermanly strong, vibrant chords, packed with aggression and virility leave me cold."* *Sounds*

OLD NEW BORROWED AND BLUE

SLADE

Polydor, 1974

Slade's fourth album arrived a matter of months after the success of *Merry Xmas Everybody*, the last of the group's six UK chart-topping singles. It revealed that the Slade sound was evolving. *Just A Little Bit*, *When The Lights Are Out* and *My Friend Stan* retained the quartet's usual hooligan traits, but the likes of *Everyday* and *Miles Out To Sea* presented a new-found maturity. Reviewers began to compare them to The Beatles. The contemplative nature of these ballads fitted the band every bit as well as their rowdier moments, such as the self-descriptive *We're Really Gonna Raise The Roof*. **DL**

What they said at the time: *"A hit all the way."* *Record Mirror*

BURRITO DELUXE

FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS

A&M, 1970

Post-Byrds, Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman pretty much invented country rock with their debut, *The Gilded Palace Of Sin*. They may not have sold many records but they *had* impressed Dylan, the Stones and the men who'd become the Eagles. Admitting inspiration had run out for their next album, a breezier song-set than *Palace* emerged that improved on side two, with *Older Guys* and *Cody, Cody*, and an unrecorded ballad gifted to Parsons by Jagger and Richards that eventually became the definitive rendition – *Wild Horses*. **JK**

What they said at the time: *"Heading into simple rock and roll… it's still a fascinating collection."* *The Times*


Hey ho, let's get on the bus: the Ramones.

IN TRANCE

SCORPIONS

RCA, 1975

This was the first genuine Scorpions album, even if they hadn't completely got this 'rock' thing down pat. Guitarist Uli Jon Roth remained a weighty influence, and there was a skewed, Germanic take to proceedings. But there's a notable shift in focus from the hippie ramblings of the band's previous two records to more tightly focused and carefully structured songs: come on down *Robot Man*, *Top Of The Bill* and the title track. The album's sleeve wasn't half as controversial as the one that would follow it, *Virgin Killer*. Even so, the cover model's exposed breast was deemed sufficiently offensive to be 'blacked out' (pun intended) in the US. **GB**

SURF'S UP

THE BEACH BOYS

Reprise, 1971

With its sombre sleeve artwork and eco-consciousness, this was the Beach Boys' bid for countercultural acceptance. If they sounded world-weary, it was probably because it was their seventeenth studio album since 1962. A gorgeous pall hung over Carl Wilson's soulful *Long Promised Road*, Al Jardine's *Lookin' At Tomorrow* was sublimely solemn, and manager Jack Rieley sang a moving confessional from the point of view of a tree. But it was mainman Brian Wilson, his decade horribilis well under way, who stole the show with the beautiful *'Til I Die* and the baroque title track, salvaged from the legendary *SMiLE*. **PL**

What they said at the time: ***"A blast of truth at the time we need it most. Let's hope Brian feels like sticking around a while longer."*** *Melody Maker*

CHEAP TRICK

CHEAP TRICK

Epic, 1977

Cheap Trick's hallmark pile-up of big riffs and bigger hooks eventually turned the Illinois foursome into arena stars. But before the hit 70s albums, *At Budokan* and *Dream Police*, came their underperforming debut. With songs about serial killers and paedophiles (*Daddy Should Have Stayed In High School*'s lyrics invite the now much-heard excuse that "They were different times"), this was Cheap Trick at their most basic. It's obvious why Illinois punk pioneers Big Black later covered *He's A Whore* – most of this debut has a menace and garage-band intensity that they never quite captured again. **MB**

What they said at the time: ***"Their lyrics run the gamut of lust, confusion and misogyny… Catch them before Nurse Ratched slices open their frontal lobes."*** *Rolling Stone*

AMERICAN STARS 'N BARS

NEIL YOUNG

Reprise, 1977

It was impossible to second-guess Neil Young by the late 70s. Having dispensed with *Harvest*'s country-rock formalism and the raw nihilism of *On The Beach*, his eighth album was an often playful amalgam of styles. When he wasn't being a libidinous cowhand (*Saddle Up The Palomino*) or warbling mellow entreaties with guests Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt, Young was either baring his soul with rare candour, as on *Star Of Bethlehem*, or else charging ahead with Crazy Horse on the epic bombast of *Like A Hurricane*. **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"Young has shaken off much of the desperation that has coloured the moods of his most recent works."*** *Melody Maker*

EVEN SERPENTS SHINE

THE ONLY ONES

Columbia, 1979

The South Londoners' second album didn't have a single to match *Another Girl Another Planet*, and perhaps the band's musical proficiency (notably John Perry's guitar genius) didn't sit well with the punk orthodoxy. In Peter Perrett's narcotic, nasal vocals and world-weary words, however, they had ample attitude. His fatalistic sighs steered switchbacks from angst to aggression, from the gut-punch of *Programme* to the majestic melodrama of *Curtains For You*. Deliciously dark: the sound of a band out of step but in the zone. **CR**

What they said at the time: ***"Takes its time to reveal its subtleties and sting… develops and refines their unique personality as a band… uniquely English."*** *Melody Maker*

LONG LIVE ROCK'N'ROLL

RAINBOW

Polydor, 1978

It ain't all about *Rising*. Rainbow's third studio album mixed the grandeur of that predecessor with new-found commercial sensibilities – something bandleader/guitarist Ritchie Blackmore would exploit more fully with Graham Bonnet and, later, Joe Lynn Turner as frontmen. We've lost count of the number of times we've used 'imperious' in connection with Ronnie James Dio but really there's no other word to describe his vocal display here. *Kill The King*? Breathtaking. *Gates Of Babylon*? Splendiferous. The title track? There's never been a better rallying cry. **GB**

What they said at the time: ***"Ritchie Blackmore is one of the few classic guitar heavies left."*** *Trouser Press*

ROCKET TO RUSSIA

RAMONES

Sire, 1977

The Ramones were already on their third album as 1977 ended. But although their formula had given punk its blueprint, relentless road-honing and a bigger budget resulted in a career peak. Boasting a pronounced surf influence on tracks such as *Cretin Hop*, *Rockaway Beach* and their wonderfully crazed version of The Trashmen's *Surfin' Bird* (only for it to be taken to the nth degree even later by The Cramps), the Ramones still packed more excitement, warped innocence and pulverising power than any imitators, now enhanced by a punchier sound and greater variety – they even included a ballad with *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow*. **KN**

What they said at the time: ***"Rocket To Russia is the best American rock and roll of the year and possibly the funniest rock album ever made."*** *Rolling Stone*

OVER-NITE SENSATION

FRANK ZAPPA & THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION

DiscReet, 1973

Over-Nite Sensation was gleefully embraced by a generation of puerile schoolboys who found an unexpected kindred spirit in dear old smut-mouthed Uncle Frank. With its dense technical complexity defused by the visceral sass of an uncredited Tina Turner And The Ikettes, *Over-Nite Sensation* helped reposition Zappa in subsequent public perception as an incorrigible lech, invariably winking at the camera with tongue in cheek and bristle in 'tache. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"Having made social comments on plastic people, status at high school, brain police and road ladies, Zappa returns to the most pervasive element in his warped personality: the joys of a wet crotch."*** *Crawdaddy*

BACK IN THE USA

MC5

Atlantic, 1970

How could MC5 follow up 1969's incendiary *Kick Out The Jams*? By signing to Atlantic, submitting to future Springsteen mentor Jon Landau's tight production, and forging an album that strove to update teenage rock'n'roll. Despite the watered-down sound, bottled lightning bolts such as *The Human Being Lawnmower*, *The American Ruse* and *Teenage Lust* were later acknowledged as punk-influencing classics on one of the decade's seminal works. **KN**

What they said at the time: ***"...the music, the sound, and in the end the care with which these themes have been shaped drags it down, save for two or three fine numbers that deserve to be played on every jukebox in the land."*** *Rolling Stone*

HERGEST RIDGE

MIKE OLDFIELD

Virgin, 1974

It says much about *Hergest Ridge* that Oldfield's previous album, the huge-selling *Tubular Bells* released in 1973, returned to bump its follow-up from the UK No.1 spot. The poor thing never stood a chance. Oldfield loathed the attention *Tubular Bells* brought him, and recorded its follow-up's demos in rural isolation. The result was a filmic study in folk, classical and ambient sounds, closer to composer Terry Riley than a conventional rock band, and perhaps best experienced when out of one's gourd. Even now, its pastoral moods make it a far more inviting listen than Oldfield's overheard, overexposed debut. **MB**

What they said at the time: ***"Mike Oldfield has the singular ability to paint landscapes with music. This scene is stately, orderly, English, very green."*** *Down Beat*

GET YOUR WINGS

AEROSMITH

Columbia, 1974

Popular opinion says that Aerosmith didn't discover their mojo until 1975's *Toys In The Attic*. But those wanting a dirtier experience go back to its predecessor, *Get Your Wings*. *Same Old Song And Dance*, *Lord Of The Thighs* and a runaway cover of *Train Kept A Rollin'* are the motherlode of the Aerosmith sound: basically, a lascivious Steven Tyler vocal about girls, stimulants and good times yoked to a funky white-boy guitar lick. Repeat ad infinitum. *Seasons Of Wither*, with its slow build and final guitar crescendo, sounds like every Guns N' Roses ballad ever, just 12 years early. **MB**

What they said at the time: ***"Aerosmith's second album surges with pent-up fury yet avoids the excesses to which many of their peers succumb."*** *Rolling Stone*

ACE FREHLEY

ACE FREHLEY

Casablanca, 1978

Given Ace Frehley's role as the perpetual fuck-up of Kiss, only a brave bookmaker would have offered odds on the guitarist/occasional singer attaining the biggest sales of the four band members' solo albums released on September 18, 1978. But that's what happened. Some consider Paul Stanley's as the pick of the bunch, but Frehley's matches it track for track, spawning the series' only Top 40 single in *New York Groove*, selling over one million copies, and depositing much egg upon the face of a certain Demon. **DL**

SPACE SHANTY

KHAN

Deram, 1972

The only album recorded by the short-lived Canterbury-scene band whose principal players were guitarist Steve Hillage and former Egg/future Hatfield And The North keyboard whizz Dave Stewart, *Space Shanty* is buried treasure. Musicianly, at times heavyweight, at others spacey or jazzy, it's a true 70s prog classic that deserves to be known by more than just the genre's know-it-alls. The playing of Hillage and Stewart in particular is highly accomplished, although heard today the occasionally cringeworthy lyrics and some space-cadet song titles – try *Stranded (Including Effervescent Psycho Novelty No. 5* or *Space Shanty (Including 'The Cobalt Sequence' And 'March Of The Sine Squadrons')* for size – might deter the more earth-bound punter. **PH**

GRAND HOTEL

PROCOL HARUM

Chrysalis, 1973

All you really need to know about *Grand Hotel* is that the epic immensity of its title track's choir, orchestra, soaring guitar solo and kitchen sink-encumbered mid-section inspired Douglas Adams to conceive *The Restaurant At The End Of The Universe*. Obviously, ear-witnesses of less vision condemned the Procols' ever-expanding conceptual immensity, but there's an album's worth of ear-bleeding pomp crammed into every single stanza. **IF**

What they said at the time: **"Grand Hotel *is a collection of overblown production jobs that at their worst approach self-parody, and simpler, less grandiose tracks that suggest Procol Harum may yet find a way out."*** *Rolling Stone*

SONGS FROM THE WOOD

JETHRO TULL

Chrysalis, 1977

Forever eclipsed by Jethro Tull's big hitters – *Aqualung* and *Thick As A Brick* – *Songs From The Wood* was band leader Ian Anderson's wonderfully un-chic salute to English country life. Released in the same month that Sid Vicious joined the Sex Pistols, the whole thing sounds like Anderson bulldozing Vivienne Westwood's SEX shop in his tractor. Rendered on flutes, mandolins and a pipe organ, these cheery odes to farm life, pagan rituals and al fresco coupling with *'high-born hunting girls'* had a tuneful immediacy absent from many of Jethro Tull's earlier and more revered albums. **MB**

What they said at the time: ***"Jethro Tull have revamped their old medieval image. Unfortunately the whole affair sounds like the background music to TV's*** **Robin Hood.***"Sounds*

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Shelter, 1976

Tom Petty may have been a blond longhair, but his debut album had new wave values: a testament to short, sharp musicianship

The Velvet Underground (l to r) in 1970: Sterling Morrison, Lou Reed, Maureen 'Moe' Tucker, Doug Yule.

2 X GETTY

and melodic concision after years of jamming and boogie. *Rockin' Around (With You)* flew out of the traps with energy to spare. *Fooled Again (I Don't Like It)* matched Springsteen for slow-burning intensity. And highlight *American Girl* had the freewheeling spirit of peak-era Byrds, mixed with the urgency of punk. A star was born. **PL**

What they said at the time: *"The best rock debut by any American band this year."* *Sound*

INFINITY

JOURNEY

Shelter, 1976

After three albums in the jazz-rock idiom, Journey made a huge switch in direction. With frontman Steve Perry om board, they went for a melodic rock approach that put them firmly in the Foreigner/ Boston camp. It worked. *Infinity* was stuffed with radio-friendly songs such as *Wheel In The Sky* and *Lights*. It became a huge seller in the US and is now acknowledged as a hugely influential AOR classic. **MD**

What they said at the time: *"Good rock'n'roll has always had its fair share of risks. Journey has faced them with an entirely new sound."* *Circus*

MOTÖRHEAD

MOTÖRHEAD

Chiswick, 1977

A certain fairy-tale quality surrounds the debut album that applied a defibrillator to Motörhead's fast-fading corpse after United Artists had opted to shelve its original incarnation, later known as *On Parole*. With Chiswick boss Ted Carroll agreeing to back a bargain-basement revision of most of its songs, the album has a rudimentary production from Speedy Keen of Thunderclap Newman fame that fails to disguise the sheer quality of the group's material, and also their thunderously unique delivery. **DL**

What they said at the time: *"Unbearably loud and heavy, Motörhead have added another dimension to the darker side of heavy metal – sort of Steppenwolf meets Sabbaff and beyond."* *Trouser Press*

MOTT

MOTT THE HOOPLE

CBS, 1973

It broke up the band, with Mick Ralphs leaving for Bad Company soon after its release.

The boss: Brucie.

Yet *Mott* arguably remains the definitive Hoople album, created while surfing an overdue surge in popularity and offering both jubilant hits and introspective, autobiographical ballads. It proved that Ian Hunter could write rollicking instant classics such as *All The Way From Memphis* and *Honaloochie Boogie*, then break your heart with the tenderness of *I Wish I Was Your Mother*. Glam *and* gritty, the dudes were blazing. **CR**

What they said at the time: **"Mott** *is the album* **All The Young Dudes** *should have been… arrogant, defensive… burned but still sane and making the best music they ever have."* *Let It Rock*

RED

KING CRIMSON

Island, 1974

After blueprinting prog's widescreen flights for five years, Robert Fripp was steering Crimson in darker directions by the time Bill Bruford left Yes to join bassist John Wetton in rock's heaviest rhythm section (which Fripp likened to a "flying brick wall"). *Red*'s power trio line-up forged bludgeoning, monolithic riffs, as heard on the brutally malevolent title track and the calm-before-the-storm of *Starless*. Too dark for fans, *Red* was Crimson's first album not

to reach the Top 30. Fripp then split King Crimson for five years, while *Red* built its own cult, including Kurt Cobain. **KN**

What they said at the time: ***"Grand, powerful, grating and surprising lyrical…this does for classical-rock fusion what John McLaughlin's Devotion did for jazz-rock fusion."*** *Village Voice*

L.A.M.F.

HEARTBREAKERS

Track, 1977

When ex-New York Doll Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers landed in the London of 1976 they transformed the punk scene. This was what attitude looked and sounded like. Not all who saw them could play like them –some just settled for a smack habit. Beset by production woes, their *Like A Mother Fucker* debut finally emerged late, flawed and muddy. It didn't matter. Their core constituency, listening on cheap Dansettes, didn't notice. *L.A.M.F.* is the sound of the city, a swaggering soundtrack to good drugs and bad decisions. Infinitely inspirational, it's an enduring triumph of abject juvenile delinquency. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"The cover tells it: big city outlaws, uncompromising, battered but tough - the attitude. Music to get wrecked to, not intellectual, studied, or subtle."*** *Sounds*

STUPIDITY

DR FEELGOOD

United Artists, 1976

The arsey concision of the Feelgoods' third LP was the perfect antidote to the flabby complacency of Californian soft rock. A sharp symbiosis of Lee Brilleaux's tough vocals and the terse choppiness of Wilko Johnson's guitar lines, it was also the first live album to top the UK charts in its first week. "This was the culmination of the revolution against the stack heel and platform shoes brigade," remarked Brilleaux. "We said bollocks to all that, this is how a live band really goes to work." **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"If there is such a thing as aural GBH then Stupidity should get the Feelgoods sent down for a long stretch."*** *Melody Maker*

PILEDRIVER

STATUS QUO

Vertigo, 1972

The title and the cover of Quo's fifth album spoke volumes. Guitarist Rick Parfitt gave the album its name. "Our music was like a piledriver," he said. The cover was as powerfully symbolic – a shot of the band on stage, with Parfitt, frontman Francis Rossi and bassist Alan Lancaster tightly grouped, heads bowed, hair flailing. After their formative years as 60s pop dandies, *Piledriver* redefined Quo as a down-and-dirty heavy boogie machine with the pulverizing *Big Fat Mama*, reefer-celebrating hit single *Paper Plane*, and a pulsating version of the song that kick-started their obsession with the 12-bar shuffle, The Doors' *Roadhouse Blues*. **PE**

What they said at the time: ***"An almost universal dismissal of musical subtlety… repetitive, wholly predictable, which is why Quo's music is so immediately satisfying."*** *Let It Rock*

ALL THINGS MUST PASS

GEORGE HARRISON

Island, 1974

Arguably the best Beatles solo album. Although some of its songs date back as far as 1966, it's teh crowning glory of the period when Harrison found his feet as a singer and songwriter. Songs of amazing depth and insight, played with consummate grace by the best musicians around, and sung by George in tones that mixed a new creative confidence with a real sense of emotion and vulnerability. Too many of the people from this post-Beatles story – Delaney Bramlett, Carl Radle, three-quarters of Badfinger, and George himself – are no longer with us. But *All Things Must Pass* endures: a monumental piece of great art on which the 'quiet' Beatle suddenly roared. **JH**

What they said at the time: ***"Its sheer magnitude and ambition may dub it the War & Peace of rock'n'roll"*** *Rolling Stone*

REAL LIFE

MAGAZINE

Virgin, 1978

This was the album that prompted the *NME* to dub Magazine singer Howard Devoto "the most important man alive". He had that messianic aura, while the music had the requisite gravity and heft, even if it's usually Magazine's third LP. *The Correct Use Of Soap*, that gets the plaudits. *Real Life* signalled the shift from punk to post-punk, the moment the scene switched its gaze from tower blocks to more cerebral matters and started experimenting. Although with its glacial keyboards and discordant musicality, it rather posited Magazine as a displaced prog band, even a latter-day Roxy Music. **PL**

What they said at the time: ***"Magazine shut down once and for all any Buzzcocks comparisons. A commercial, quality rock album with deceptive depths."*** *Sounds*

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

ROD STEWART

Mercury, 1971

Remembered by Rod as "all the planets aligning", his third solo album proved the sand-and-glue vocalist was also a master interpreter and no slouch as a songwriter. *Every Picture* was a critical and commercial slam-dunk at the time, but as Rod's standing has dropped with every *Great American Songbook* it's cited less in pub debates. Which is a shame. **HY**

What they said at the time: ***"[With] his fantastic ability to interpret tunes and to wail… Stewart once again weaves a musical web of knowing."*** *Billboard*

LOADED

VELVET UNDERGROUND

Cotillion, 1970

Lou Reed always insisted that VU were essentially a rock'n'roll band. This fourth album, which also happened to be his swansong, seemed intent on proving the point. Whether or not the songs were conceived in response to the record label's demands for a hit single, they came packed with great melodies and hooks, from *Sweet Jane*'s trademark riff to the stained beauty of *Lonesome Cowboy Bill* and the majesty of *Rock And Roll*. **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"This is just possibly the most important pop record issued in years"*** *Melody Maker*

THE WILD, THE INNOCENT & THE E STREET SHUFFLE

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Columbia, 1973

Bruce Springsteen may have been the future of rock'n'roll, but he wasn't yet its present. Second album *The Wild, The Innocent & The E Street Shuffle*, his first to really showcase the E Street Band, got great reviews but sold dismally. Rich in self-mythologising tales of the frustrated boys and girls of Asbury Park's balmy boardwalk days and nights, it delivered a show-stopping, cinematic Side Two. *Incident On 57th Street* is where Springsteen moved from dreamer to creative colossus. **CR**

What they said at the time: ***"The size and style of Springsteen's talent is suggested by the title, and this is very good in spurts – but it never coalesces."*** *Creem*

Judas Priest in 1977. Shocking, isn't it?

26 IN THE LAND OF GREY AND PINK

CARAVAN

Deram, 1971

Very probably the only great rock album that begins with a parping trombone, *In The Land Of Grey And Pink* was a pivotal album of 70s prog, by the Canterbury scene's de-facto heads of state. The old-school charm of *Golf Girl* and the melodic elegance of *Winter Wine* – the latter arguably the best 'short-course' track the band ever recorded – are Caravan signatures, while the side-long, expansive, multi-part *Nine Feet Underground* is in a class of its own. This album more or less single-handedly defined the scene that it stood at the centre of, yet is largely ignored outside of it. **PH**

25 GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE

THE CLASH

CBS, 1978

When they were operational, The Clash were far from today's untouchable heroes; they attracted flak from punk purists and were accused of "selling out" when Blue Öyster Cult mastermind Sandy Pearlman produced this, their presciently titled second album. But from powerhouse barrages like *Safe European Home* and *Tommy Gun* to Mick Jones's poignant *Stay Free*, *Give 'Em Enough Rope* is packed with deceptively subtle missiles, framed in glorious high definition. It also brought The Clash to America and drummer Topper Headon into the classic line-up, while the knowledge Jones gained from Pearlman led to *London Calling*. **KN**

What they said at the time: ***"A triumphant roar of battles won, which must be placed among the rock albums that merit the term 'classic'."*** *Zigzag*

24 WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE

DEEP PURPLE

EMI/Purple, 1973

The final full-length record from the Mk II Deep Purple (until they re-formed in 1984) is widely regarded as their weakest. The band were admittedly in complete and utter disarray when they recorded it… but then again, were they ever anything but? And how bad can an album be when it has *Woman From Tokyo* on it, surely one of the Top 10 Purple songs of all time? *Mary Long*, which remains a staple of the modern-day group's live set, and *Rat Bat Blue* are no slouches, either. *Who Do We Think We Are* even reached No.4 in the UK. Which isn't bad for a supposed career low point. **GB**

What they said at the time: ***"It ain't as good as* Machine Head *(their best and one of the greatest albums ever) 'cause it's more like* Fireball *(only the critics liked that one)."*** *Creem*

23 MACHINE GUN ETIQUETTE

THE DAMNED

Chiswick, 1979

Of course, by this point The Damned had already played their first farewell show, re-formed, reshuffled, reinvented, signed their second deal and brought in their fourth bassist. Their second album, the Nick Mason-produced *Music For Pleasure*, had been good enough to lose them their contract with Stiff Records. But *Machine Gun Etiquette* wasn't just a full-tilt, psychedelicised, punkicidal kick in the bollocks, it had hits on it. Not shit, here-today-toss-tomorrow hits, either: *Love Song*, *Smash It Up*; monolithic posterity-bothering classics. Any other band would have been taken seriously after this. I dunno, maybe blame the Captain's beret. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"A bewildering mix of genius, garbage, taste, idiocy, noise, misjudgment, alcohol, aggression, wind-ups, grotesqueness, psychosis and awful clothes."*** *Sounds*

22 SIN AFTER SIN

JUDAS PRIEST

CBS, 1977

The new wave of British heavy metal gave Judas Priest a well-deserved boost. After all, their musical histrionics and

provincial sex-shop S&M image inspired the genre. But it's on *Sin After Sin* rather than the more common choice, 1976's *Sad Wings Of Destiny*, where Rob Halford's banshee wail and Glenn Tipton and KK Downing's tag-team guitars really came of age. *Sin After Sin* is the album where Priest became a heavy *metal* band. The dated production aside, the likes of *Sinner* and *Dissident Aggressor* still sound like a *How To…* manual for every metal band from Iron Maiden to Metallica and beyond. **MB**

What they said at the time:
"Music that has a sledgehammer effect on its head-shaking mesmerised audience."
Daily Express

BUCKINGHAM NICKS

BUCKINGHAM NICKS
CBS, 1977

A year after Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks's debut, the couple joined Fleetwood Mac and wowed America with the Mac's self-titled White Album. *Buckingham Nicks* sold badly, and has never had an official CD release. More's the pity. It's stuffed full of charming folk rock and west coast pop: Nicks's cheesecloth headscarf-and-tarot-cards persona offset by Buckingham's trademark needling guitar. *Don't Let Me Down Again* and *Frozen Love* sound like a trailer for *Rumours* and Fleetwood Mac re-recorded *Crystal* and re-worked the intro of *Lola (My Love)* for *The Chain*. The best album Fleetwood Mac never made. **MB**

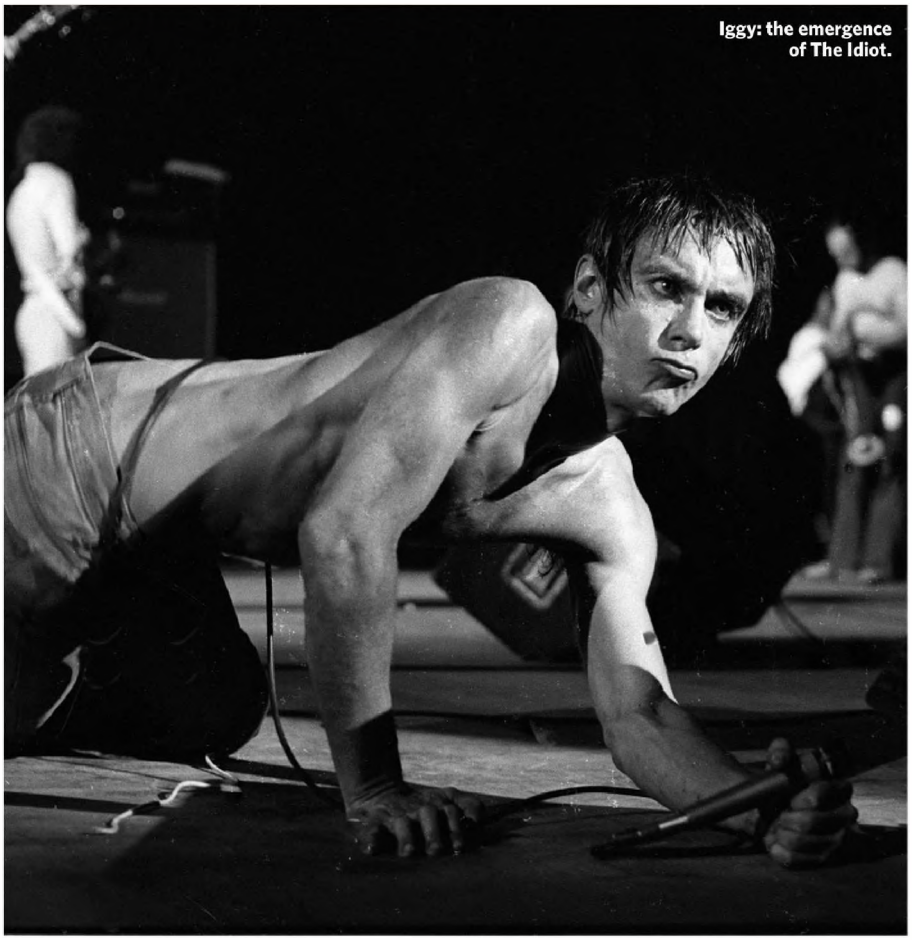
What they said at the time: ***"May well be one of the finest American albums released over the last three or four years."***
Daily Express

VAN HALEN 2

VAN HALEN
Warner Bros, 1979

How do you follow up a debut album universally hailed as a classic? You don't. Van Halen faced this problem, and as a result their second record, *Van Halen 2*, was seen as disappointing. But when you strip away all the superlatives about their debut, this one was a fine album. If anything it established the VH style, with the band sounding more comfortable in their skin. Songs like *Dance The Night Away* and *Light Up The Sky* were sharp and confident, and there was a charismatic swagger throughout. **MD**

What they said at the time:
"After almost one careful listening, I'm utterly convinced that the members of Van Halen must have been up half the night creating it."
Rolling Stone


Iggy: the emergence of The Idiot.

IGGY POP

THE IDIOT
RCA, 1977

Although tactically released after his own *Low*, David Bowie produced Iggy's debut solo first, so technically *The Idiot* marked the opening instalment of Bowie's Berlin period. Consequently it's charged with dark, gothic majesty as you'd expect. *The Idiot* presented a new Iggy Pop to the world: Bowie encouraged him to investigate his lower registers, and his stentorian tones accentuated the European soundscapes emanating from Hansa studios. In the year of punk, here was the sound of the future. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"This is zombie-rock – with heart."*** *Circus*

SECOND HELPING

LYNYRD SKYNYRD
MCA, 1974

On their debut album there was the epic *Free Bird*, the *Stairway To Heaven* of southern rock. With their second, Skynyrd didn't even try to top it. They just hit a groove on *Sweet Home Alabama*, and stayed there. That famous song would prove as defining for Skynyrd as *Free Bird*. But there was as much good stuff on *Second Helping*, from gritty hard rock songs such as *Workin' For MCA* to the lazy blues of *The Ballad Of Curtis Loew*. **PE**

What they said at the time: ***"This band has the expertise, the youth and the confidence to keep things going its way for a long time to come."*** *Crawdaddy!*

DEGÜELLO

ZZ TOP
Warner Bros, 1979

In 1977, ZZ Top disappeared from public view for two whole years – an eternity in an era when major rock acts were locked into annual album/tour cycles. Adding to the Texan trio's mystique, they resurfaced with guitarist Billy Gibbons and bassist Dusty Hill sporting foot-long beards. Their comeback album, *Degüello*, was worth waiting for: a rich blend of funky rock'n'roll, blues and southern soul, with Captain Beefheart-style weirdness in *Manic Mechanic*, and the trio blasting horns on the joyous *She Loves My Automobile*. Although the title warned 'no quarter', this is ZZ's warmest, most soulful record. **PE**

What they said at the time: ***"Still a power trio. And the ZZs are still in touch with the masses."*** *Creem*

The Faces approach the end of the Rod.

A NOD IS A GOOD AS A WINK TO A BLIND HORSE

THE FACES

RCA, 1977

Sadly, this, the Faces' greatest moment on record, was the beginning of the end. Eclipsed by Rod Stewart's burgenoning solo career (*Maggie May* hit no.1 just weeks earlier), the band had finally transferred the bloozy bonhomie of their live shows to the studio, serving up such irresistible items as *Miss Judy's Farm* and, somewhat prophetically, *Last Orders Please*. Best of all were Ronnie Lane's gorgeous balled *Debris*, and the rambunctious *Stay With Me* which gave the Faces their first hit. **RH**

What they said at the time: *"It's about entertainment, fucking, partying, nostalgia, and finally, the idea of fun itself."* *Creem*

SINGLES GOING STEADY

BUZZCOCKS

IRS, 1979

Originally compiled for a US-only release, the album sold decently on import in the UK. It eventually emerged here on the United Artists label in 1981 – just after the Lancastrian band first split. It then flopped, despite being a fiercely focused set of lovelorn punk-pop songs.

If the Pistols and The Clash brought the rage to the age, Buzzcocks brought the (twisted, thwarted) romance through Pete Shelley's witty, woebegone words, as lasers such as *What Do I Get?* and *I Don't Mind* soundtracked our falling in love with someone we shouldn't've. **CR**

What they said at the time: *"To describe it as wonderful would be doing the lads a gross injustice. Fast, funny and memorable."* *Melody Maker*

A TRICK OF THE TAIL

GENESIS

Charisma, 1975

Many thought it would be all over for Genesis after Peter Gabriel left, but they managed just fine. Taking over on vocals, Phil Collins suggests the local chimney-sweep given the lead role in a public school's end-of-term drama production. But there's great charm – and great choruses – in *Squonk*, *Entangled* and other wistful songs about childhood dreams and romance. This is the sound of Genesis slowly joining the real world. **MB**

What they said at the time: *"Is it artistically valid? Blowed if I know… But Genesis fans'll go a bundle on* A Trick Of The Tail." *NME*

KILLER

ALICE COOPER

Warner Bros, 1971

Four albums in, Alice Cooper (the band) were learning how to weave a tinge of a commercial presence into their sick shtick without relinquishing either weirdness or darkness of mood. *Under My Wheels* and *Be My Lover* took them into a bewildered hit parade, but *Killer* built upon a growing reputation for the macabre with the controversial *Dead Babies* – actually a plea for parents to care better for their offspring. Elsewhere, *You Drive Me Nervous* and *Yeah, Yeah, Yeah* preserved AC's garage-rock roots. **DL**

What they said at the time: *"[This is] a strong band, a vital band, and they are going to be around for a long, long time."* *Rolling Stone*

THE KICK INSIDE

KATE BUSH

EMI, 1978

Opening with whale song, darting between literary references and debuting that eerie somersault of a vocal, 19-year-old Kate Bush's first album was hard to ignore (particularly after *Wuthering Heights* made her the first female artist to have a self-penned UK No.1 hit). Before the bean-counters and image consultants moved in, *The Kick Inside*'s arty mélange sounded blissfully unshackled ("I was lucky to be able to express myself as much as I did," Bush recalled). But while the album is rightly treasured by Bush fans it's on far fewer shelves than 1985's *Hounds Of Love*. **HY**

What they said at the time: *"A bewildering record. While sometimes it just seems pathetically contrived, at others it suggests there's talent struggling to get out."* NME

MARQUEE MOON

TELEVISION

Elektra, 1977

11

After Patti Smith's *Horses* and The Ramones' self-titled debut, this was the first album from New York's CBGB explosion to match unanimous critical gushing with chart success. Headily influenced by ecstatic jazz, French poets and West Coast jam bands, Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd hoisted a formidable twin-guitar front line, allowed to fly on the mercurial title track, while gorgeous reflections such as *Venus de Milo* injected subtlety next to abrasive live faves such as *Friction*. Sadly the band disappeared up its own myth after 1978's underrated *Adventure*. **KN**

What they said at the time:

"An album for everyone, whatever their musical creeds and/or quirks… passionate, full-blooded, dazzlingly well crafted, brilliantly conceived and totally accessible." *NME*

NEWS OF THE WORD

QUEEN

Elektra, 1977

10

Landing bang in the middle of punk, News Of The World was the sound of a band stripping things back. Of course, a stripped-down Queen was still more OTT than every other band on the planet. We Are The Champions and We Will Rock You stand as glorious monuments to self-aggrandisment, while elsewhere they turned their hand to epic showtunes (Spread Your Wings), pervy disco (Get Down Make Love) and majestic heavy rock (the titanic It's Late). They even found time to aim a snarky dig at the punk upstarts on the breathless Sheer Heart Attack, proving they might have ditched the flamboyance but they'd lost none of their cheek. **DE**

What they said at the time:

"Less flamboyance, less implicit drama, less operatic overtones characterize this album; more experimentation more intelligence."

Washington Post

SPUNK

SEX PISTOLS

Blank, 1977

9

Never Mind The Bollocks was a massively reworked and refined Chris Thomas-produced caricature of the Pistols' sound. Steve Jones's brutal guitar riffs were stripped to their essence, multi-tracked into an impenetrable wall of sound and, with the sole exception of *Bodies* (iconic non-savant idiot Sid Vicious's only appearance on *Bollocks*), further bolstered by Jones's own emphatically primitive root-note bass runs. *Spunk*, meanwhile, caught the band at their free-range, organic best. Recorded with Dave Goodman over the course of three sessions between July '76 and January '77, it captured the Sex Pistols as they sounded on the nights that they inspired The Clash, Damned, Banshees et al into existence: simple, uncontrived, doldrums-driven aggression with its intrinsic melodic sensibilities underlined by the fluid harmonic bass runs of Glen Matlock, the man who put them there in the first place. Released a month before *Bollocks*, most probably by manager Malcolm McLaren himself (who not only preferred the sound of these sessions, but also – as ever – 'needed' the cash), *Spunk* may not have boasted the pendulous, epoch-defining cojones of *Bollocks*, but it provided a superior showcase for the pure power-pop genius of the Pistols' compositions. **IF**

What they said at the time: ***"An album no self-respecting rock fan would turn his nose up at. I've been playing it constantly for a week and I'm not bored yet."*** *Sounds*

A FAREWELL TO KINGS

RUSH

Mercury, 1977

8

In the summer of 1977 there was anarchy in the UK. But in a remote part of Wales, three long-haired, pot-smoking Canadian dudes remained unaffected by all the hullabaloo about punk rock. Recording for the first time outside of Canada – at Rockfield studios in Monmouthshire – Rush created in their fifth album, *A Farewell To Kings*, a masterpiece of virtuoso progressive heavy rock. The album was dominated by two epic tracks running to more than 10 minutes: *Xanadu*, based on the 18th-century poem *Kubla Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge; and the fantastically titled space-rock odyssey *Cygnus X-1 Book I: The Voyage*. There were shorter songs too, including the beautiful, uplifting *Closer To The Heart*, which became an anthem for the band. But the track that defined the album was *Xanadu* – vast, complex, and richly atmospheric. *A Farewell To Kings* was the antithesis of punk, save for one small detail: in its title track, drummer/lyricist Neil Peart wrote of '*Ancient nobles showering their bitterness on youth*'. In this was an echo of the most infamous song of 1977 – the Sex Pistols' mutinous *God Save The Queen*. **PE**

What they said at the time:

"A triumph. A total, out-and-out, honest-to-God, five star studded, complete, utter, unmitigated triumph." *Sounds*

SOME GIRLS

THE ROLLING STONES

Rolling Stones, 1978

7

There was a certain irony, a wry self-awareness, in the title of a Stones compilation released in 1981: *Sucking In The Seventies*. Although the band had begun that decade with two classic albums – *Sticky Fingers* and *Exile On Main St* – the broad consensus was that the Stones had sleepwalked from *Goats Head Soup* in '73 to *Black And Blue* in '76. It was only with their last album of that decade, *Some Girls*, that they reclaimed their reputation as The World's Greatest Rock'N'Roll Band. With Keith Richards partly distracted by the threat of jail following his drug bust in '77, it was Mick Jagger who took the lead on *Some Girls*. "Punk and disco were going on at the same time," Jagger said, and these became key influences for the Stones – on fast, spiky rock'n'roll numbers such as *Respectable*, and the funky, hypnotic hit single *Miss You*. Jagger never sang with more soul than on *Beast Of Burden*, and never shocked more than when he sneered on the title track: '*Black girls just wanna get fucked all night*.' Mick had saved the Stones – a tough one for Keith to swallow. **PE**

What they said at the time: ***"What makes* Some Girls *more than just-another-duff-Stones-album is the creative revitalisation of Mick Jagger."*** *NME*

MEDDLE

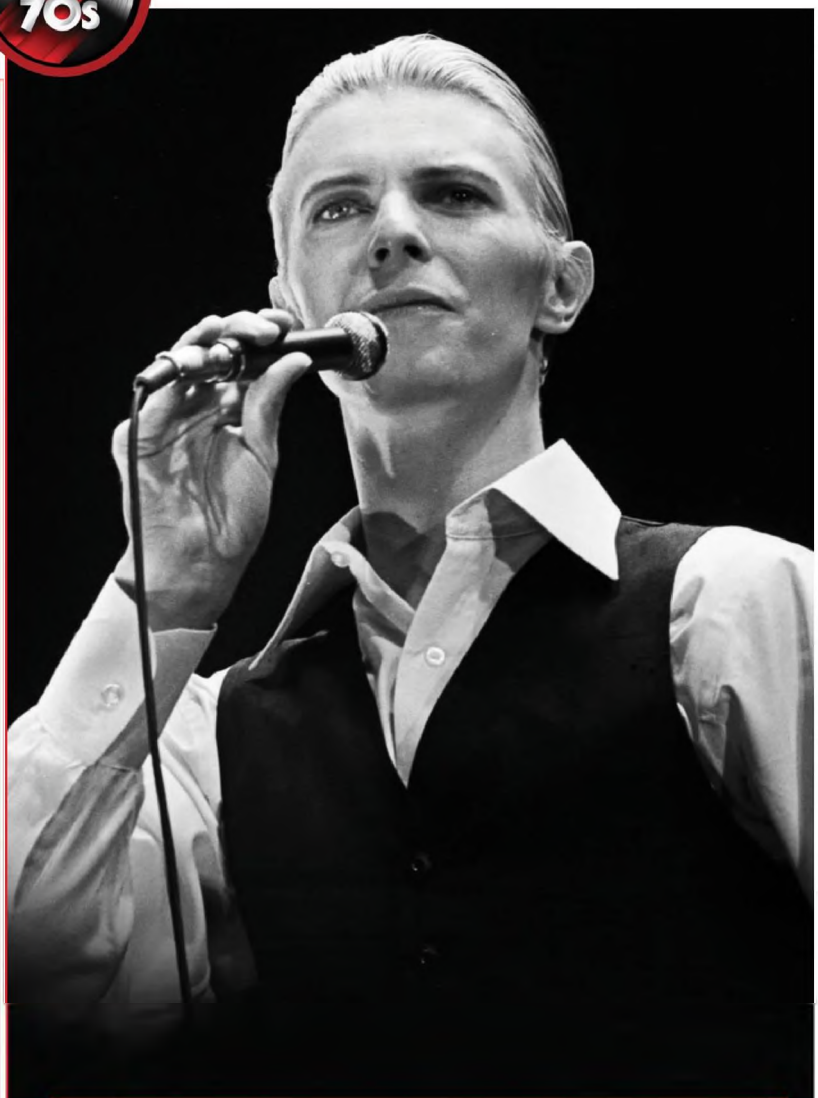
PINK FLOYD

Harvest, 1971

6

Having resolved the creative impasse that led to Ron Geesin's input on the band's 1970 album *Atom Heart Mother*, Pink Floyd set about its follow-up with renewed vigour. The resulting *Meddle* struck a balance between the whimsical art-pop of Floyd's earliest days and the proggier, more experimental nature of their post-Syd era. Acoustic ballad *A Pillow Of Winds* and the shuffling jazz of *San Tropez* were thus fairly conventional next to the 23-minute monster that was *Echoes*. Taking up an entire side of vinyl, it was a logical extension of Floyd's previous album, replete with accidental sound effects, improvised passages, choral echo and a scintillating guitar solo from David Gilmour – not to mention keyboard player Richard Wright's depth-charge 'ping'. Another standout was the dust-devil rock of *One Of These Days*, featuring a curious spoken line by drummer Nick Mason. *Meddle* fared well in the UK, although lax publicity in the States meant that it failed to become a hit there. Nevertheless, its artistic vision cleared the path for the truly sensational success of the album Pink Floyd recorded next: *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. **RH**

What they said at the time: ***"Confirms lead guitarist David Gilmour's emergence as a real shaping force with the group… killer Floyd from start to finish."*** *Rolling Stone*



GETTY X3

5 STATION TO STATION

DAVID BOWIE

RCA, 1976

Although a massive influence on the new wave movement of the late 1970s and beyond, *Station To Station* arrived midway through a period when Bowie was in creative overdrive, and was rather overlooked at the time as one of a flurry of DB albums that rearranged the furniture in the palace of pop.

Beginning with the sound of a steam train panning across the speakers, *Station To Station* was a trailblazing voyage through a pop world in a state of flux. With only six songs spread over two sides, it was both epic and concise as it straddled the divide between Bowie the established chameleon pop star and Bowie the emergent art-rock experimentalist.

It introduced Bowie's last great persona, the Thin White Duke, who was referenced in the opening lines of the album's title track, a 10-minute odyssey that was the longest and arguably most ambitious song he ever recorded. Musically ground-breaking and defiantly 'out there' it was also one of Bowie's most melodically adept albums and a major chart success, peaking at No.5 in the UK and No.3 in the US. **DS**

What they said at the time:

"It offers cryptic, expressionistic glimpses that let us feel the contours and palpitations of the masquer's soul but never fully reveal his face." Circus

LED ZEPPELIN LIVE ON BLUEBERRY HILL

LED ZEPPELIN

4

Sure, *Led Zeppelin IV* and *Physical Grafitti* are generally accepted as Zeppelin's twin peaks, though you could find someone to make a case for each of their albums (even *In Through The Out Door*). But if you want a true connoisseur's choice, then this hugely influential live bootleg is the one. Bootlegs and Zeppelin have been synonymous for over four decades. Despite manager Peter Grant's heavy-handedness when dealing with anyone he caught taping their shows, Led Zep quickly became the most bootlegged act of all time.

Zep's impact on their initial American tours made them a prime target for the then emerging bootleg recording business. From their inception, it was more than evident that Zep's studio output was just the starting point. On stage was where the real action occurred, as they constantly improvised and expanded their material. Peter Grant summed it up when he stated: "Led Zeppelin was primarily an in-person band… that's what it was really about."

Zep live in 1970.

On the night of September 4, 1970, during their sixth American tour, two separate teams of fans were intent on taping the Zeppelin gig at the Inglewood Forum in Los Angeles. Both parties came away with lengthy representations of the band's then current state of play, recorded on reel-to-reel machines close to the stage.

The recording that would become known as the album *Led Zeppelin Live On Blueberry Hill* was captured by a pair of West Coast bootleggers whose previous credits included Dylan's *Great White Wonder* set and the Stones' *Live'r Than You'll Ever Be*. Another bootlegger known as Rubber Dubber also recorded the show and quickly issued it as a double album stamped *Led Zeppelin Live Los Angeles Forum 9-4-70*. The more common *Live On Blueberry Hill* Blimp label version with a distinctive surreal cover insert, also came out within weeks of the show. Regardless of which version you hear, the sheer authenticity of the performance shines through. The dynamic thrust of Bonham's drums, the sinewy grind of Page's guitar, Jonesy's resonant bass lines and melodic keyboards, plus the outstanding clarity of Plant's vocal shrieks (enhanced by the echo unit used at the time), all merge into a ferocious mix that magically recreates the electricity of the occasion.

Moments to relish include the unpredictable *Communication Breakdown* medley that included Buffalo Springfield's *For What It's Worth* and The Beatles' *I Saw Her Standing There*, plus the Zep I opener *Good Times Bad Times*. Not forgetting freshly minted nuggets from the soon to be released Zep *III* album such as *Since I've Been Loving You* and the rarely played live *Out On The Tiles*. A lengthy *Whole Lotta Love* turned into a rock'n'roll juke box as they randomly threw in covers of Buddy Holly's *Think It Over* and Leiber, Stoller & Barrett's *Some Other Guy* – a formula they repeated with a breathless encore rendition of Fats Domino's *Blueberry Hill*.

Back in their heyday, bootleg recordings of Led Zeppelin offered a whole new perspective on the band. This remains as essential a part of their discography as any of their official albums. To paraphrase the great Fats himself, *Led Zeppelin Live On Blueberry Hill* is still an absolute thrill. **DLS**

What they said at the time: ***"106 minutes and 53 seconds of pure and alive rock."***
Uncredited blurb on the sleeve insert

"Led Zeppelin was primarily an in-person band... that's what it was really all about."
Manager Peter Grant

The Who live on the Quadrophenia tour in 1974.

QUADROPHENIA

THE WHO

Track, 1973

The Who finally seemed to be sitting pretty by the early 70s. The global success of *Tommy*, both as an album and stage show, had made the band solvent for the first time in their career. And even Pete Townshend's doomed Lifehouse project had been partly salvaged for *Who's Next*, another platinum-seller. But Townshend was still restless. Concerned that their newfound status may have robbed The Who of their drive, in 1972 he began work on an ambitious double album, provisionally titled *Rock Is Dead – Long Live Rock*. The idea didn't quite pan out as intended, though he rescued *Is It In My Head?* and *Love Reign O'er Me* for a fresh concept that looked to the band's Mod origins through four pairs of eyes.

Quadrophenia, likened by Townshend at the time to "a sort of musical Clockwork Orange", told the troubled tale of Jimmy, an adolescent Mod growing up in working-class Britain during the 60s. Dead-end jobs, beachfront barneys, drugs and unrequited love formed the backdrop to his spiritual malaise. Townshend's epiphanic narrative, in which the sea is used as both a destructive and cleansing metaphor, was brilliantly fleshed out by the band across four sides of vinyl. John Entwistle's skilful horn arrangements came to the fore on the title track and the pumping salvos of *5:15*. Drummer Keith Moon was a powerhouse throughout, as was Roger Daltrey, who delivered some of his most memorable vocals on the likes of *Drowned*, *Doctor Jimmy* and the jaw-dropping *Love Reign O'er Me*. And, aside from his guitar mastery, Townshend's songwriting was sharper and more persuasive than on *Tommy*, making *Quadrophenia* a far more cohesive Who statement. **RH**

What they said at the time:
"Quadrophenia is The Who at their most symmetrical, their most cinematic... They have put together a beautifully performed and magnificently recorded essay of a British youth mentality in which they played no little part."
Rolling Stone

Whipper flares: the Sabs in '75. GETTY

1 POWERAGE
AC/DC
Atlantic, 1978

SABOTAGE
BLACK SABBATH
Vertigo, 1975

Sabotage was an album born out of what bassist Geezer Butler called "total chaos", recorded by a band that was burnt out with fatigue, screwed up on booze and drugs, and in litigation with their former manager Patrick Meehan. And yet, what Sabbath created amid this chaos was music of extraordinary power and depth.

It was with good reason, and typically black humour, that they named the album *Sabotage*. During the recording, at Morgan Studios in London, the lawyers of Patrick Meehan turned up to serve writs to the band. A siege mentality quickly developed. "It was us against them," singer Ozzy Osbourne said. And this fed into the music on a visceral level. The scene was set in the opening track *Hole In The Sky*, with a bludgeoning riff and apocalyptic imagery of impending ecological disaster and the decline of Western civilisation in the face of rising Asian superpowers and conflict in the Middle East: "The most prophetic lyrics I have ever written," Geezer Butler later said.

Even heavier, in sound and in words, was *Symptom Of The Universe*. Guitarist Tony Iommi's staccato riff would echo down the years in the music of bands such as Metallica, Slayer and Sepultura, the latter covering the song in 1994. And the lyrics – written, as standard, under the influence of marijuana – were a meditation on life, death and what lay beyond.

Sabotage also included the weirdest and darkest song Sabbath ever recorded: *Supertzar*, a "demonic chant", as drummer Bill Ward called it, featuring the English Chamber Choir. To Ozzy, it sounded like "God conducting the soundtrack to the end of the world". And to finish, there was a bitter riposte to Sabbath's nemesis Patrick Meehan. It was named *The Writ*.

What *Sabotage* represented, at the time, was a triumph over adversity. Even now, the power in the darkness resonates. **PE**

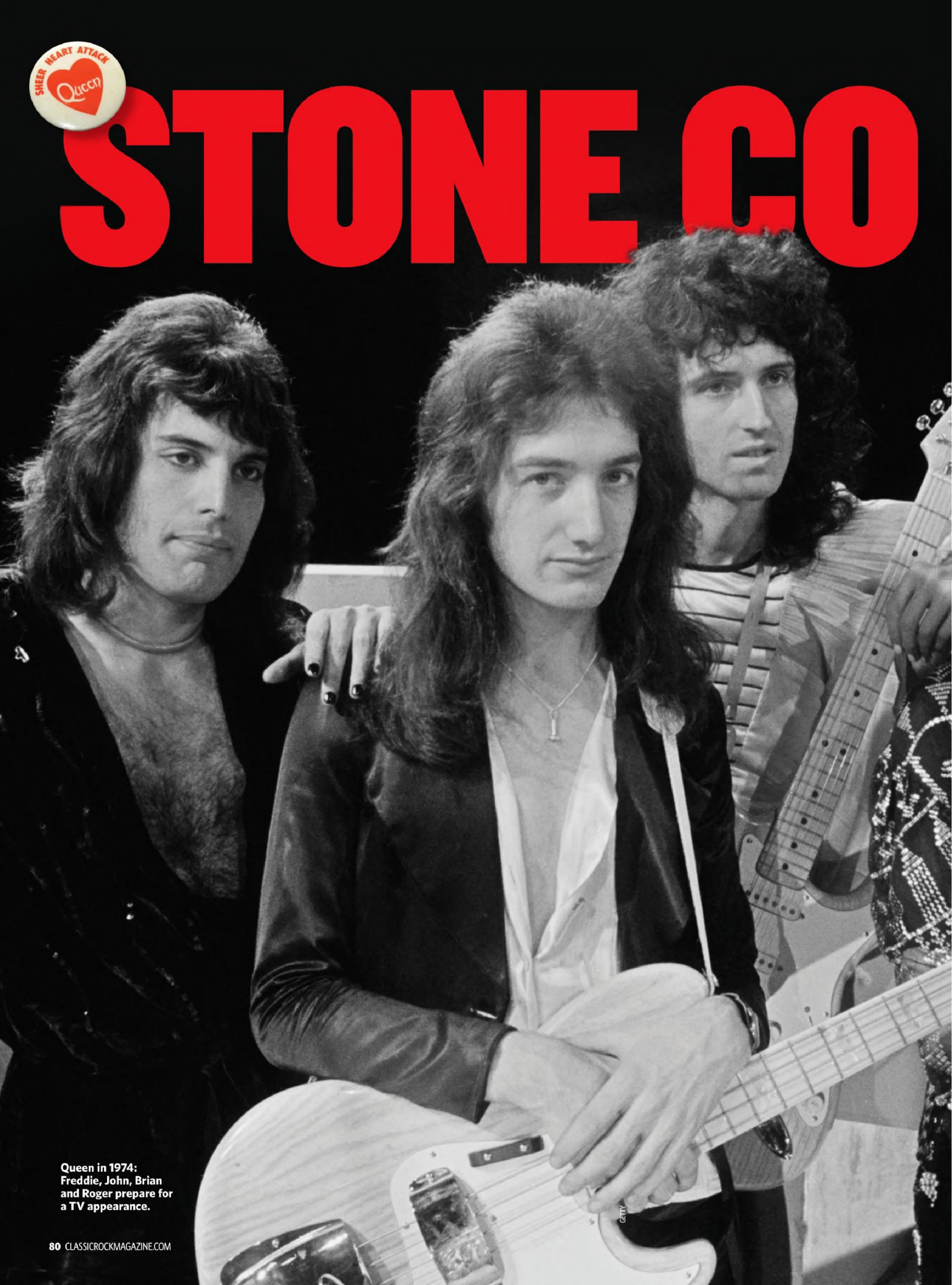
What they said at the time: "*Sabotage is not only Black Sabbath's best record since* Paranoid, *it might be their best ever.*"
Rolling Stone

On a highway to hell: Angus of AC/DC in Chicago during the 1978 Powerage tour.

Sandwiched between the twin peaks of *Let There Be Rock* and *Highway To Hell*, AC/DC's fourth international release didn't immediately stake a claim as the finest album in the band's catalogue. That *Powerage* is the only AC/DC album title not to feature in a chorus speaks of one of its key virtues – subtlety. Granted, there's little that's subtle about the throttling riffs on *Riff Raff* or the crunching *Kicked In The Teeth*, but elsewhere – on the beautifully lachrymose *Down Payment Blues*, the playful *What's Next To The Moon*, the plaintive, in-the-pocket *Gone Shootin'* – 'DC display a discipline, control and restrained power that only the most mature and confident of players can attain. Which helps explain why this is Keith Richards's favourite AC/DC album.

Emphatically, though, this is Bon Scott's album. Much of the beauty of *Powerage* comes from Scott's brilliantly sketched portraits of disappointed, desperate men pushed beyond breaking point by lost love and empty pockets. As cocksure as he could be – and no other singer before or since swaggered with such Jack The Lad insouciance – Scott always had an affinity for the broken and bruised; that guy with holes in his shoes, holes in his teeth and patches on the patches on his old blue jeans, and *Powerage* is a celebration of fortitude in the face of soul-crushing setbacks. Crucially, though, there is always hope here, always a glimpse of blue skies for those knocked in the gutter, as evinced by *Sin City* at the heart of the album, a glorious 'fuck you' to the fates, a defiant last hurrah in the face of cruelly stacked odds. After *Powerage*, AC/DC would get louder, slicker and bigger, but they would never again display this much heart, soul and humanity. **PB**

What they said at the time: ***"Shows AC/DC to have evolved... to full-blown competence."*** *Circus*



STONE CO

Queen in 1974: Freddie, John, Brian and Roger prepare for a TV appearance.

GETTY

LD CRAZY

Under intense pressure, and with one band member in his sickbed, **Queen** still managed to record the album that laid the foundation for all the success that followed: *Sheer Heart Attack*.

Words: **Dave Everley**

GETTY

"Darling, he's *far* too busy in the studio. That's what happens when you get sick in Queen – you have to make the time up."

In the South London offices of his band's PR company, a characteristically flamboyant Freddie Mercury is entertaining the press. It's the autumn of 1974, and Queen have almost completed their third album, *Sheer Heart Attack*. Almost. For Mercury's bandmate Brian May there's still work to do. It's just a few months since the guitarist was felled by a virulent bout of hepatitis mid-way through their debut US tour, and subsequently hospitalised for a second time with a stomach ulcer, forcing him to miss initial sessions for the album. May is currently holed up in the studio, finishing off his guitar parts, hence his absence today.

> **"Do we row? Oh, my dear, we're the bitchiest band on earth. We're at each other's throats."**
>
> Freddie Mercury, 1974

It's typical of Queen's ferocious drive that they haven't let a pair of potentially fatal medical conditions get in the way of the job in hand. Their first two albums – 1973's *Queen* and follow-up *Queen II*, released earlier in 1974 – set them up as a unique proposition: one part Zeppelin-esque rockers, one part glam dandies, one part fantastical Aubrey Beardsley illustration made flesh. Their music, along with their billowing silk blouses and Mercury's outrageous, 1,000-watt personality, has earned them as much scorn as admiration. Both responses have only fuelled their ambitions.

But now those ambitions are coming into sharp focus. Like its predecessors, *Sheer Heart Attack* is the product of an intense work ethic that stems from a desire to be bigger, bolder and better than everyone else. It's a watershed for the band: this album will lay the groundwork for future success. There are solid economic factors, too. The album needs to be a success to boost their ever-decreasing finances. Their management, Trident Productions, have put them on a wage that barely pays the bills, while seeking a return on their hefty investments in recording and studio costs. Combined with May's illness, it's fair to say, there's a lot riding on it.

"The whole group aimed for the top slot," says Mercury. "We're not going to be content with anything less. That's what we're striving for. It's got to be there. I definitely know we've got it in the music, we're original enough… and, now we're proving it."

"I first met Queen in November 1973, when Mott The Hoople were rehearsing for their tour," recalls Peter Hince, then a 19-year-old Mott roadie (and later one of the key members of Queen's crew). "We were in Manticore Studios in Fulham, a converted cinema. It was freezing cold, everyone in scarves and coats. Then Queen came in in their dresses, their silks and satin. Even then, Fred was doing the whole thing, running up and down and doing his poses. My first thought was basically, 'What a prat.'"

It wasn't an uncommon reaction. Formed from the ashes of May and drummer Roger Taylor's old band Smile in late 1970, Queen initially struggled to make a name for themselves. When eventually they did, they found themselves polarising opinion. While they had their admirers, they had also inadvertently become whipping boys for some sections of the British music press.

"We were just totally ignored for so long, and then completely slagged off by everyone," Brian May acknowledged. "In a way, that was a very good start for us. There's no kind of abuse that wasn't thrown at us. It was only around the time of *Sheer Heart Attack* that it began to change. But we still got slagged off a fair bit even then."

The opprobrium heaped on them may have hurt them individually, but it only strengthened their collective resolve. Where their first album owed a noticeable debt to Led Zeppelin, the follow-up raised the bar immeasurably. Divided between 'Side White' and 'Side Black' to reflect what Mercury called "the battle between good and evil", it brought both operatic bombast and ballet-pumped daintiness to their heavy rock thunder – often in the same song.

"They planned everything in their heads," says Gary Langan, then an assistant engineer at Sarm Studios in East London, who worked on two *Sheer Heart Attack* tracks. "Nothing was left to chance. That's what separated them from other bands. You had to earn Freddie's respect to get close

him. He used to scare the pants off me. The aura around that guy was astonishing."

Mercury was born Farrokh Bulsara, to Indian Parsi parents, on the island of Zanzibar, just off the eastern coast of mainland Africa. His formative years were spent at boarding school near Bombay, where he learned to play music and formed his first band, the Hectics. In 1964, when he was 17, civil war broke out in Zanzibar and the Bulsara family fled the island to settle in the altogether less dangerous environs of Feltham, Middlesex.

It was here, in the chrysalis of suburbia, that Farrokh Bulsara would ultimately transform himself into Freddie Mercury. The latter was an entirely self-created character, as camp and outrageous in public as he was shy and driven in private. By the time of *Queen II*, Farrokh Bulsara was a ghost known only to his family and closest friends; to everyone else he was Freddie Mercury.

Not that the rest of the band were content to exist in Mercury's shadow. Three very distinct personalities, they each brought a different aspect to the band: May the studios intellectual, Taylor the louche rock'n'roller, Deacon the quiet man whose musical contribution would often be overlooked. It was a frequently combustible combination, albeit one with a shared vision.

"Do we row?" said Mercury in '74. "Oh, my dear, we're the bitchiest band on earth. We're at each other's throats. But if we didn't disagree we'd just be 'yes men'. And we do get the cream in the end."

Fittingly, it would be Mott The Hoople who taught Queen how to be a rock'n'roll band. In October 1973, the foursome embarked on a 24-date UK tour with Ian Hunter's survivors. Queen had released their debut album the previous July: the follow-up was already recorded, although it wouldn't be released for another four months (a source of growing tension between band and management).

The two bands couldn't have been more different. Mott were veterans of the rock'n'roll wars: they'd had their ups and downs, and had even split up before David Bowie threw them a lifeline in the shape of *All The Young Dudes*. They'd been there, done that, and rolled their eyes in wry resignation at the thought of it all. By contrast, Queen were young, hungry and at least striving for something approaching glamour. The rocks thrown their way hadn't dented their drive for success in the slightest.

It quickly became apparent that Queen weren't the usual makeweight support band. "They were quite pushy from day one," says Peter Hince. "They demanded more space on stage, they were quite arrogant. They'd got this very clear idea of what they were going to do: 'We're gonna go for it.' But you could see that they were already very good."

For Queen, the tour was an invaluable lesson. They studiously watched the headliners. One of the songs in their own set was a prototype version of *Stone Cold Crazy*, a song that would later appear on *Sheer Heart Attack*.

"On tour as support to Mott, I was conscious that we were in the presence of something great," said Brian May. "Something highly evolved, close to the centre of the spirit of rock'n'roll, something

VASELINE & SEAWEED

Photographer Mick Rock tells the story behind his iconic sleeve.

"I met Queen when they were looking for someone to shoot a press shot for their first album and a cover for *Queen II*. I came up with the lighting concept for the sleeve, which was an echo of an old Marlene Dietrich picture.

"The *Sheer Heart Attack* cover was their idea. They were very articulate, very well educated. Freddie was the arty one, but I think it was Roger who came up with the idea. They wanted to look like they'd been thrown up on some distant island. Course, when it came to the shoot itself they wondered what the fuck they were doing.

"If you'd have walked in the studio at that point you'd have seen four geezers lying on the floor, covered in glycerine and having water chucked over them, with me hovering over them. They were very co-operative, albeit uncomfortable.

"The cover was actually two shots: there's a basic shot, then Roger's hair is taken from another shot that's been grafted on – his hair looks like seaweed. It adds another layer to things.

Brian made some comment in my book, *Killer Queen*: 'It was almost worth lying on the floor, covered in Vaseline, having cold water thrown over us'."

For more info, visit www.mickrock.com

Brian May was hospitalised during 1974, delaying work on *Sheer Heart Attack*.

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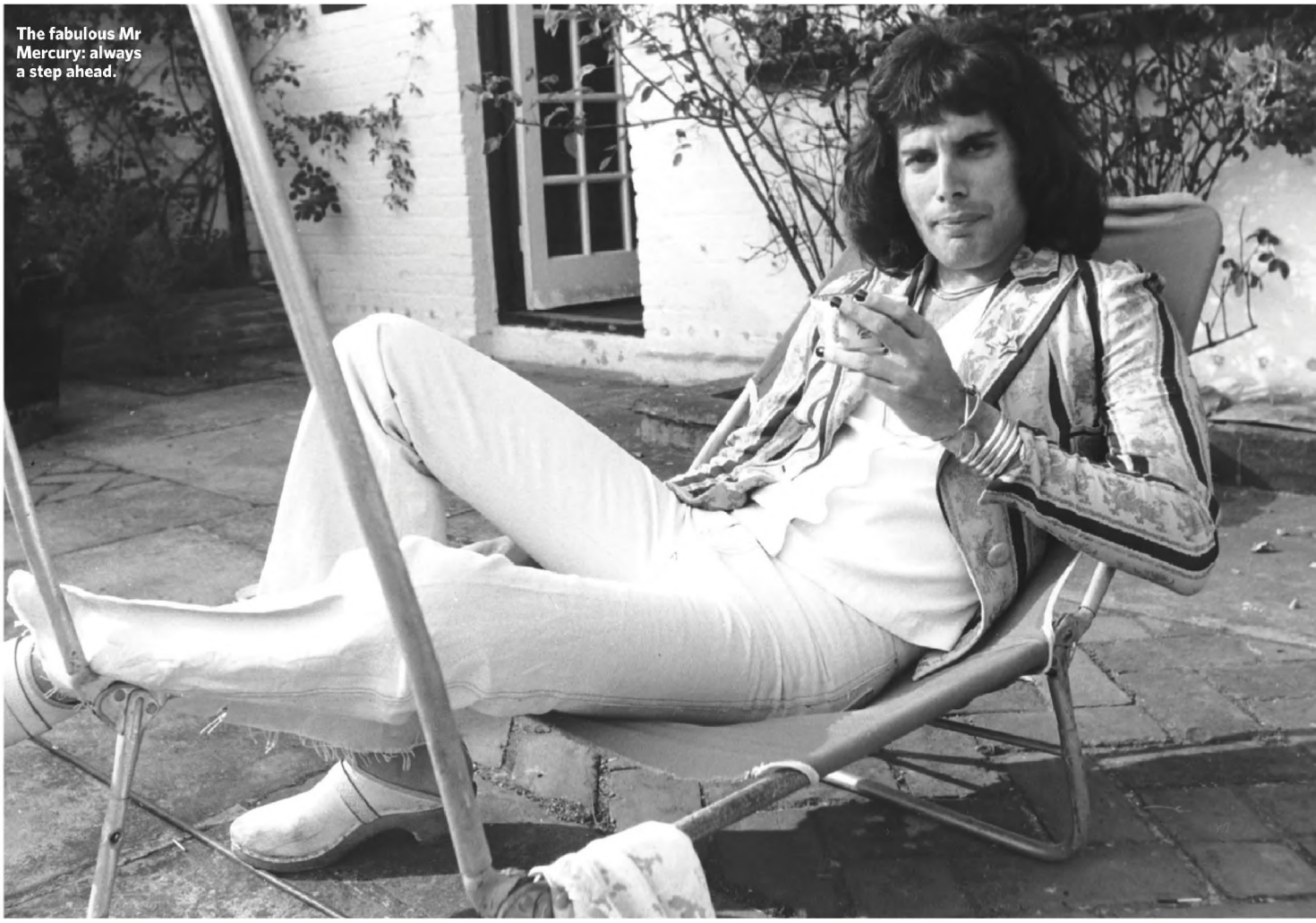


The fabulous Mr Mercury: always a step ahead.

GETTY

to breathe in and learn from."

Typically, Freddie Mercury found playing second fiddle harder to swallow. "Being support is one of the most traumatic experiences of my life," he would later pout.

The Mott tour finished with two shows at Hammersmith Odeon on December 13 and 14, but there was no rest for Queen. The next day they kicked off their own short tour at Leicester University. Shortly afterwards they flew to Australia to play their first show outside Europe; less happily, it ended with the band getting booed off by the roughneck audience.

By the time *Queen II* was released in March 1974, the band were finally matching their own self-belief. With a following wind behind them from the Top 10 success of *Seven Seas Of Rhye*, they kicked off their first proper UK headlining tour, starting in Blackpool, taking in such glamorous rock'n'roll destinations as Paignton, Canvey Island and Cromer, and peaking with a prestigious gig at London's famed Rainbow Theatre. There was a riot at a show in Stirling, when 500 audience members refused to leave the venue after the final encore, forcing the band to barricade themselves in the dressing room (the next night's show in Birmingham was cancelled when the band were detained for questioning by the disgruntled Stirling police force).

For Freddie Mercury it was proof that Queen's destiny was in their own hands. "You have to have confidence in this business," said the singer. "It's useless saying you don't need it. If you start saying to yourself: 'Maybe I'm not good enough. Maybe I'd better settle for second place,' it's no good. If you like the icing on the top, you've got to have confidence."

"Fred was marching up and down in my room, going: 'When are these silly bastards going to get it?'"

Ian Hunter

While Queen's star was rising in the UK, America was another matter. Barely known beyond a few Anglophile hipsters, they would need to start from scratch to build up anything resembling a Stateside following. Handily, their friends in Mott The Hoople were there to help them out again.

"We went out on tour with them. They were very nice people," says Mott's Ian Hunter. "Very intelligent. So we said, 'Okay, do you want to come to America as well?'"

On April 16, Queen played their first US show, in Denver, Colorado as support to Mott. Remarkably, despite the band's name and Mercury's stagecraft, the more macho sections of the American audiences didn't take against them.

"They were more like a normal group," Hunter recalls. "They were playing rock songs, but with their own slant on it. They did say that they picked up a lot of their stagecraft from Mott, you know? You've got to pick it up from somewhere."

This big-brother-little-brother dynamic was evident off stage, as was the support band's desire to be successful. At one point the two bands found themselves

KILLER QUEENS

Leppard, Metallica and Foos serve up the ultimate *Sheer Heart Attack* covers album.

BRIGHTON ROCK **Fastbacks**
Seattle pop-punks (and Duff McKagan's old band) turn in a shambolic version of Brian May's guitar-hero showcase.
On: *Bike-Toy-Clock-Gift*

KILLER QUEEN
Glenn Hughes
Old leather lungs brings some Black Country earthiness to Freddie Mercury's foppish tale of a high-class hooker.
On: *Stone Cold Queen: A Tribute*

TENEMENT FUNSTER/FLICK OF THE WRIST/LILY OF THE VALLEY
Dream Theater
Hirsute Yanks park the neo-prog workouts for a faithful rendition of *Sheer Heart Attack*'s triple-headed cornerstone medley.
On: *Black Clouds & Silver Lining: Special Edition*

NOW I'M HERE
Foo Fighters
Never ones to hide their Queen fandom under a bushel, Dave Grohl's mob have been known to deliver a rough-and-ready version of May's signature song live.
On: various live bootlegs

STONE COLD CRAZY **Metallica**
James Hetfield' and co. add muscle to Queen's proto-thrash original. Unveiled at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert, and a live staple ever since.
On: *Live Shit: Binge And Purge*

DEAR FRIENDS **Def Leppard**
Bassist Rick Savage elbows Joe Elliott aside on this glammed-up version of Brian May's wistful nursery rhyme.
On: *Yeah! (Bonus EP)*

MISFIRE **Neko Case**
Candian chanteuse gives John Deacon's breezy ditty an alt-country makeover.
On: *The Virginian*

Getting it together in the country.

GETTY X2

staying in a set of apartments owned by *Spartacus* star Kirk Douglas.

"There was a bit of a do in my room," says Ian Hunter, "and Fred's marching up and down saying: 'When are these silly bastards going to figure it out?' Meaning the Americans. I said to him: 'It's a big country, you've got to go around three or four times before it happens. It's not like England, where you can conquer it in a day!' He was very, very impatient. It was hilarious."

The Olympian levels of debauchery that became synonymous with Queen were a few years away, but there were still some memorable moments. Not least when the tour crossed paths with Bette Midler, then a brassy singer who'd made her name on New York's gay bath-house circuit.

"She was doing a theatre in the same town as us," Hunter remembers. "She latched onto Luther (Grovesnor, aka Mott guitarist Ariel Bender). And then we had Bette's mob come back to the hotel with us. There was us, Queen, Bette and these seven-foot guys in feather head-dresses and what have you. Ha ha! It was so much fun."

On May 7, Mott and Queen began a triumphant six-night residency at New York's Uris Theater. But disaster struck the morning after the final show, when Brian May fell ill. The guitarist was diagnosed with hepatitis, possibly picked up from a dirty needle when they were inoculated before that ill-fated Australian show. Distraught, the band were forced to pull out of the tour, and May, against doctor's orders, was flown home. Their plan to conquer America had been derailed. At least for the time being.

"To us it was out of the blue," says Ian Hunter. "They were on the tour and then they're not. Next thing we knew, they had the album out and it was doing extremely well."

"I felt really bad at having let the group down at such an important place," Brian May said in 1974. "But there was nothing to do about it. It was hepatitis, which you get sometimes when you're emotionally run-down."

Laid up in hospital after returning from America, May was feeling guilty and frustrated at inadvertently curtailing his band's American ambitions. Understandably keen to rejoin his bandmates who had started work on their next album without him, he'd already begun writing while convalescing. One of the songs he was working on, *Now I'm Here*, reflected the disconnect between touring the US with Mott The Hoople and his living in a pokey bedsit in West London with his girlfriend. "It came out quite easily," said the guitarist. "Where I'd been wrestling with it before without getting anywhere."

It was a six weeks before May recovered from his bout of hepatitis. After being discharged he immediately rejoined the others in the studio. But something was wrong. May was constantly being sick, and he couldn't eat anything. He was taken back to hospital, where doctors discovered that he had an undiagnosed stomach ulcer, which had been aggravated by the hepatitis.

"I was stuck in hospital for a few weeks, and they did some stuff to me which was like a miracle," said May. "I thought I was dead. Being ill like that may even have been a good thing at the time, because although it was pretty hellish going through it, I felt glad to be alive and I became able to hold things in perspective more and not get so wound up and worried about them to make myself ill."

By the time May returned to the sessions for the second time, work was properly underway on the new album. It was a strange experience for the guitarist, although not a negative one.

"It was very weird, because I was able to see the group from the outside, and was pretty excited by what I saw," he later said. "We'd done a few things before I was ill, but when I came back they'd done a load more, including a couple of backing tracks of songs by Freddie which I hadn't heard, like *Flick Of The Wrist*, which excited me and gave me a lot of inspiration to get back in there and do what I wanted to do."

Sheer Heart Attack was recorded between July and October 1974. As with its two predecessors, the album was produced by Roy Thomas Baker, a larger-than-life character who could more than match Mercury in the charisma stakes.

"Every one of our musical and production frustrations came out on *Queen II*," said Baker. "The idea for the third album was to get together and do some 'simpler' songs for a change; real little, short songs. And it was very successful on that level."

Unlike *Queen* and *Queen II*, *Sheer Heart Attack* was conceived in the studio, albeit through necessity rather than by design. "Nobody knew we were going to be told we had two weeks to write *Sheer Heart Attack*," said Mercury. "And we had to – it was the only thing we could do. Brian was in hospital."

Despite the setback of the cancelled US tour, there was no doubt among the band that *Sheer Heart Attack* would take them to the next level. The black-and-white approach of *Queen II* had been reigned in, replaced by a kaleidoscopic range of sounds and styles. Leading this new approach was *Killer Queen*, an outrageously camp ditty that was closer to Noël Coward than to Robert Plant.

"That was the one song which was really out of the format that I usually write in," said Mercury.

Killer Queen: Freddie and co with their biggest fan.

"Usually the music comes first, but the words, and the sophisticated style that I wanted to put across in the song, came first."

Many have claimed to be the inspiration behind *Killer Queen*, most notably Eric 'Monster! Monster!' Hall, the future football agent who then worked as Queen's radio plugger. According to Mercury, the title chartacter was pure fantasy.

"No, I'd never really met a woman like that," he explained after the album's release. "I can dream up all kinds of things. That's the kind of world I live in. It's very flamboyant."

If *Killer Queen* was the best-known song, it was hardly representative of the album, largely because the band didn't chain themselves to one style. No band other than The Beatles had dared throw as many different styles into the mix with as much confidence. That state of affairs in Queen was helped by the fact that all four members pitched in with the writing.

A convalescing May delivered the rockers, including *Now I'm Here* and opener *Brighton Rock* (working titles: *Bognor Ballad*, *Southend Sea Scout* and *Happy Little Fuck*). Bookended by a picaresque tale of two seaside lovers sung in high and low registers by Mercury, it was a showcase for an extended May guitar solo dating back to *Blag*, a song by his old band Smile. By contrast, Mercury threw in everything from waspish glam rock (*Flick Of The Wrist*, a reflection of their increasingly strained relationship with their management) to old-fashioned vaudeville (*Bring Back Leroy Brown*, complete with ukelele solo from May). Most prescient was *In The Lap Of The Gods*, a two-part, near-operatic epic that laid the groundwork for *Bohemian Rhapsody* the following year.

In this creative environment, the rhythm section also rocked up with material. Taylor, who had written a song for each of their previous albums, contributed *Tenement Funster*, a lachrymose salute to the rock'n'roll lifestyle, and an overlooked Queen gem. John Deacon chipped in with the slight but perfectly formed *Misfire*. The furious *Stone Cold Crazy* – an influence on the future members of Metallica, and hence a cornerstone of the thrash metal movement – was credited to all four members, even though it dated from Mercury's pre-Queen band Wreckage.

For a band who were frequently mocked for being shallow, there were plenty of hidden depths, not least on Mercury's delicate *Lily Of The Valley*. The singer's sexuality was the subject of much debate in the press; apparent double-bluffs such as his famous proclamation that "I'm as gay as a daffodil, dear" deliberately clouded the issue. But while Mercury was still living with girlfriend Mary Austin, he reputedly told his closest friends that he was gay.

"Freddie's stuff was so heavily cloaked, lyrically," Brian May said in 1999. "But you could find out, just from little insights, that a lot of his private thoughts were in there, although a lot of the more meaningful stuff was not very accessible. *Lily Of The Valley* was utterly heartfelt. It's about looking at his girlfriend and realising that his body needed to be somewhere else."

All such personal distractions were kept out of the studio. "They worked 15 hour days," says Gary Langan, who worked as tape operator on *Now I'm Here* and *Brighton Rock*. "When we finished work at Sarm [Studios], we'd meet them at a club called the Valbonne in Soho. That's when they let their hair down."

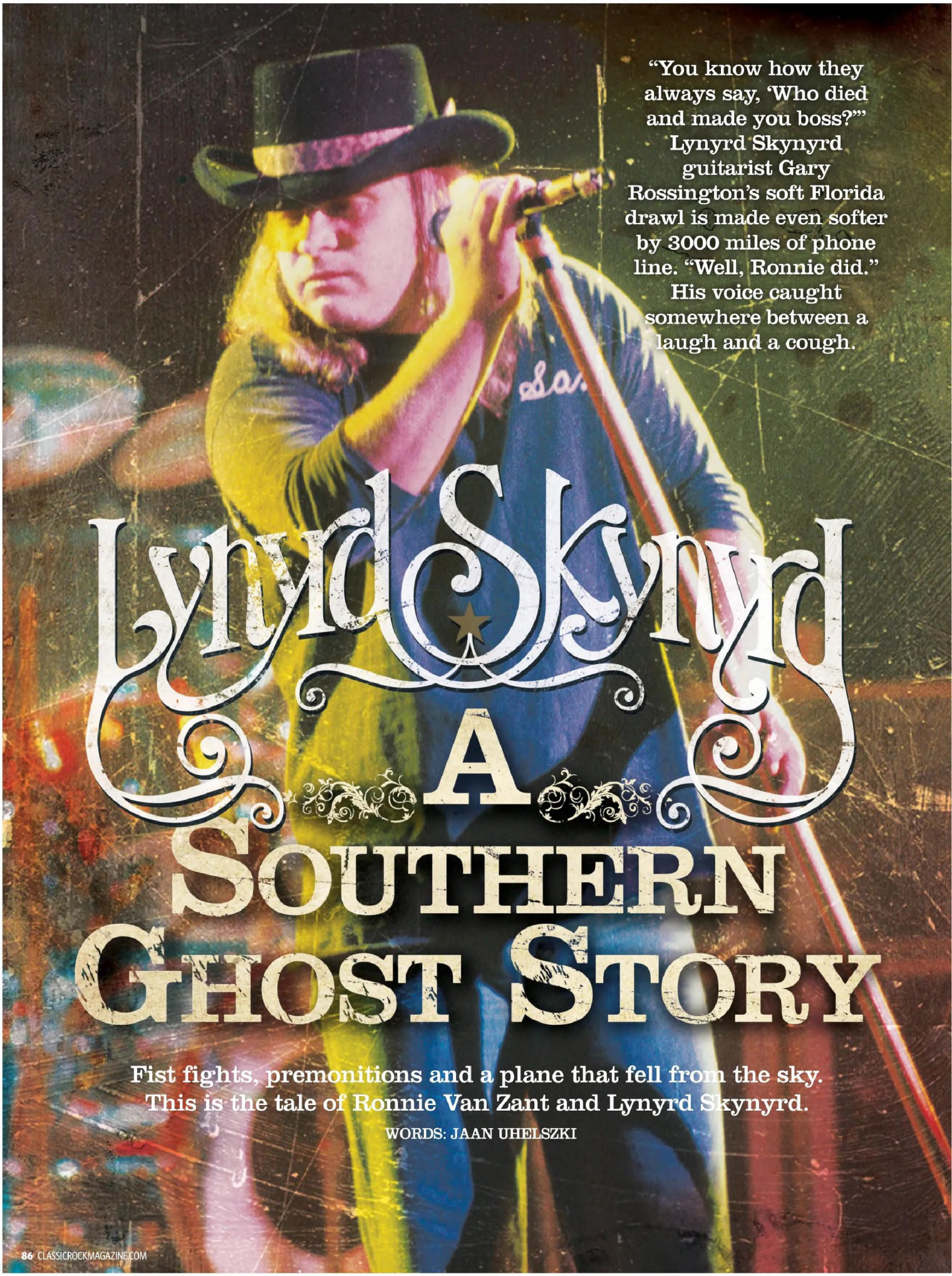
This drive for perfection ensured there was no fat on *Sheer Heart Attack*. Just two songs failed to make the final album. One was May's imperious reworking of the national anthem, *God Save The Queen*, later resurrected for 1975's *A Night At The Opera*. The other was the song that gave the album its title, the frantic, Taylor-penned *Sheer Heart Attack*. Little more than the bare bones of a song when they started, the drummer failed to finish it in time. They finally got around to recording it for 1977's *News Of The World* album, underpinned with the sneering key lyric: *'I feel so inar.. inar… inar inar… inarticulate'*. The band in the next studio at the time? The Sex Pistols.

By the time *Sheer Heart Attack* was released on November 1, 1974, *Killer Queen* had already given Queen their first Top 3 hit. *Now I'm Here* followed a couple of months later, complete with touching nod to unofficial mentors Mott The Hoople ("It was nice," recalls Ian Hunter, "but there was no money attached to it"). Between the two, Queen embarked on their first proper world tour, headlining. This time there were no illnesses or riots, though they were greeted by scenes approaching Beatlemania when they arrived in Japan in April 1975. The effort that went into *Sheer Heart Attack* had paid off.

Forty years on it stands as Queen's most pivotal album. They had greater success later, but none of it would have be possible without the groundwork laid down here. "That was the album that showed the world what they were capabale of," says Gary Langan. "If that album hadn't been as successful as it was, then something like *A Night At The Opera* probably wouldn't have been accepeted."

Freddie Mercury put it more succinctly.

"We were in a prolific stage and so much was happening with us, dear," he said afterwards. "We felt the need for a change of sorts and, as ever, we felt able to go to extremes. As usual, we put ourselves under pressure. That's just us."



"You know how they always say, 'Who died and made you boss?'" Lynyrd Skynyrd guitarist Gary Rossington's soft Florida drawl is made even softer by 3000 miles of phone line. "Well, Ronnie did." His voice caught somewhere between a laugh and a cough.

Lynyrd Skynyrd

A Southern Ghost Story

Fist fights, premonitions and a plane that fell from the sky. This is the tale of Ronnie Van Zant and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

WORDS: JAAN UHELSZKI

GETTY

Rossington's broken bones healed long ago, but they still ache when the weather turns cold or rainy. The pain, the scars, the metal rod in one arm – frequent reminders of October 20, 1977, the day Lynyrd Skynyrd's plane went down near McComb, Mississippi.

Among the dead, lead singer Ronnie Van Zant. Guitarist Steve Gaines. Steve's sister Cassie, one of the Honkettes – Skynyrd's backing vocalists. Road manager Dean Kilpatrick and the aircraft's two pilots.

Rossington doesn't need aches and pains to remind him of that day – it's something that will haunt him forever.

"I used to send flowers to the graves every October 20th for about 10 years. And then Judy [Van Zant, Ronnie's widow] told me, 'Just quit. Because people just steal them the same day.' It doesn't hurt and freak me out like it used to, but it's in the back of my mind and hard all that day. Right around the evening time when it happened, that's when it really gets weird, and [my wife] Dale leaves me alone."

Rossington and the rest of the band and crew – 20 in all – survived their injuries but struggled for years with the aftermath. Drug addiction. Paralyzing car wrecks. Divorce. Suicide. Murder. Accusations of sexual and spousal abuse… It seems that some terrible curse was determined to lay its claim on the surviving members.

No one who survived that day can forget that Van Zant, then 29, had repeatedly proclaimed that he would not live to see his 30th birthday. He died 87 days before that pivotal date.

The tale boasts all the elements of a southern gothic soap opera. Or a modern day ghost story. Was this litany of woe what Van Zant had in mind when he insisted matter-of-factly to his wife, bandmates, family members, audiences – and this journalist – that he just wasn't long for this world?

"When I heard that there had been a plane crash, I just knew Ronnie was one of the ones that didn't make it," Judy Van Zant Jenness recalls. "He told me so many times that I realised that he really knew what he was talking about."

Former Skynyrd drummer Artimus Pyle was often nearby when Van Zant foretold his own demise. "We were in Tokyo at some bar and we were drinking lots of sake. Ronnie told me, 'I am never going to live to see 30'," recalls Pyle. "I said, 'Bullshit man.' But he said, 'No, no, I want to go out with my boots on.'"

"Ronnie was the only one of my children who had second sight," recalled his late father Lacy Van Zant in 1995. The bearded octogenarian was slumping heavily in his La-Z-Boy Recliner. As he leaned over to spit the bug-coloured juice from his Red Man chewing tobacco into an empty plastic milk carton, he looked me straight in the eye to see if I believed him. I did.

"Ronnie told me often that he didn't expect to live past 30," remembers Kevin Elson, Skynyrd's soundman, who went on to produce Journey, Mr. Big, Night Ranger and Strangeways. "I think it was because he lived hard every day and anyone who does that – like Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix – is gone by the time they're 28 or 29. He and [assistant road manager] Dean Kilpatrick were the same. They were like, 'I have this funny feeling about this. I don't think I'm going to make it.'"

Elson was also on that rented twin-engine plane the day it fell out of the Mississippi sky. Had he been older and wiser, he says, he never would have climbed those rickety steel stairs.

"We had problems on the plane before that last flight," Elson says. "We had a day off, then a show, then a day off flying. They flew a mechanic in from Dallas who was supposed to repair everything. Everyone was sort of wary, though. But there was a lot of confidence with the pilot, Walter. Everyone felt safe with him. Except Cassie [Gaines]," explains Elson. "But it was one of those things where intuition should have been followed. Cassie said, 'I'm going to ride in the truck,' but she changed her mind at the last minute. There was so much leading up to that… Now as an older person I can see it. Man, all the signs were there."

It didn't stop there. Van Zant told journalist Jim Farber three months before the plane crash. "I wrote [*That Smell*] when Gary had his car accident. It was last year and Allen [Collins, Skynyrd guitarist] and Billy [Powell, keyboards] were in car accidents all in the space of six months. I had a creepy feeling things were going against us, so I thought I'd write a morbid song."

The oft-told, star-crossed saga of Lynyrd Skynyrd has been portrayed as the convergence of opportunity, preparedness, talent and luck. What were the chances of Dylan associate, Blues Project founder and producer extraordinaire Al Kooper walking into an Atlanta dive in the summer of 1972 and spotting this band?

Kooper had just persuaded MCA records to bankroll his Sounds Of The South label in an effort to compete with Phil Walden's Capricorn Records (home of the Allman Brothers). He was bowled over by Skynyrd's professionalism, arrangements, guitar work, and mostly by short and stocky lead singer Van Zant, who showed up in a black T-shirt and droopy jeans.

"At first he annoyed me, because he was a mic stand twirler," says Kooper from his home in Boston. "The drum major of Lynyrd Skynyrd, but instead of a baton he had a microphone stand that was, by the way, lightweight aluminum – it only looked like it was heavy. That just got me. Plus I was amused because he left his shoes on the side of the stage. But looks didn't really matter to me. The music was incredible. How can you not respond to the first time you hear *I Ain't The One* or *Free Bird*?"

In Kooper's eyes, Lynyrd Skynyrd were his Allman Brothers – the jewel in the southern rock crown. Skynyrd transcended the southern rock genre with their swaggering, dangerous music that conjured the dark fury of betrayal, perfidy or just plain orneriness and hopelessness over the diminished prospects in the rural south.

These were guys who never expected anything, but wanted everything. You could hear it in the antebellum taunt of *Sweet Home Alabama*, to the prosaic plea of *Gimme Three Steps*, and the stately requiem of *Free Bird*. That anthem-turned-albatross began life as a wistful love song about a man who was trying to extricate himself from a claustrophobic relationship. It grew to epic stature when they grafted on a mad combative closing coda that builds and tumbles on itself then doubles back again, making a nine-minute sonic edifice that stretches right across the Mason-Dixon line, purloining fills from Duane Allman and travelling all the way to London to sit at the right hand of Jeff Beck, siphoning off his *Beck's Bolero* riffs.

Skynyrd was always more influenced by second wave British invaders (Eric Clapton, Free, and the tough, garagey thud of the Stones, Kinks and Yardbirds) than the jazzy, free-falling improvisation of the Allmans. With their tales of beautiful losers, thwarted romance and dashed ambition, Skynyrd were a more menacing bunch. Peace, love and understanding never made it to Jacksonville. Van Zant's lip would curl into a surly half moon as he spat out the lyrics to on *On The Hunt*, *Poison Whiskey* or *Things Going On*. On the sneeringly sarcastic of *Working For MCA*, a song he wrote for the Sound Of The South launch party held at Richard's in Atlanta on Sunday July 29, 1973, where the band played in front of jaundiced record executives, radio programmers, disc jockeys, promoters, rock critics and T.Rex's Marc Bolan, all of whom flew in on MCA's tab.

Introduced by Al Kooper as "the American Rolling Stones", Skynyrd proceeded to sing about how the former Blues Project founder had discovered them. Van Zant stood in one spot barely moving, his bare feet squarely planted on the stage as he spat out the words to the band's creation myth. *'Seven years of hard luck comin' down on me/From a motorboat, yes, up in Nashville, Tennessee/I worked in every joint you can name, yes, every honky tonk/ They all come to see Yankee slicker saying, baby, you're what I want.'*

Behind him, a wall of guitars wailed. Ed King, the Strawberry Alarm Clock expatriate who'd been hired to play bass on debut album *Pronounced Leh-Nerd Skin-Nerd* had switched to guitar, ripped off notes that nibbled at the far ends of psychedelia, his Stratocaster filling the psychic gap between Collins' Gibson Firebird and Rossington's Les Paul. The rhythm section of Powell, bassist Leon Wilkeson and drummer Bob Burns played with military precision.

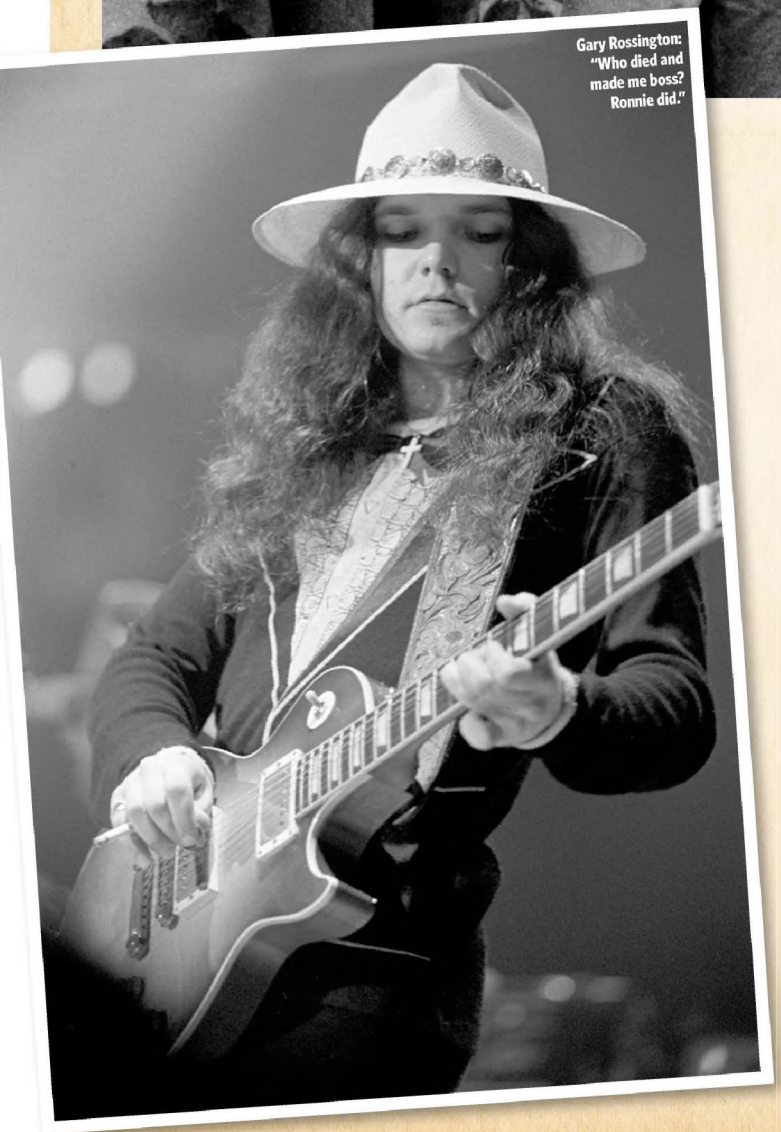
The press and hangers-on were out of their chairs from the very first assault of …*MCA* to the final lingering note of Free Bird. So devastating was Skynyrd's assault that the other acts showcased at Sounds Of The South, Mose Jones and Elijah, were forgotten. Lynyrd Skynyrd, that seven year work-in-progress, was ready at last.

Gregg Allman said, on meeting Ronnie Van Zant in 1972. "Are you the guy that's trying to sound like me?"

Anyone actually listening would know that wasn't true. Maybe it had more to do with the fact that Allman once dated Van Zant's winsome wife Judy There was always a whiff of competitiveness between the two of them.

With their take-no-prisoners attitude, Skynyrd earned themselves a formidable reputation as contenders. "When we get on that stage it's war," Van Zant told me in 1975. "There are no friends, no relatives. We are there to win."

He drilled his band mercilessly, driving out to Green Cove Springs, Florida to a little tin shack on 90 acres north of Jacksonville. This sweltering shed, ↦



Gary Rossington: "Who died and made me boss? Ronnie did."

which quickly earned the nickname Hell House, became the boot camp where Van Zant moulded his raw recruits into musical men. He picked up his bleary-eyed and grumbling troops in his battered old '55 Chevy truck every morning at 7.30am, stopping for jugs of coffee at the donut shop where his mother worked. By 8.30 he'd be putting his charges through their paces in workdays that regularly ran eight to 12 hours; sometimes they wouldn't straggle back until the next morning.

It paid off. With Kooper's help, Skynyrd landed the support slot on the American leg of The Who's Quadrophenia tour. They went from headlining small venues in the south to performing in front of 20,000 at some of American's largest facilities. At their first show at San Francisco's Cow Palace, they saw how daunting it could be. The audience pelted the little known band with quarters – ostensibly to get them off the stage.

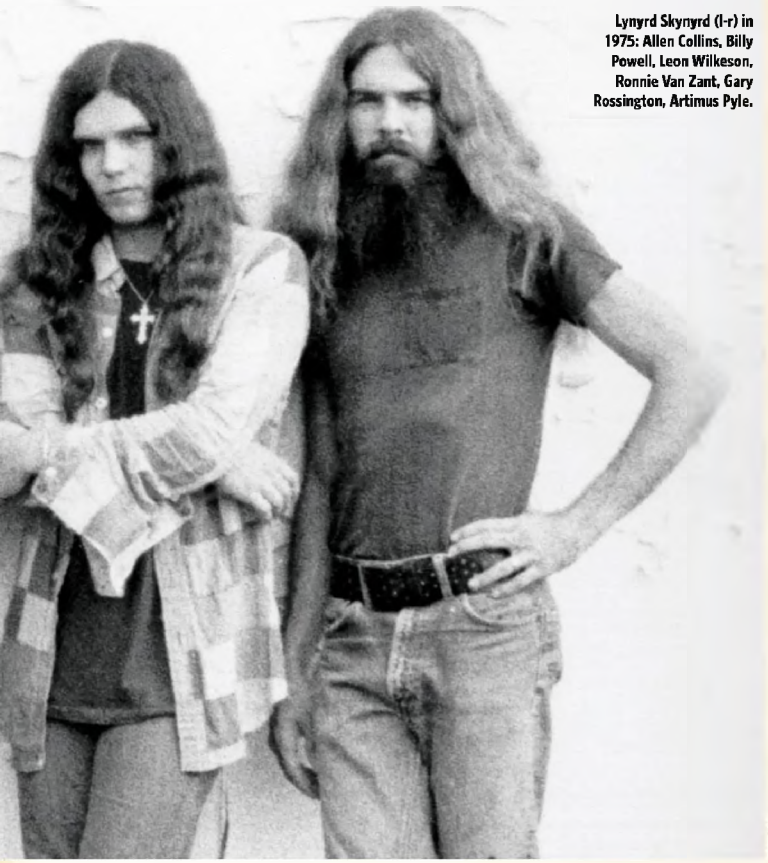
"And damn that hurt," Van Zant said at the time.

But 25 minutes later, that same jaundiced audience called Skynyrd back for an encore. "No band that has ever opened for The Who has ever gotten an encore." Who manager Peter Rudge remarked at the time. Before you knew it, Rudge was managing Skynyrd.

"They were immediately affected by the presence of The Who," remembered Bill Curbishley, Rudge's management partner and current manager of The Who. "They wanted to be crazier than [Keith] Moon; they wanted to be more everything than The Who. They were naturally a bit crazy in various ways and all that meeting with The Who did was light the fuse. It also gave them a hunger and a drive and a motivation. I was touring with them quite a bit in Europe and I felt this was a band that could have gone all the way.

"I think they made the type of music that transcended fashion," Curbishley said. "I think they would have stuck in there. Punk or alternative wouldn't have damaged them. But one thing that sticks out in my mind, is the time I got a call from my tour manager and he said there was some trouble at a place they were staying. He rang me and said, 'We've got some trouble in this hotel.' He told me they've got hold of the manager's wife's cat and they skinned it. It's not just smashing up a room – they skinned a cat!"

Ed King remembers it another way. He recalled when their first drummer Bob Burns snapped in a northern England hotel room in late 1974 on the band's first overseas trek, a breakdown the others say was triggered by an unhealthy number of viewings of the hit film, *The Exorcist*. Burns, who'd been playing poorly and suffering Van Zant's wrath regularly, freaked and tossed the



Lynyrd Skynyrd (l-r) in 1975: Allen Collins, Billy Powell, Leon Wilkeson, Ronnie Van Zant, Gary Rossington, Artimus Pyle.

GETTY X3

Remembering RVZ with Cameron Crowe

Ronnie wasn't always the bully he was often made out to be.

Film-maker and former rock journalist Cameron Crowe was in Lynyrd Skynyrd's company quite often. His girlfriend at the time was Skynyrd road manager MaryBeth Medley. Here, he remembers a trip to Hawaii, en route to Japan.

"We went fishing in Hawaii, he wanted me to catch a fish. I loved deep sea fishing and we went out twice and he paid for everything. He always paid for everything – in that 'that's what money is for' way. He was always the first one to reach in his pocket to pay for something that involved everybody enjoying the moment. Not necessarily getting freaky and rowdy, but he was very much into 'let's enjoy right now'. I don't think he had that much money at the time.

"So, he knew I wanted to catch a fish and we went out once. No fish. Not a bite, and he demanded we go out again and still no fish. He was so so disappointed that he couldn't deliver a fish... I had this tape of songs, a road tape. I was playing it on the boat. Years went by, the crash happened, and I was digging through these tapes and I listened to it. Halfway through the music cut out and all of I sudden I heard all of us on the boat. I must have pressed record for about three minutes by mistake. And I heard all of us laughing and Ronnie being the most gregarious and somehow the most noble guy I had ever known at the time.

"It was like my whole experience with these guys was all there in this three minutes of us fishing and laughing and talking on the boat. Then it was just gone and the tape went back to the Paul McCartney song *Beware My Love*. It just killed me."

hotel's beloved resident cat out his fourth floor window, making for a grisly kitty cat splat outside the establishment's front door. He later went after the road manager with a pickaxe. Somehow the band got through the two-week tour, but they made a point of putting Burns on a separate flight home.

The members of Lynyrd Skynyrd were strangely united by one thing. The bandmates, almost to a man, had lost their fathers early on. Artimus Pyle's dad had perished in a plane crash that chillingly resembled the one that felled the band, leaving from the same Greenville, South Carolina airport that the band did on that final flight. Rossington was raised by a single mother, his father dying when he was just a tyke. Ed King's father had committed suicide. Allen Collins' father had just begun showing up "about the same time the cheques did," according to one member of the band. Leon Wilkeson's father was alive, but was "the weirdest human being I had ever met in my life," according to King. "He was abusive, a nasty, mean little man with the personality of a thumb."

Ronnie Van Zant assembled this fatherless regiment, all in need of guidance and direction, and hammered them into a touring and recording machine.

Hammered was the operative word. Van Zant had no compunction about hitting a band member across the mouth if he saw some dereliction of duty. Like the time Leon Wilkeson was caught staring at a girl's breasts. Or when Ronnie caught Wilkeson drinking wine during *Free Bird*. Or the time he knocked out two of Billy Powell's teeth, not to mention the time he smashed a bottle and gored the back of Rossington's hands in Hamburg, Germany, hissing "I'll do it without you."

"What I recall most is Ronnie Van Zant wasn't the sort of person I'd want to have an argument with," recalls Chris Charlesworth, a former *Melody Maker* journalist who became Skynyrd's press officer. "He'd as soon smack you in the face as sit down and discuss something at great length. He was the sort of guy that pulled himself up by his bootstraps. To the effect that he started with very little and he was getting somewhere and although he still had a bit to go, he still thought 'Well if I continue to do it my way I'll do okay. I've proved this to myself, so why should I listen to anybody else?' That's the feeling you got. Peter Rudge, whom I worked for, was a tough guy too. A brainy guy, if there was any trouble he could handle it. They were a good pair."

Van Zant and his band became known as offstage boozers and brawlers who would fight among themselves if no external adversaries were available. Their antics reached such proportions that many viewed the airplane crash as a symbolic culmination of the band's violent lifestyle.

Charlesworth, however, chalks the plane crash up to just "dumb bad luck. I don't believe for one minute that the indiscretions of their lifestyle would have led to this. That's superstitious bollocks."

"When the crash happened," Powell said. "I was lying in the swamp, holding my nose on, thinking, 'Thank God this violence is over with.'"

"I loved and respected Ronnie Van Zant, "says Pyle. "I mean that from the bottom of my heart. But I have seen the man turn into the devil right in front of me and hurt people."

"If we were The Beatles, Ronnie was the mean Beatle," says Rossington. "He was super mean, and super nice."

"They were all mean around here," remembered Van Zant's mother Marion. "But Ronnie was the meanest of them all."

"Ronnie's meanness, they all have it," remembers Jeff Carlisi, a neighbour of the Van Zants, and bandmate of Ronnie's younger brother, Donnie Van ➔

"My tour manager rang me and said, 'We've got some trouble in this hotel. It's not just smashing up a room – Skynyrd skinned a cat.'"

Bill Curbishley, manager, The Who

Supernatural Skynyrd

From ghostly sightings to bird attacks to messages from beyond the grave.

Ronnie Van Zant was such a force of nature that it's no surprise to anyone who knew him that he is still running things from beyond the grave. In fact, it's common knowledge in the inner circle of Skynyrd-cognoscenti that his compatriots have often used the presence of birds to signify that their fallen leader is among them. Case in point – the first time Johnny Van Zant consented to sing the words to *Free Bird* in his brother's stead in 1990 (after three years of full refusal) occurred after the bandmembers found what seemed to be an injured bird hopping on one foot in a parking lot.

"They went over and found this little bird flopping around on the pavement," revealed Will Jordan, a former staffer at the Freebird Foundation. " They thought it had broken its wing, but the wing was just wrapped up in string. One of them took the string off and the bird flew away. That afternoon Johnny agreed to sing *Free Bird*. The message is they free the bird and then the bird frees them to go on."

Except in the case of Allen Collins first visit to Ronnie Van Zant's grave. The guitarist had come to the cemetery to see the Charlie Daniels poem that Van Zant's widow had carved into a bench at the gravesite, but when he approached the bench a mocking bird dive-bombed him repeatedly and would not allow him to get close. "Allen swatted at the bird a few times, but the bird continually charged down and pecked at his head," recalled Gene Odom, the band's road manager. "Allen finally took the message and stayed back. He came to me and said, 'I think it's Ronnie telling me not to worry about him and don't come back here with your head in your hands. Go back and set the stage on fire.'"

There was no doubt in Gary Rossington's mind that Van Zant was in touch with him from the astral plane to oversee the new lineup – demanding he fire two of the band's guitarists. "It's hard but you gotta do what you got to do," said Rossington in 1997. "Especially if it's a guy like Mike Estes and Ed King. They were my brothers, and we were real close. Mikey and me we were like best friends. Then I had to fire him. He didn't do nothing wrong. Nothing happened. It's just that I had this vision, this dream and it's almost like I felt it from Ronnie and Allen. They were saying 'Hey, go for it. Do it. Just do it. So, I did it and it worked out. Rickey [Medlocke] and Huey [Thommason, who passed away in 2007] are great. The band has a whole new spark and flame."

During a two-week period during 2000, the graves of Lynyrd Skynyrd singer Ronnie Van Zant and guitarist Steven Gaines were desecrated not once but twice. The first time, on June 29, on a moonless night at approximately 3am vandals managed to drag Van Zant's body out of its huge marble edifice, and almost pry open the casket before authorities arrived on the scene. Gaines wasn't so lucky. The would-be grave robbers tipped over the urn that held his ashes – not more than 30 yards from Van Zant's final resting place, scattering them willy-nilly around the grounds of Jacksonville Memory Garden in Orange Park, Florida.

Two weeks later on July 11, deputies found David Jennings, 29, inside Memory Gardens, attempting to kick in a temporary wall at of the mausoleum containing Van Zant's body. Insiders claim that the desperados were determined to see if Van Zant really was buried in a black Neil Young T-shirt as legend has it – he was buried in a suit according to his widow, Judy Van Zant Jenness. After the second attack, the family removed the graves to an unmarked burial site, leaving the mausoleums behind at the cemetery as memorials to the musicians.

Residents of the small suburb of Jacksonville, where Van Zant grew up, don't mind where the singer is buried anyway, since they routinely talk about seeing the singer making his way towards the still waters behind his old house on Doctor's Inlet, Florida...

Billy Powell: "After the crash I lay there thinking, 'Thank God this violence is over with.'"

GETTY

Zant, in .38 Special. "He grew up in Shantytown [the rough and tumble West Side of Jacksonville]. Violence was just part of the culture there. If you didn't fight for it, somebody would take it from you."

By most accounts, Van Zant was largely full of ire when he drank. "He knocked Billy's teeth out," remembered Judy Van Zant Jenness, Van Zant's widow. "I was there that day and that was not a pretty day. What set him off? Alcohol. The temper of the Van Zants. They all grew up in the house with Lacy. One thing breeds another, you know. It's passed on and on."

Lacy Van Zant was a Golden Gloves boxer, with no less than 36 bouts under his belt. From an early age he taught his eldest son Ronnie – named after his favourite movie star Ronald Reagan – not only knew how to fight but how to hurt.

"I started teaching him how to box when he was two-and-a-half years old," remembered Van Zant's father in 1996. "He was very, very intelligent, but he had a high temper. If he couldn't get his way, he'd run across this room and butt a hole right in the wall. I taught him if you wanted to hurt a man you'd hit him across the face. Don't hit him straight in the face, you'll only break his nose."

Over the course of his life, Ronnie Van Zant was arrested 12 times – five of them occurring during the last year of his life – and he had suffered enough bruises of his own to show he didn't always pick on the little guy. Parked outside a club in San Francisco, a rather large Chicano man wandered onto their tour bus, called the Great White Wonder, demanding to have a look around. Van Zant took umbrage to the intrusion, and lost no time in raising his fists and thumping the intruder on the side of his head. The man scrambled off the tour bus, with Van Zant in pursuit, only to be met by a crowd of the man's pals – bigger, brawnier and more lethal than their friend. Before 10 minutes had passed, Gary Rossington had joined Van Zant at the bottom of a bloody heap and the singer suffered facial injuries that required he wear sunglasses onstage.

"I remember we were on the bus and Ronnie would be lying there with two pieces of raw meat on his eyes, and he'd wear sunglasses during the show. At the end of *Free Bird* he'd get rid of the mic and take off his sunglasses and stare at the audience," recalls Billy Powell. "And the whole front row would go 'Wow'."

As mean as he could be, there was a Jekyll and Hyde aspect to Ronnie Van Zant. "He'd give you the shirt off his back," remembers his brother Donnie. "He always paid for everything," remembers writer Cameron Crowe, who partially based the band in his film Almost Famous on Skynyrd. "When we were in Japan and Jack Daniel's was $75 a bottle, Ronnie said, 'I'm buying'. He was always the first one to reach into his pocket."

"Ronnie was such a gentleman, he wouldn't let anybody mess with us," says Jo Jo Billingsley. Although all three Honkettes were stunning, there wasn't a man in miles who would come near them if Van Zant was around.

"Once Ronnie stuck a wooden coat hanger down his pants at a bar to fight to defend the honour of one of the girl singers. He turned to me and said, 'Are you with me?' I didn't have a choice but to come along," said Jeff Carlisi.

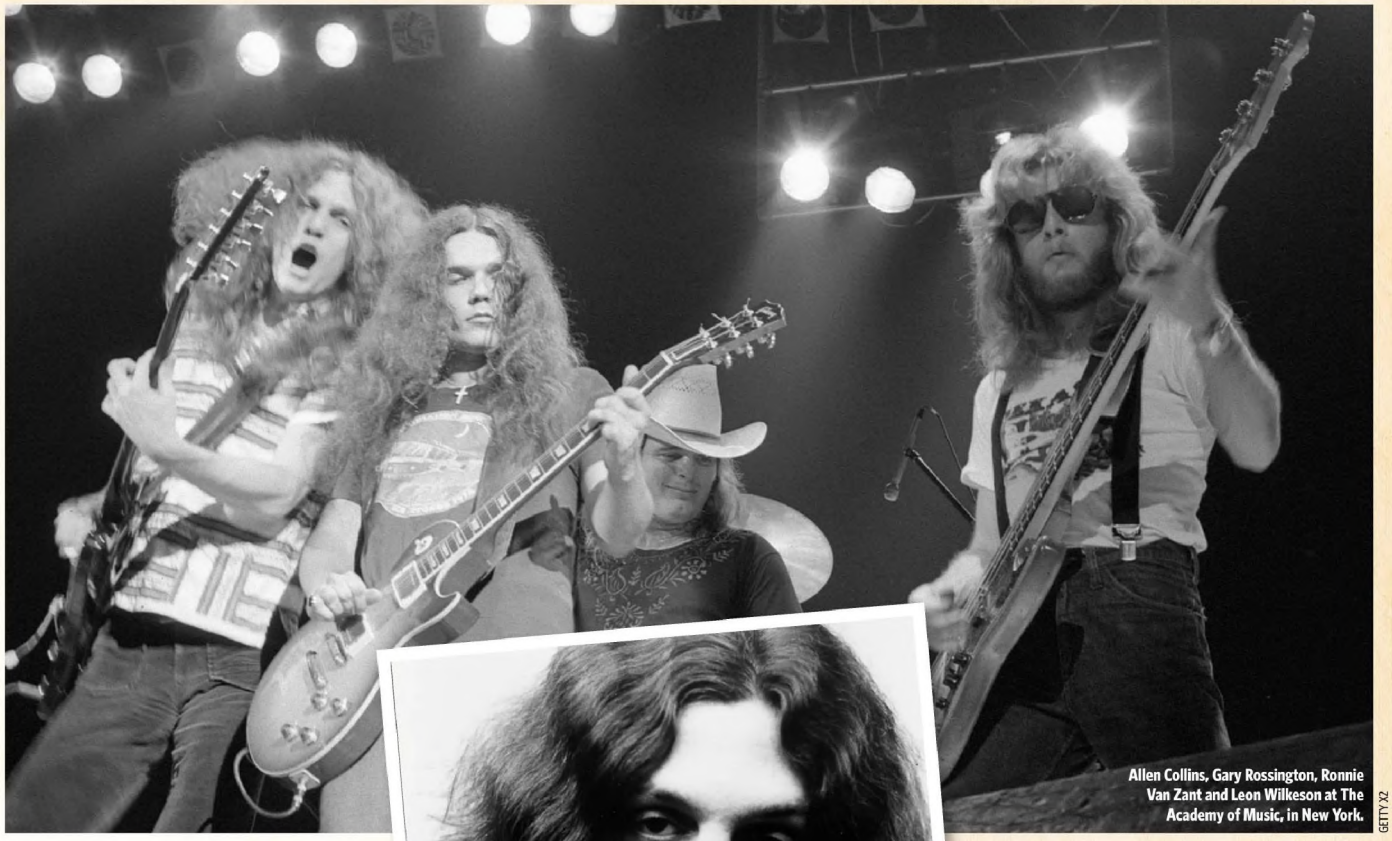
"Ronnie had this here charm about him," remembered his mother Marion in 1996. "He could charm anybody. But he was straightforward with everything he did. You could say he always knew his own mind. He never ever changed, either. He saw his old friends when he came off the road and he loved to fish would fish with anybody. One thing I surely remember is he was very protective of Allen. No one could mess with Allen. He was older than both Allen and Gary. He figured he was supposed to watch them when they were out on the road."

And if you believe in such things, he's watching over them still.

About two-and-a-half hours out of Greenville, South Carolina en route to Baton Rouge, Louisiana during Skynyrd's Street Survivors tour, the right engine of their chartered 1948 twin-engine Convair suddenly hiccupped and died. The pilot radioed to the Houston [Texas] Air Route Traffic Control Center, telling the staff they were "low on fuel", and requested vectors for a tiny airstrip in McComb, Mississippi. They hadn't even finished receiving their directions when the left engine also went and the small plane began its death glide into the Mississippi swamp.

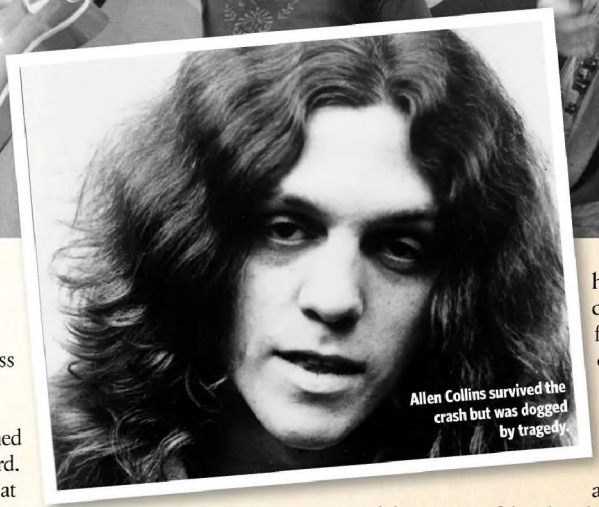
Chris Charlesworth was due to travel with the band on that night of October 20, 1977. At the last minute his plans changed, and he decided to meet the band in Baton Rouge. Three decades later, his near miss still chills him.

"Those in the front of the plane came off worse – that's where Ronnie, Steve Gaines, Cassie Gaines and road manager Dean Kilpatrick were sitting," he says. "The crew in the back were less injured. The group and those closest to them were up front. That's where I would have sat, because I didn't know the crew."



Allen Collins, Gary Rossington, Ronnie Van Zant and Leon Wilkeson at The Academy of Music, in New York.

GETTY X2



Allen Collins survived the crash but was dogged by tragedy.

"We hit the trees at what seemed like 100mph. It felt like we were being hit with baseball bats in a tin coffee can with the lid on," says Billy Powell, his voice still breathless in the telling. "The tail section broke off, the cockpit broke off and buckled underneath, and both wings broke off. The fuselage turned sideways, and everybody was hurled forward. That's how Ronnie died. He was catapulted at about 80 mph into a tree. Died instantly of a massive head injury. There was not another scratch on him, except a small bruise the size of a quarter at his temple."

Later reports would insist that the singer was decapitated, causing his widow, Judy Van Zant to publish her husband's autopsy results on the internet.

The plane was mired in almost three feet of swamp n the middle of a forest; the sun going down so rescue helicopters couldn't land. The survivors weren't aware that the cause of the crash was due to the pilots running out of fuel, so they feared the plane would burst into flame at any moment.

Drummer Artimus Pyle and crew members Ken Peden and Mark Frank stumbled through the wreckage to go for help. Artimus, with a broken sternum and three of his ribs poking out of the skin in his chest, made his way to a farm house a painful three-quarters of a mile away, impelled by one thought. "Every painful step I took was a drop of their blood. I knew that I had to keep putting one foot in front of another."

Scrambling in the dark – fearful of snakes, alligators, or worse – the three finally flagged down a farmer named Johnny Mote, who had come to investigate what the mighty noise was that jarred him out of his house.

Unnerved by the sight of a dirty, blood-drenched hippie running towards him, Mote fired a warning shotgun blast. It did nothing to deter Pyle, who still contends that Mote shot him in his right shoulder – a claim Mote denies. When the drummer could finally utter the words "plane crash", Mote called for help – which was long in coming. Rescuers had to cross a 20-foot creek in order to get to the crash site. The 20 injured had to wait in the mud for hours, while police and emergency workers carved out a makeshift road through the middle of the woods.

Horrifyingly, it wasn't only help that came. Looters reached the site, pilfering the pockets of the dead and the living alike. By dawn almost 3,000 people had come to the crash zone – and the carcass of the plane had been picked clean.

"They were human vultures," recalls road manager Craig Reed. "All the money that was in my pockets was taken. We had been playing poker right before the crash, and I was winning big. I had a couple of grand that was taken. All my T-shirts were taken, all my jewellery, a skull and crossbones coke spoon. Silver bullets from *Gimme Back My Bullets*. All gone. They went through our suitcases. They took anything that said 'Lynyrd Skynyrd'. They even went out and took the side of the plane that was painted 'Lynyrd Skynyrd'."

"The thing I think of is the constant telephone calls with Judy Van Zant who was at Ronnie's house," remembers Charlesworth. "All the women, wives and girlfriends of the band and the crew gathered at Judy's house – there must have been a dozen women there. I just couldn't help but try to imagine the horror of the scene. Can you imagine all these women sitting around a table in the house and none of them knowing if their husbands were alive or dead after ➔

"The tail section broke off, the cockpit buckled underneath and both wings broke off. The fuselage turned sideways and everyone was hurled forward..."

Billy Powell remembers that fateful flight

Skynyrd in California during 1976 on the One More From The Road tour.

GETTY X3

they'd been in this plane crash? The horror of all these women waiting to hear if their husbands were dead? You don't forget a night like that easily."

By the next day, the injured were scattered over three hospitals – where some would remain for weeks. Allen Collins injured his spine; back-up singer Leslie Hawkins had serious facial cuts, while Billy Powell and Artimus Pyle were released from hospitals a week after the crash. Leon Wilkeson suffered a broken jaw, a crushed chest and internal bleeding and was declared dead not once, but three times, waking up only to say he had been sitting on a cloud-shaped log with Ronnie and Duane Allman.

"Ronnie told me, 'Boy get yourself out of here, it's not your time yet, get on out of here,'" the bassist told me in 1997. This would not be the last time the spectre of Ronnie Van Zant would pay a visit to friends and family.

Skynyrd manager Rudge chartered three planes to take family members to the small Mississippi town to see the survivors and in six instances, identify their dead. .38 Special guitarist Don Barnes accompanied Ronnie Van Zant's father to Mississippi and was with him when he went to identify his son. Ronnie's mother was afraid to fly, because as a girl she had witnessed an air crash where nine people died. Judy Van Zant was there, as was Billy Powell's ex-wife Stella. Former Skynyrd guitarist Ed King drove through the night arriving the next morning to see the members of the band he left in the middle of the night two years before. "I always knew something bad would happen to them after I left," the guitarist recalled.

"When the tragedy happened, I was the one who flew out with Lacy to identify the bodies," says Barnes. "The strength that this man displayed was monumental. Lacy was in denial on the plane and hoped that there was a mistake and that his son was not dead.
I had to find out who was where and we had to get to the funeral home to identify the body.

"We then went to the hospital and saw all the other people who were hurt. They all looked at Lacy through stitches and swelling and he told me not to say anything about Ronnie. He just said that Ronnie was fine and you just get better and rest. This man had just been to the funeral home and seen his son dead and decided to keep that to himself for these guys to heal. I told him that it was the strongest thing I had seen a man do."

Lacy Van Zant always insisted he warned his son not to get on that plane. "On that last day, he was standing right on this step," said the elder Van Zant, who pointed to a spot about 10 feet from where we sat, "and I begged him not to get on the charter plane. He told me, 'Daddy, that pilot can fly through the eye of a hurricane and land in a corn field.' It turns out that he was wrong."

The funeral wasn't held for Ronnie Van Zant until almost a week later, mostly because his wife Judy was falling apart.

"I went into shock when Ronnie died," says Judy Van Zant Jenness. "I didn't want to hold the funeral until Allen and Gary got out of the hospital. "She looks off into the distance, pushing a strand of blonde hair off of her eyes. "But that was impossible. And then I didn't want him buried in the ground, I insisted on a crypt. I know I drove a lot of people crazy but I wasn't going to put him in the ground and put dirt on him. I know it sounds silly now. It didn't then. So they put up a temporary crypt. Later we had this special memorial service just for Allen and Gary and we moved Ronnie to his permanent place. Theresa [Gaines] decided she wanted Steve and Cassie there too."

She wasn't the only one who had trouble keeping it together. Lacy Van Zant wore a Lynyrd Skynyrd t-shirt to the 10-minute long funeral service, and had to be hospitalized for nervous exhaustion for three days afterward. But before that, he went up to Honkette Jo Jo Billingsley, and did something that unnerved her. "Lacy came up and reached down and scooped up a handful of the dirt and wiped it across my mouth and said, 'Kiss this ground you're walking on'. And walked off."

The reason for Lacy's rather strange behavior was because Jo Jo wasn't on that flight. She hadn't been with the band at the beginning of the Street Survivor tour – intimates say she had been fired because she was having an affair with the very married Allen Collins – but according to Billingsley, Van Zant called her the night before their show in Greenville to come rejoin the band on the road.

"I thought, well, that's music to my ears," Billingsley told a reporter from swampland.com in 2003. "I said, 'Yes, of course.' While I was talking to him I felt this strange feeling and I heard this word, 'Wait.' My spirit was talking to me. I said, 'Well, we were planning to come to Little Rock anyway. Why don't I just meet you there?' And he said, 'Good, bring all your stuff.' I went back to sleep at my mom's, and that night I had the most vivid dream. I saw the plane smack the ground. I saw them screaming and crying, and I saw fire. I woke up screaming, and my mom came running in going, 'Honey what is it?' I said 'Mama, I dreamed the plane crashed!' And she said, 'No honey, it's just a dream.' And I said 'No mom, it's too real!'"

"They had already sent me the itinerary, so the next day I called Greenville. I called everybody on the list. Finally, late that afternoon Allen called me back. He said, 'Jo what in the world is

"They were all mean around here, but Ronnie was the meanest of them all."
Marion Van Zant, Ronnie's mother

Ronnie Van Zant: Lynyrd Skynyrd's guiding light.

Sweet Home... Atlanta?

A chance meeting with Al Kooper in Georgia gave Lynyrd Skynyrd their big break. Words: Al Kooper

I first came upon the band for the first time at a tough bar in downtown Atlanta.

They were performing for a week and I was in town producing an album for somebody. Every night, we would frequent this club, as they treated us quite nicely there. The first night they played I was instantly taken in by the quality of their material. By the third night I asked if I could sit in on a song. As they had no keyboard player in their genesis, I sat in on guitar. As I slipped on one of their excess guitars, I asked "What song? What key?" "*Mean Woman Blues*," Ronnie Van Zant instructed, "In C#". Boy, that made me laugh out loud. It was their defence in case a sitting-in guitarist was not very good and only knew a few chords. After starting playing guitar at age 12, I had no problem in C#.

It took me three months of hounding their manager to sign them. Toward the end of the three months, Ronnie called me at home late one night. "Al, I'm sorry to call so late, but we are in deep trouble here. Someone broke into our van tonight and stole *all* our instruments and amps. Without those, we cannot put food on our families tables or pay our rents or get any gigs. I was hoping you could lend us $5,000..." I quickly replied, "All I need is the address you want me to send it to, Ronnie and you'll have it in two days..."

After a moment of silence he said, "Al, you just bought yourself a band for $5000. Thanks from all of us!" By the next week, their contracts were signed and they were back on the road.

In between recording the first album and its release, they were back playing at that bar I discovered them in. It was a very tough place. I saw someone shot dead outside there one night, and there were numerous bar fights as common events there. There were two floors; on the first floor the bands played surrounded by numerous bars; on the second floor, there more bar locations and many pool tables. During a break, I was sitting at a table talking to some people upstairs, and Allen and Gary pulled me out of my seat and dragged me to the bar. The two of them then lifted me up and deposited me behind the bar and told me to sit down out of sight. Within 30 seconds, there was a huge bar fight involving our favourite band.

They were just looking out for their producer, who grew up in the Northeast USA, where such fighting was replaced by drag-racing and quizzes about B-sides of records. I was obviously *not* the hand-to-hand combat model, as usually raised in the South. I will always recall that gesture as a sign of true friendship early on from them. My hair didn't even get mussed!

Al Kooper: the man who found Skynyrd.

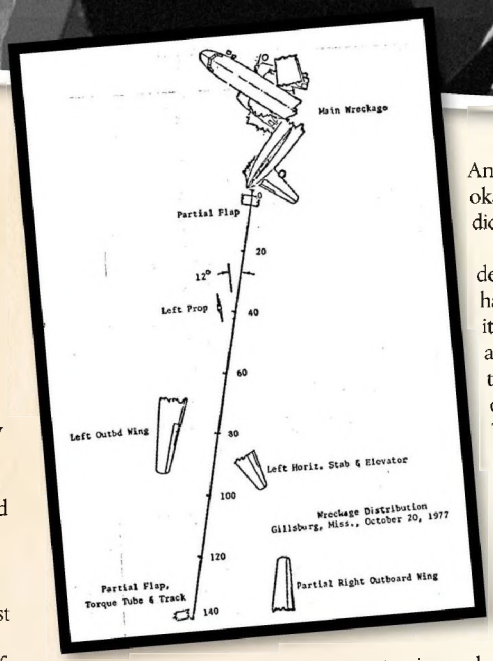
it? I've got messages all over Greenville from you.' I said 'Allen, it's that airplane.' And I told him about my dream. I said 'Allen, please don't get on that plane.' He said, 'Jo, it's funny you'd mention that, because I was looking out the window yesterday and I saw fire come out of the wing.' [When I heard about the crash] the first thing I thought was, 'God saved my life.' The Lord gave me that dream to warn me, and I did the only thing I could do and warned them. It was so weird because some of them thought that maybe I had something to do with it, but I had nothing to do with it."

Remarkably, Lynyrd Skynyrd, considered one of the greatest American rock bands of the 70s, still have a strong effect on contemporary music. Since reforming in 1987 with Ronnie's younger brother Johnny on lead vocals, Rossington has held the reins of Lynyrd Skynyrd, putting him in a position that he never imagined nor wanted. Van Zant was proud of telling people he ran Skynyrd like Stalin ran Russia, but Rossington ran the outfit more like Himmler – instructing his roadies to spy on each other.

"Ronnie used to say, you're in charge of the crew and whatever you say goes. But you better be right. Whatever you say, I'll be right there with you," remembers Craig Reed, a longtime member of the road crew. "Gary wants me tell him everything I see. That was my purpose. If you don't want Gary to know it, don't do it in front of me. Gary doesn't have the same authority Ronnie had. He slapped me in the elevator, and I just looked at him and said 'Slap the other side, I'm lopsided.'"

The entire operation is lopsided. Why? Because none of the reconstituted band members can write a song that can get near to anything Van Zant ever wrote. Nor do they have the will. "One day I went up to Gary and said, 'What happened to 'I want to be the best band in the world I shall not be denied?'" continues Reed.

Lynyrd Skynyrd with The Honkettes. Below: diagram showing the trajectory of the plane crash.



A year after the plane crash, Gregg Allman wanted to form a band with Gary Rossington and Allen Collins. "I was acting as the manager for Gary and Allen," says Judy Van Zant Jenness. "I went down to meet with Gregg, who wanted to join up with them. But Gregg wanted them to call it *Free Bird*, so we dropped the idea. It was probably a good thing. Gary and Allen weren't ready."

It would take them two more years to launch Rossington-Collins.

By autumn of 1979, the two guitarists felt confident enough to talk to the press about a new venture, explaining, "We've just been getting together and messing around… doing a little playing and a little thinking, but we're not worried about making any big rock'n'roll moves." They hired singer Dale Krantz (who later married Rossington, after a rather torrid romance with Collins) and were eventually joined by keyboardist Billy Powell, and bassist Leon Wilkeson.

It was the closest they had come to any sense of normality after the crash. But it was a fool's paradise. It seemed fate was not done with them yet.

Allen Collins suffered another gut punch while he was onstage with his new band. After a performance in November 1981, he got a phone call telling him that his heavily pregnant wife had started bleeding in a movie theatre and was rushed to a local hospital, where she later died. The guitarist never seemed to recover from the loss, and he became even more extreme in his habits, retreating from friends and family. The only thing that seemed to comfort him were rock'n'roll panaceas – drinking, drugs and driving around in fast cars. Five years after his wife's death, Collins' car plunged over a ravine, killing his girlfriend, Debra Jean Watts, and paralyzing him from the waist down. Four years later, wheelchair bound Collins would be dead. Cause: pneumonia resulting from injuries sustained in the car accident.

"After Allen's wife died, he dove into a bottle and never came out," says Billy Powell. "Allen was great. He was so funny, so happy-go-lucky and crazy," says Rossington. "But after his wife died, he became real bitter, even with me… He never knew how many people he inspired because he died too early."

There is something unnerving about the Northern Florida swamps at night. The brackish water is dull with a green sheen, while Spanish moss drips from the branches of the oak and cypress trees, coating them in poisonous putrid icing, swallowing the sounds of animals and the snap of a gator's jaws. Jittery types like to avoid the still waters of Lake Delancy, one of Van Zant's favourite fishing spots, where people have claimed to have spotted his ghost, dressed in black and striding towards the water with the yellow cane fishing pole he was buried with tucked under his right arm.

There are others who swear it's his head he's carrying…

Judy Van Zant recalled a dream she had, shortly after she had buried her husband. "About six months after Ronnie's death, I woke up in the middle of the night. As stupid as it sounds, it just felt like he was there. He said that he had three things to tell me. The first of course was to take care of Melody [the couple's daughter]; the second was not to worry about Allen and Gary, that they could take care of themselves. And the third was he wanted me to know that he was okay. I kept calling to him, 'Come back, don't go away.' I didn't want it to end."

The fact that Van Zant would come back from the dead doesn't much surprise anyone who knew him. He had uncanny powers while he was alive. One story has it that Ronnie would point his finger at a spot in water and tell his fishing companion to put his pole at exactly the spot and within minutes a fish would be flapping on the hook. Then of course, there was the lyrics to *That Smell*, one of the last songs Van Zant wrote for *Street Survivors*. At the time people were chilled when he sang: 'The smell of death's around you.' After the crash, the words took on a macabre, prescient feel.

Van Zant had written the song as a cautionary tale to his band members, inspired by Rossington's near-fatal 1977 car crash and the feeling that some of them were pissing away their future with excessive drinking, drugging, and carousing. It wasn't only the tragic prophecy of the song that's chilling. In his own circle, it was common knowledge that Van Zant didn't expect to live much longer.

"Ronnie could see the future, always had been able," said his father Lacy. "You know, prior to starting the Survivor tour, Ronnie gave my brother EC his best black hat and a beautiful ring that he used to wear. He also gave me several things, including his lawn mower and his 1955 Chevy pickup truck. That led me to believe that Ronnie may have known that he did not have long to live. But when we were in Glasgow and they were playing with The Who or The Stones, I forgot. It was my birthday and Ronnie gave me the trophy that they had won over there. He told those people in Scotland: 'I don't think I'll be back over to see you, to play for you anymore because I have never felt like I'd live to be 30.' He was 29 when he said that."

"Skynyrd aren't haunted by Ronnie Van Zant," says Jeff Carlisi. "They're haunted by the spectre of what could have been. And what was taken from them. They were contenders. And now they're a tribute band."

Could Ronnie have really foretold his own death? Johnny Van Zant, who replaced him as the lead singer of Lynyrd Skynyrd, isn't sure. "Things work out in mysterious ways," he says. "Ronnie and Stevie were only on this earth a short time. God made his mark on them for them to make their mark on the world. Hell, I don't know if we'll ever figure it out. Fate takes you on whatever road it wants. Some of us take a good road and some of us take a bad road. But, if my brother was really so sure he was going to go, don't you think he would have made a will?"

“I woke up in the middle of the night and sat up and looked around. It just felt like he was there. He said that he had three things to tell me...”

Judy Van Zant, Ronnie’s wife

Allen Collins and RVZ.

GETTY X2

Black Sabbath

Iron Man

With its complex, sci-fi storyline and equally weighty sonics, *Iron Man* went on to become so much more than just another Sabbath track – but don't go thinking it's about the superhero...

Words:
Malcolm Dome
Photo:
Getty

There's a well-thumbed story that the Black Sabbath song *Iron Man* was inspired by the Marvel Comics character of the same name. But it's not true. Although Marvel had established that superhero in 1963, Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler, who wrote the lyrics for the iconic song, had never even heard of him in 1970.

"My parents never let me read American comics when I was growing up," he says. "I knew about Batman and Superman, but that's about it. For me it was all about the *Beano* and the *Dandy*. So whenever someone's said to me over the years: 'Oh, didn't you write this about the superhero?', I'd just say: 'Sorry, never heard of him.'"

The idea for the song (which first appeared on the second Sabbath album, *Paranoid*, released in 1970), actually started with Ozzy Osbourne.

"I can't exactly recall what Ozzy said, but it was something like: 'Why don't we do a song called *Iron Man*, or maybe *Iron Bloke*'. That got me thinking about a lump of metal, and then putting it all into a science-fiction context. It all flowed from there."

The storyline – a self-fulfilment prophecy, mixed up with time travel – is actually quite complex. It's about a man who goes into the future and witnesses the apocalypse. Going back to his own time, he encounters a rogue magnetic field, which turns him into a mute, steel creature. Unable to talk, he still tries to warn people about the impending end of the world, but is only mocked for his troubles. Angry and bitter, he eventually causes the devastation he'd warned everyone about. Ultimately the would-be hero becomes the villain.

"I was heavily into science fiction at the time," he recalls of more than 40 years ago. "Remember, this was the era of the space race," says Butler. "A lot of the stuff I was writing about was inspired by those sorts of stories. I was fascinated by what might happen to a man who's suddenly transformed into a metal being. He still has a human brain, and wants to do the right thing, but eventually his own frustrations at the way humanity treats him drives this creature to taking extreme action. It's almost a cry for help.

"What I always attempted to do with my science-fiction plots was to make these relevant to the modern world at the time," Butler continues. "So I brought war and politics in. It was also an era when the whole issue of pollution was starting to get attention, and this affected my thinking quite a bit."

Sabbath drummer Bill Ward reckons that, musically, the song was nothing like anything else the band had done up to that point: "For me, this is a special song for the band. It was just so different. As soon as you hear that ominous start, you know something's building. For me, the drumming was a real challenge to get right in the studio. But it's also a drummer's dream to play.

"Technically, we had real problems getting it right in the studio," Ward recalls. "The trouble was that the microphones available to us in 1970 just weren't up to the task of capturing the power and depth of the sound. I played very loud back then, and wanted a powerful bass drum sound; that's what the song needed. Yet all I could get was a dull thud. For Rodger [Bain, producer] and Tom [Allom, engineer], trying to make *Iron Man* work was so tough. In the end they did an excellent job under the circumstances. Today it would be so easy for a band to get the proper sound on a song like this, because the technology exists."

Over the years, *Iron Man* has become not only one of the cornerstones of the Sabbath catalogue, but also credited as one of the most important songs in the history of metal. For Geezer Butler, it is perhaps the track that bests sums up the band.

"I really do feel that when you listen to *Iron Man*, what you're getting is the essence of what made Black Sabbath such a special band," he offers. "It's fairly simple, yet also has a lot of depth. I'm very proud of what we achieved here."

Bill Ward believes that the song's stature has grown over the years, to the point where it has now gone beyond being just a great Sabbath song.

"In America, if you go to most sports events you'll hear it at some point. It's now a part of the culture of the country. People recognise it as soon as it starts up. It's very musical, but also so theatrical. I think its popularity now is such that, in a way, it no longer belongs to Ozzy, Geezer, Tony [Iommi] and me, it's now everyone's song."

In 2008, *Iron Man* received another boost when it was included in the movie of the same name, based on the Marvel Comics creation. That delighted Butler.

"It was a recognition of just how much the song means," he says with pride. "When you have such a major film using it, then it does introduce it to a new generation, kids who perhaps aren't aware of who Black Sabbath are but who might be tempted to go and check us out.

"When you listen to *Iron Man*, what you're getting is the essence of what made Black Sabbath such a special band."

I suppose, because of the film, there's also gonna be those who see a tie-up between what I wrote 40 years ago and the comic-book character. So, here we go again."

Sabbath released *Iron Man* as a single in 1971. Although it reached No.52 in America (nine places higher than *Paranoid*), in the UK it make no impact at all.

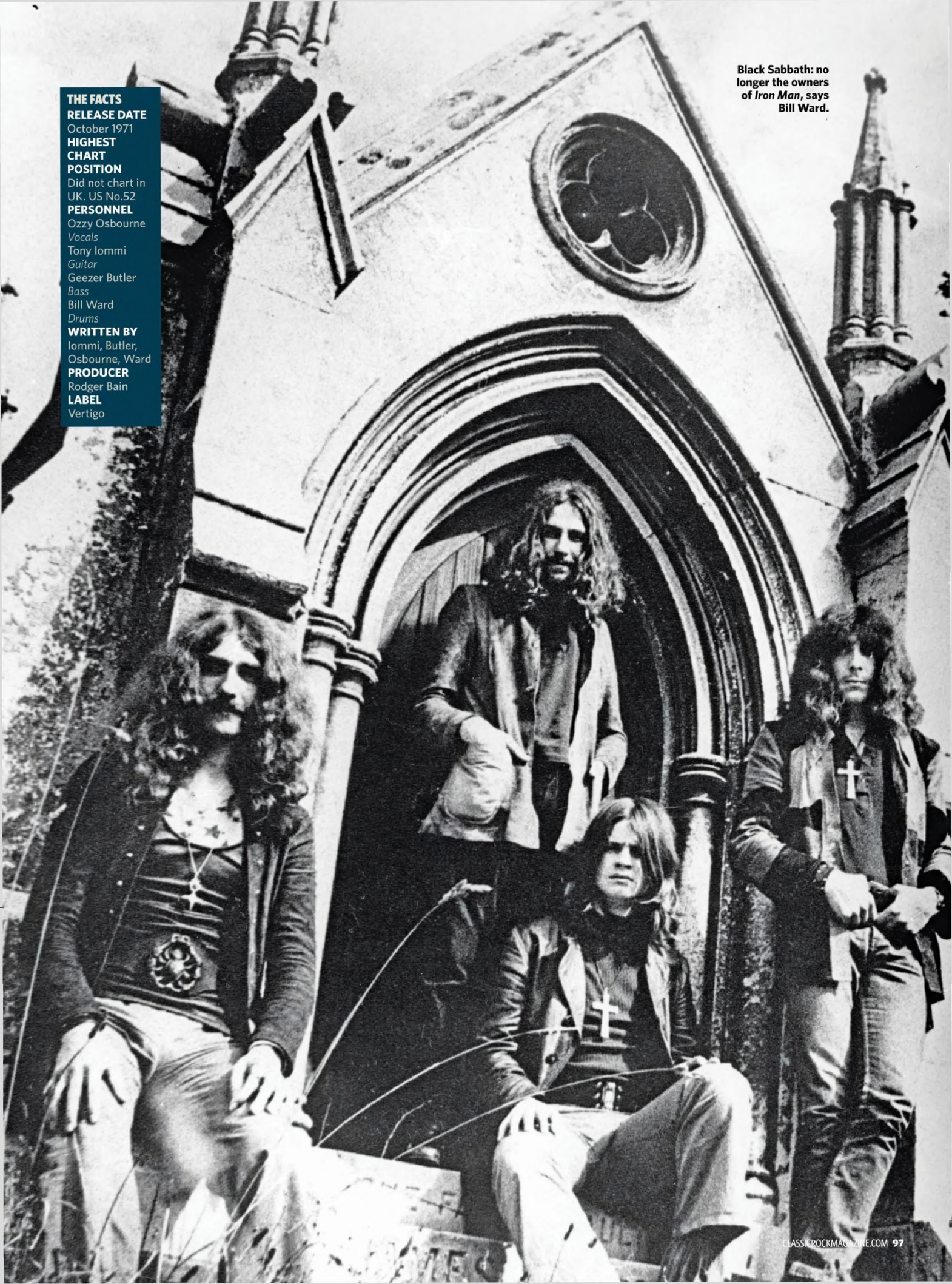
"I think it worked best at the time in the context of the album," Ward says. "We never thought of ourselves as a singles band anyway. But, over the years, *Iron Man* has grown and grown. I don't think we believed at the time that it would turn out to be so special. But that's the beauty of what happens: it's the fans who decided this was a great song."

The Classic Albums series Paranoid DVD is out now on Eagle Vision. Ozzy Osbourne's 2019 world tour starts in the UK from February 1 in Nottingham.

MAN OF THE WORLD

It's incredible to think that, 30 years after it was first released, *Iron Man* won a Grammy, collecting the accolade of Best Metal Performance in 2000, having beaten the likes of Ministry, Motorhead, Nine Inch Nails and Rob Zombie.

"Yeah, it only took three decades for it to get recognition," laughs Geezer Butler. "Still, we were the first British band to get that award [although Ozzy won it individually in 1994], which means something."



THE FACTS
RELEASE DATE
October 1971
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
Did not chart in UK. US No.52
PERSONNEL
Ozzy Osbourne
Vocals
Tony Iommi
Guitar
Geezer Butler
Bass
Bill Ward
Drums
WRITTEN BY
Iommi, Butler, Osbourne, Ward
PRODUCER
Rodger Bain
LABEL
Vertigo

Black Sabbath: no longer the owners of *Iron Man*, says Bill Ward.

"Our music was raunchy and dirty."

Getting their rocks off, stuck in a rut, living on the edge, throwing toys out of the pram, nosing the mirror... **Aerosmith** recall some of the best, worst and decidedly average albums of their turbulent 40 years.

Words: **Paul Brannigan**

Aerosmith have made a mockery of author F Scott Fitzgerald's famous maxim: "There are no second acts in American lives." America's greatest hard rock band throughout the 1970s, the Boston five-piece imploded at the end of that decade as egos and drug habits spiralled out of control. The band re-emerged in the mid-80s with a spectacular comeback which saw their raunchy, blues-driven rock'n'roll strike a chord with a whole new generation of fans.

The wheels on the Aerosmith bandwagon have wobbled precariously in recent years, with vocalist Steven Tyler auditioning to take Robert Plant's place in Led Zeppelin in 2008 (he was either rejected or turned it down, depending on whether you believe Tyler or guitarist Joe Perry) and his bandmates threatening to bring in a new vocalist of their own.

The future of Aerosmith, always a combustible outfit, remains uncertain, with both 'Toxic Twins' Tyler and Perry looking to commence solo albums in the coming year. But, whatever lies ahead, there's no arguing with their back catalogue.

Aerosmith

CBS, 1973

The point at where it all started. Even if they did borrow a lot of 'it' from The Rolling Stones and The Yardbirds.

Steven Tyler: Man, talk about raw! That album was the shit. We were living together in an apartment in Boston, and we had to scrape together the songs that we were playing in clubs and write some of our own. It was a crazy period. Joe would sit in his room and get stoned and play guitar with his amp on and, I swear, more great shit would come out of his fingers in one night than we ever collected in 30 years. Joe and I wrote *Movin' Out*, and the next thing I knew everyone was moving out, to live with their girlfriends. In my fear and anger I wrote a couple of songs on piano – *Dream On* and *One Way Street*. And I grabbed a guitar and wrote a couple of songs on that, which I'd never done prior to that. It just shows you what you can do under pressure.

Joe Perry: I had no idea in what was involved in getting the band to sound good. We basically set up in a room with our stage gear and just played the set. It was that basic. Steven was a real perfectionist. He'd make us play stuff over and over and over again until it was right to his ears.

Steven Tyler: Did it cross the line into bullying? Well, how the fuck else do you get a bunch of teenagers to stop what they're doing and just focus? It's hard being in a band. But the difference here was that nobody left, nobody went to go to college, everyone dug in. We fucking did it, man. And then we were off.

Toys In The Attic

CBS, 1975

The first true Aerosmith classic. *Sweet Emotion*, *Walk This Way* and the title track have never been off their live set-list since.

Tom Hamilton: Since we'd had so little support from radio stations on the first album, our management realised that we'd need to go out and tour our asses off. It was great for the band in terms of progressing our style and ability as musicians, but unfortunately it progressed our abilities in some other directions too.

Joe Perry: This was the watershed for us in becoming recording artists. It was the first record we had to start from scratch as far as writing goes, but I was really starting to get into the momentum of it, in terms of writing, and really starting to pull riffs from the air.

Steven Tyler: One night we were playing the HIC in Honolulu. In soundcheck Joe was playing the lick to *Walk This Way*, and I came out on stage and sat down at the drums and came up with a beat, and the rest is history. But on the way to The Record Plant to record it I lost all the lyrics to the album in a yellow cab, so that night I had to rewrite the lyrics from memory. The reason it came across as kinda rap more than singing is that I really didn't have time to get into bed with the lyrics, they were hot off the press, so I just threw it down, speaking more than singing. But I think it worked out just fine, didn't it?

Rocks

CBS, 1976

The album that inspired Slash, James Hetfield and Kurt Cobain to pick up a guitar. An enduring stone-cold classic.

Tom Hamilton: We recorded it in our rehearsal space, just outside Boston. We had the Record Plant recording truck pull into the garage, and we had a big room which we dressed with heavy curtains and divided up into a really neat recording room. There was a lot of laughter and a lot of camaraderie. Everyone was at their best on that album.

Joe Perry: There were a lot of drugs around, but ↦

GETTY

Aerosmith: the prime US rock band of the 70s.

if anything it helped loosen us up a little. The music always came first, everything else was just entertainment. The party only started taking over a few years later.

Steven Tyler: Everyone talks about the drugs, but if you want to talk about stuff that has any relevance here let's talk about something else. The drugs were part of our lifestyle then, but sleep deprivation was just as important here. We'd sit down with Jack [Douglas, producer], and get an arrangement in seven or eight hours and go and record it the next day. So, to me, that record is not about 'How much cocaine did you do?' It's got everything to do with me sitting in a dingy hotel in Hell's Kitchen writing the lyrics after a long day at the studio, back when 42nd Street was full of hookers and pimps and shady bars. *Rocks* sounds raunchy and dirty? Hell, our lives were raunchy and dirty. What else would you expect?

Draw The Line

CBS, 1977

Recorded in an abandoned convent near New York at huge expense. But any remaining holy vibes did nothing to stop the wheels seriously wobbling.

Brad Whitford: We had caterers, we had our cars, and we were getting into all kinds of mischief. We had a great set-up to make the record, but we also had a lot of distractions.

Joe Perry: We were running wild. The whole thing about being in a band was having a good time. But sometimes you can have too much of a good time. We probably should have left some of our toys at home. We were all recording in separate rooms, and that's an appropriate analogy for where the band was at.

Steven Tyler: That album was fucking weird. This was the tail end of the band getting together all the time to write. Everyone was married, we'd toured ourselves into oblivion. I cringe when I look back on it. Apart from *Draw The Line* and *Kings And Queens*, we should have thrown everything else out and started from scratch.

Tom Hamilton: In terms of drug use, *Draw The Line* was the lowest point. There was just too much decadence and destruction going on. We went from being this great up-and-coming band to being this dilapidated shambles. I never liked the album. All I think of is all the pain we went through as a band.

Done With Mirrors

GEFFEN, 1985

Perry quit halfway through 1979's *Night In The Ruts*, and their other guitarist, Brad Whitford, followed soon after. Both returned for this much-touted 'comeback' album. Except it didn't quite turn out that way.

Joe Perry: Aerosmith hadn't really done much for the name in our absence, with Steven passing out at gigs, and that record they made with the other guitar players [1982's *Rock In A Hard Place*, with Jimmy Crespo and Rick Dufay]… Let's just say we don't play any songs off that one. It wasn't a bed of roses when we got back together.

Brad Whitford: It wasn't one of our better albums. We knew we had some work to do to get back to being professional musicians, because at that point we were half musician/half partiers. The party was over at that point, but we were the last people to know. The album title had a certain irony to it, because our drug use was still pretty prevalent.


Steven Tyler: a rock'n'roll life lived on the edge.

GETTY

"It'd be nice to make another album, but I don't know if it'll happen."
Joe Perry

Steven Tyler: It was a crazy get-together. We looked at [producer] Ted Templeman's credits and thought that it might make for a great departure, but the band wasn't quite there at the time. It was a really odd time. We were trying to get sober and we didn't know why. *Done With Mirrors* was rough and raw and corporate, but it had to come out to get us going again.

Pump

GEFFEN, 1989

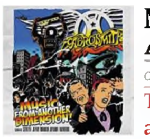
If 1987's *Permanent Vacation* put the newly-sober 'Smiths back on top, then this crowned their comeback. Their last true classic.

Joey Kramer: We were fortunate to be able to do the remake of *Walk This Way* with Run-DMC which reignited our career. To follow that up with *Permanent Vacation* and *Pump* was a real second coming. Somebody up there was looking out for us.

Steven Tyler: There's some crazily good shit on that record. *Young Lust? What It Takes? F.I.N.E? Love In An Elevator?* Fuck me, we had collected some fine-ass marbles on that record. We actually finished 18 songs for that album, and some of them you'll never hear. We had to bury a lot of good shit.

Working with [producer] Bruce Fairbairn was incredible. He could squeeze blood out of a stone in terms of getting every single last idea from a band. But every day he'd work with us for six hours and then leave. And I fucking hated it, because I might just be getting to the point where the magic is happening for me. I remember everybody leaving one day, and me working on *Elevator* on my own, ad-libbing the front part to it.

Bruce Fairbairn introduced me to this crazy fucking guy who collected all these instruments from all over the world. When I went up to his house, I completely lost my shit. He had everything from nose-flutes to Ethiopian instruments – and he could play them all. And I started jamming with him. And we took those jams and put them between the tracks, and that was the magic that took that album over the top.



Music From Another Dimension

COLUMBIA, 2012

Their first original studio album in a decade had a troubled birth. It still divides opinion among fans – and band members.

Tom Hamilton: It was rough at times. Not all of us were as anxious to get back into the studio as some others.

Steven Tyler: After falling off the stage [in South Dakota in 2009], I wasn't getting any sympathy from the guys. When we talked about going on tour, Joe said: "Why don't you sit on a stool?" And I said: "I will, if you play electric ukele." But when I went to rehab, I realised that the fucking band is the greatest asset I've got short of my children, and I was tired of the fighting. We wound up going to Boston and getting back together with Jack Douglas. It brought everybody to the table with their songs.

Joe Perry: Steven was determined to do those ballads with Marti Frederiksen, because apparently we "needed singles". Some of those songs he wrote with Marti didn't do anything for me. I'd say about 70-80 per cent of the record stands up, but the rest is a compromise. And it did nothing commercially.

We're at a place where not many people are interested in new music from us. It'd be nice to make another record but, practically, I don't know if it'll happen. Steven wants to do a solo record, I have another solo record I want to do, and I'm working on an autobiography. I don't see us taking the time out to do it.

Steven Tyler: Is it the last Aerosmith album? I'm doing a record, but there's definitely another Aerosmith album in us. As long as we're walking the earth there will be one.

The Spirit Of

Our 11 page celebration of the most riotous year in rock starts here

Words: Ian Fortnam

1977 MARKED ROCK'S RENAISSANCE. Following two decades of fitful evolutionary leaps there came an explosion of creativity that left rock fans dizzy. It was widespread, it was exciting and it was certainly unprecedented. From mod to psychedelia to glam, revolutions usually came one at a time, in conveniently compact packages. But in 1977 everything changed, all at once, in every direction imaginable.

Megastars recalibrated to come back brighter, some maturing with their audience into AOR, some experimenting with new sounds and new styles. Meanwhile, a second generation of ↔

MAGICTORCH

rockers emerged from pubs and clubs determined to challenge, reject and, ultimately, replace all those too complacent to evolve. In 1977 rock upped its game. It had never seemed so vital.

1976, by contrast, had seemed like little more than a stopgap. Glitter had tarnished, glam bloated out into glum. Extensive prog rock experiments now seemed dully familiar as disco dominated the airwaves apparently unchallenged. Characterised by a long, hot, soporific summer that saw the Rolling Stones touring party progress across Europe like medieval princes, it felt more like an epilogue than a preface. At 16, I felt as though I'd missed out. Older heads in Chelmsford's Ecstasy Records spoke of golden days when Hendrix, Floyd and Who played down the road for under a quid. Oh sure, I saw the Stones at Knebworth in '76. But I saw them through binoculars.

But as '76 finally limped to an inauspicious conclusion, final mixes were being made of some of the greatest rock albums of all time. And, as the Sex Pistols leered from tabloid covers and The Eagles unleashed *Hotel California* on the USA, rock'n'roll suddenly seemed interesting again.

The inescapable soundtrack to 1977 was provided by a selection of landmark albums that saw rock inhabit the mainstream like never before. Three unavoidable monsters dominated the airwaves and album charts on both sides of the Atlantic. Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* and The Eagles' *Hotel California* – released in '76, but so very '77 – tapped into a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction that seethed beneath the Stepford Wives veneer of a battered and bruised post-Vietnam, post-Watergate America.

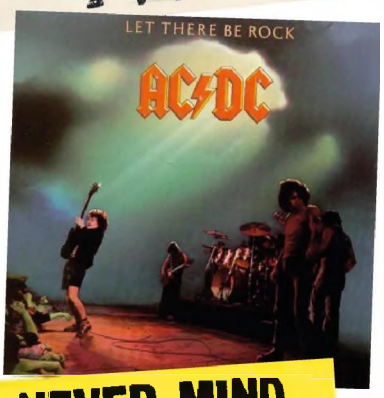
Despite an easy-on-the-ear slickness, *Rumours* was a tightly wound, cocaine-fuelled psycho soap of mammoth proportions, a tangled web of divorce, bitterness and paranoia. *Hotel California* exemplified the idealistic Woodstock generation's gradual burnout into vacuous, coke-spooning Sunset Strip hedonism. Subtle as a flying mallet, *Bat Out Of Hell*'s gothic hymn to the misplaced American dream combined Springsteen and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* to outrageous effect; its bombast laced with a simple nostalgia for motorcycles, drive-ins and lost innocence.

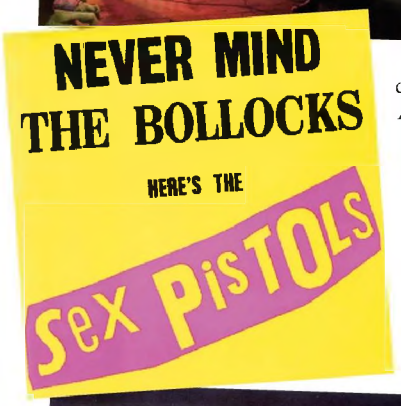
This simultaneous outpouring of adult-oriented angst struck a chord internationally and, following a long period of global dominance by a succession of Brits (Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Peter Frampton), American artists were suddenly shifting units like never before. The continuing absence of Zeppelin, Floyd and the Stones from the world stage, meanwhile, saw mid-table crowd-pleasers rise to fill the vacuum.

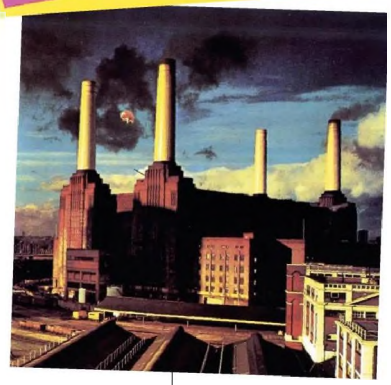
As rock fans faced abandonment issues, bands perceived as accessible, of the people, prospered. AC/DC's *Let There Be Rock* exemplified blue-collar hard rock, its riffs honed to a keen edge, its rabble-rousing lyrics sold to perfection by everyman hellraiser, Bon Scott. Phil Lynott, another man that you felt you could happily have a drink with, pretty much owned Reading '77; singles chart stalwarts Thin Lizzy's bill-topping performance of the Saturday night confirming that, with Rod out of The Faces, Slade in the States and Mott extinct, the lads' rock throne belonged to Phil. In America, a heartland starved of Dylan and Springsteen took solace in Cheap Trick's *In Color* and Tom Petty, who was touring his debut album, released at the tail-end of 1976.

Even prog was affected by the urgency in the air. Pink Floyd's *Animals* found a band reacting to accusations of remote complacency with their most scathing socio-political lyrics to date. Rush's *A Farewell To Kings* found them balancing their cracked sci-fi epics with a newfound brevity and even pop sensibility.

Every genre seemed to be hitting its stride simultaneously. By comparison to the fallow tedium of the preceding 12 months, 1977 seemed preposterously fertile. It was all you could do to keep up.







Of course, it's customary when celebrating 1977 to focus on its reputation as the year of punk, which of course it was, but its actual impact was way more limited than received wisdom would have us believe. The impetus that tabloid controversy gave to the Sex Pistols and the movement they had largely spawned was significant, but in terms of actual record sales, the impact of *Damned Damned Damned*, *The Clash*, and even *Never Mind The Bollocks... Here's The Sex Pistols* was relatively slight.

NME, *Melody Maker* and *Sounds* sold the scene hard. Punks preached the same gospel as music journalists who'd cut their teeth in the anti-establishment climate of the late 60s underground. They filled the papers with punk bands (many of whom were signed in haste, dropped at leisure) because they had unlimited access to them. Read a contemporary music paper and it's like stepping into a parallel universe, and as a punk, you could exclusively inhabit that alternate reality. If you didn't watch *Top Of The Pops*, spent your evenings at the Roxy Club or Vortex, played little else but Ramones' *Leave Home* and only read the music press, you could remain entirely unaware of Rush's existence. I know. I was that soldier.

But punk was only one part of the story as 1977 saw rock's remit expanded in all directions. Truly progressive music was still being driven by new technology and its possibilities. In Berlin, David Bowie was following Kraftwerk's keyboard-driven lead, releasing both *Low* and *Heroes* in '77, not to mention co-writing and producing newly adopted punk godfather Iggy Pop's career-redefining *The Idiot* and *Lust For Life* albums. As punk's first flush gradually subsided, some of its more progressive early adopters (Ultravox!, Magazine) incorporated synths into a spikier recalibration of prog.

Meanwhile, actual prog linchpin Peter Gabriel ditched his Genesis baggage to emerge with a leaner, more modern slant on his first self-titled debut, while over in New York Television rewrote the rock guitar rulebook with their debut album, *Marquee Moon*.

Others thought rock's future lay in a more adult direction. Tom Waits' *Foreign Affairs* seemed inclined to dismiss the notion of youth altogether, Waits' grizzled voice of experience set against a musical backdrop more beholden to jazz, blues and Beat culture, while the slick professionalism and jazz aspirations of Steely Dan's *Aja* were better suited to cocktail lounge than rock club. Which is not an accusation that can be levelled at Motörhead whose eponymous debut united punks and rockers alike, a brutal premonition of extremities to come.

But then rock fans in 1977 were nowhere near as partisan as they are today. Rock was only 20 years old, it was still of a size where you could get a hold on all of it, and the music press still covered all of it, not just the disparate strains of rock, but soul, reggae, pop and jazz. You could enjoy all of it. Fleetwood Mac, Sex Pistols, Bowie, AC/DC, Bob Marley, The Clash, Peter Gabriel, Tom Waits, Blondie, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Ian Dury: all were peaking, and all were to be found in the same papers, celebrated side-by-side, for the same readers. It wasn't until the 80s that monthly music mags came along and rock split along generic and demographic lines to its ultimate detriment.

So, was it all good, then? Well, not quite. There were casualties, though not the ones that you might have expected, or perhaps

even hoped for. The bands that the punks sought to replace – the Queens, the Pink Floyds, the Led Zeppelins – saw their record sales dip not a jot. Its actual effect on mainstream rock was akin to that of a mosquito on a bull elephant, frankly. The effect of being branded a 'boring old fart' were negligible in commercial terms, but in vanity terms… countless bands upped their games, dumped the schmaltz and tried a radical conscience on for size in the wake of punk, some even saving their careers in the process.

The bands that actually did suffer were those on 1976's 'Bands Most Likely To Succeed In '77' list. It was a massacre. Graham Parker & The Rumour's funk-infused brassy stylings and Frankie Miller's honeyed larynx saw them both pegged as credible contenders until the gob-gates opened and they, along with their pub-rock brethren, were written off into irrelevance. Hotly tipped proto-punk/r'n'b hybrids Eddie & The Hot Rods nurtured a viper in their bosom when they offered early support slots to the Sex Pistols. Even crowd-pleasing Canvey Island press darlings Dr Feelgood, whose live album, *Stupidity*, saw them ascend to No.1 as late as October '76, were suddenly yesterday's men.

At the end of it all, 1977 concluded on sheer exhaustion. There was a feeling that something had to give; something had to break the spell. Fourteen days into 1978 the Sex Pistols split up. Now we could finally get on with the rest of our lives.

With the benefit of hindsight, 1977 would never have been anywhere near as brilliant if 1976 hadn't been so utterly appalling. It was a happy accident that practically all of the bands that delivered great albums in '77 had taken a year out to record them in '76. It helped nurture a climate of fertile disgruntlement that gave rise to punk rock. And while punk didn't actually represent a genuine threat to the status quo (or even Status Quo), it talked a good game, and ultimately spurred the old guard into action.

In 1977, rock needed to toughen up or die, to reattach itself to the rebellious spikiness of youth: it was certainly not going to be allowed to embrace comfortable middle age. And rather than kill it off, or even replace it, punk – along with AC/DC and Motörhead – merely gave it the long-overdue pruning that it needed to come back stronger, and ultimately, to survive.

On New Year's Eve 1977, I watched the Ramones record *It's Alive* at Finsbury Park's Rainbow Theatre. It was the perfect conclusion to the year that inspired me to join my first band and publish my first fanzine. I never expected to do either; it was just that kind of year.

In 1977, anything was possible.

GETTY X2

The **Kiss** man turned 25 with a birthday party at Madison Square Garden. And an orgy or two.

1977: How was it for you?
It was an incredible time for us. Everything had kind of exploded and we found ourselves trying to fortify Kiss's place in rock'n'roll. I wanted to see the band become the biggest it could possibly be. To reach the Olympus of Rock.

There were two Kiss albums that year. One was *Love Gun*, which featured *Plaster Caster*. Were you ever 'commemorated' by Cynthia Plastercaster?
That song was more of a fake homage to the person who spearheaded that movement. But no, I never had it done to me. It always sounded a bit painful. I can think of better things to do with an erection than stick it into a load of dental gel.

The other Kiss album that year was *Alive II*.
Sonically, I never felt the studio albums lived up to what we were doing live. They just didn't have the kick, the balls or the sonic enormity of what we did live. *Alive II* captured the experience of being at a Kiss show and what we stood for.

Playing Madison Square Garden on your 25th birthday must've been some buzz.
Oh yeah. At that point it seemed like I'd entered the realm that I'd aspired to. It hadn't been too long since I'd been a cab driver in New York. One night I drove a couple to Madison Square Garden to see Elvis Presley and I remember pulling up and thinking: "One of these days people are going to be coming here to see me." So it was like being on top of Everest.

Is it true that you'd fly girlfriends to and from gigs on your Lear Jet?
I'd do that sometimes. And not just on tour. I really didn't cultivate much of a home life, so I'd come home from tour and go: "OK, what do I do now?" It wasn't unusual to pick up the phone and fly girlfriends in.

Is it true that you once threw an orgy with girls dressed in Kiss make-up?
I don't know if any orgies were 'thrown'. Those things had a way of happening on their own. Whether there was Kiss make-up or not I can't say, but those kinds of situations weren't uncommon.

> *"I DIDN'T SEE WHAT WAS GOING ON AT STUDIO 54 AS DISCO, I SAW IT AS HEDONISM WITH A BEAT."*

What sort people were you rubbing shoulders with?
It was a *Who's Who* from politicians to authors. Whenever I'd meet Andy Warhol he'd say: "Come on down to the Factory and I'll do your portrait." I never did it, and one of my biggest regrets from that time was not doing a Warhol portrait.

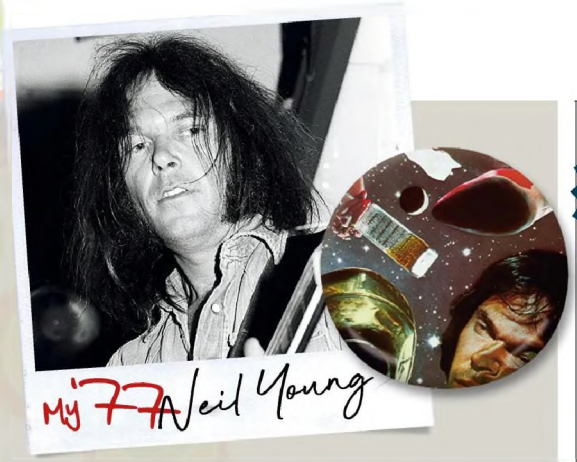
1977 was the year of disco. Did you ever head off to Studio 54 on a white horse, like Bianca Jagger once did?
The press photos of Studio 54 always focused more on the anomalies rather than what was really going on. Most of the people weren't dressed up outrageously. I'd just go in a pair of jeans and a tank top. I went there to dance, for God's sake! I didn't see what was going on at Studio 54 as disco, I saw it as hedonism with a beat. It was much more about unbridled physicality and sexuality.

And CBGB?
I went there, but that scene was based more on wanting to express yourself than knowing how to play an instrument well enough. There were a lot of artsy bands at CBGB that left me cold, like Richard Hell & The Voidoids and all that nonsense.

Where did Kiss fit into American culture in 1977?
We *were* American culture. A Gallup poll voted us the number one band in the country. We were a reflection of what people were enamoured with. And the fear had gone, at least from my mind. I was a kid from a lower middle class family, so to taste the good life was incredible. I found myself praying once or twice: "Dear God, don't take this away from me. Please be kind to this poor soul!"

Rob Hughes


Kiss alive: like being on top of Everest.



At a time when he was lost and looking for a direction, punk showed him the way.

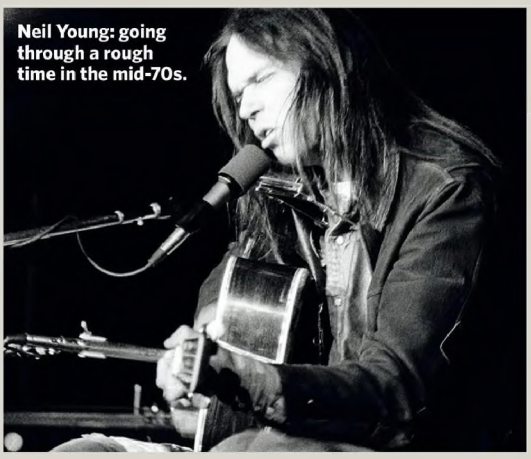
"It's not a secret that the mid-70s were quite rough for me, both personally and creatively. I mean, I had my demons and battles. Relationships, labels and band members – it was just a mess. And I didn't really know where to go next.

"But then I heard about this new music from England that they called punk. And I thought that sounded interesting. It was youthful, it had lots of energy and it had something to say. People that weren't musicians wrote songs to speak their mind. Which is the way it should be – always. And no matter where you're from.

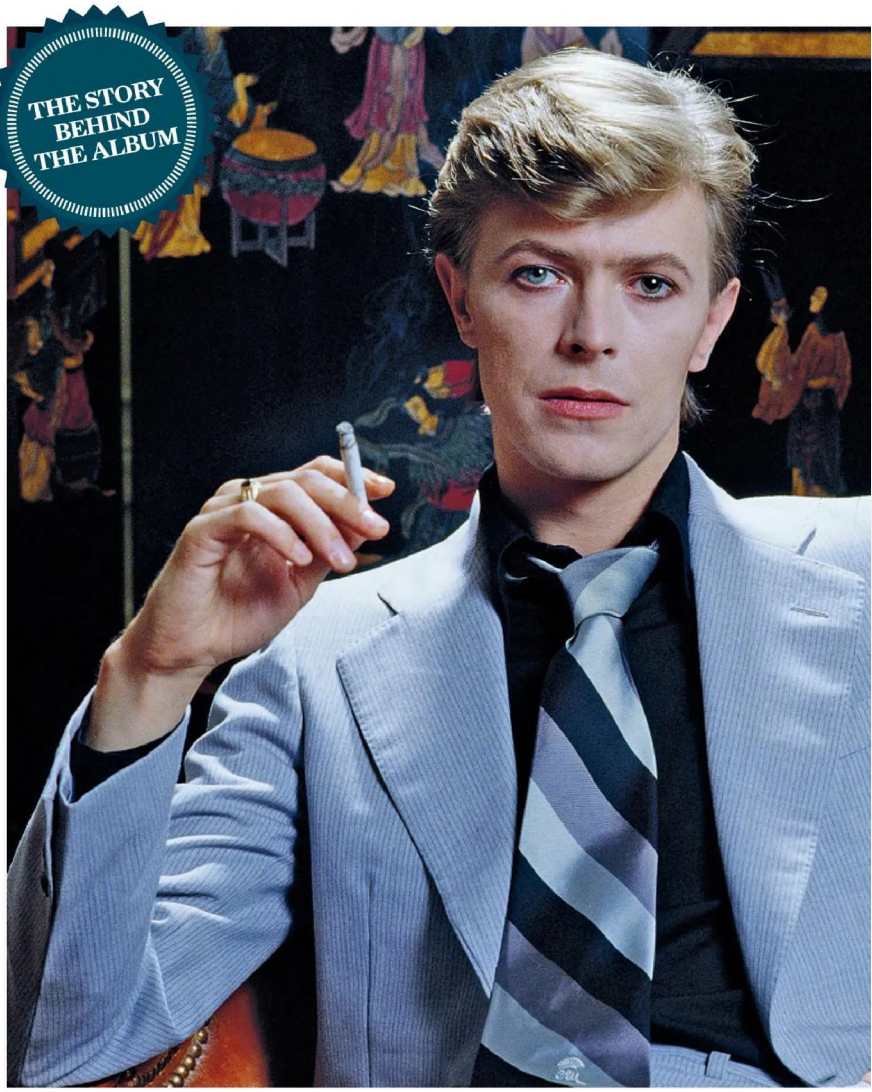
"These kids let off some steam. They really did. I mean, stuff like the Sex Pistols or The Clash was just great. And they influenced me quite a bit, they really did. Not so much in a fashion sense, 'cos I would never wear those clothes. But it led me to work with Devo, who were like electro-punk. And to write songs that would appear on *Rust Never Sleeps* – the tour and the album. I was a punk rocker in plaid flannel shirts."

Marcel Anders

> ***"STUFF LIKE THE SEX PISTOLS OR THE CLASH WAS GREAT. AND THEY INFLUENCED ME."***


Neil Young: going through a rough time in the mid-70s.

THE STORY BEHIND THE ALBUM



Low/Heroes
David Bowie

Four albums and redemption. Not a bad year.

"I've still got that same thing about when I get to a country or a situation and I have to put myself on a dangerous level, whether emotionally or mentally or physically," said David Bowie in 1977. "Living in Berlin… forcing myself to live according to the restrictions of that city."

At the end of 1976 David Bowie was in West Berlin finishing two albums: his own *Low*, and the solo debut by his friend Iggy Pop, *The Idiot*. Having left Los Angeles to escape both the American music business and his own cocaine habit (which had in turn fuelled his paranoia and an interest in the occult), Bowie was keen to approach some sort of normality. He chose to do so in Europe's most surreal location, a former capital city populated on one side of a big

GETTY/ICONS

The Spirit Of 1977

The Clash headline the opening night of the Roxy, London's first punk club.

The Police rehearse for the very first time in drummer Stewart Copeland's London flat.

Queen begin their biggest US tour to date, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with **Thin Lizzy** in support.

The **Eagles'** *Hotel California* hits No.1 in the US for the first time.

"WE HATED IT BECAUSE WE WORKED ON IT FOR SO LONG. WHEN IT DID SO WELL, IT THREW US."
JOE WALSH, EAGLES

David Bowie: his four '77 albums would change popular music for the next 10 years.

wall by secret police, Communists and imprisoned locals, and on the other side by junkies, misfits and artists.

For many people in Britain 1977 was a pretty exciting year; if you weren't wrapping bunting around a trestle table for the Silver Jubilee, you were wondering about putting a safety pin through the cat's ear. Everyone said they were bored but nobody really was.

And Bowie was far from an exception. He began 1977 celebrating his 30th birthday in a nightclub drinking with Iggy. He ended it on American television crooning Christmas songs with Bing Crosby. Along the way he said farewell to his first serious rival and best friend, Marc Bolan, spent a lot of time in the studio, and changed the course of popular music for ever.

Having recorded *Low* mostly in France with Tony Visconti – possibly the only album ever made with contributions from Brian Eno, Iggy Pop and Eurovision singer Mary Hopkin (Visconti's then wife and an Apple Records hitmaker with *Those Were The Days*) – Bowie had found a new way of working and a new music (*Low*'s working title was *New Music Night And Day*). He had left behind Ziggy, Aladdin Sane and, more importantly, The Thin White Duke – the mildly fascist, somewhat Kabbalah-influenced rock demon which was his most dehumanised persona yet. *Low* also left America behind, its synth washes, disinterested vocals and brittle funk owing little to rock and soul and a lot to the future. Right to the fore was Visconti's new acquisition, the Eventide H910 Harmonizer pitch shifter, which the producer famously sold to Bowie and Eno with the phrase: "It fucks with the fabric of time."

> ***"THERE'S OODLES OF PAIN IN THE LOW ALBUM. THAT WAS MY FIRST ATTEMPT TO KICK COCAINE."***
> *DAVID BOWIE*

Duller critics sometimes call *Low* soulless, or empty, as though not actually crying while singing makes music emotionless. Bowie himself said: "There's oodles of pain in the *Low* album. That was my first attempt to kick cocaine, so that was an awful lot of pain."

The Idiot was even further. With Pop's brilliant lyrics, songs like *Sister Midnight* and *Nightclubbing* were both sexy and sinister, ominous and exciting, while *Dum Dum Boys* provided a dark eulogy for The Stooges, and *China Girl* ('*visions of swastikas in my head*') became a worldwide pop hit when Bowie covered it in 1983. Most remarkably, Bowie and Iggy – a man who in many ways is American rock at its most extreme – created one of the great European albums (although, as Bowie put it" "Poor Jim, in a way, became a guinea pig for what I wanted to do with sound.")

In 1976 Bowie had toured the world with *Station To Station*, introducing Iggy to life in stadium rock. In '77 Bowie became Pop's on-stage keyboard player on a UK tour beginning at Aylesbury Friars Hall and visiting Newcastle, Manchester and Birmingham before ending in London, where Bowie met up with his old friend and rival Marc Bolan. They went for several drinks and were spotted in the King's Road shouting: "I'm Bowie!" and "I'm Marc Bolan!"

After a brief American tour, Iggy and Bowie returned to Berlin where, incredibly, they made a third album in '77, *Lust For Life*. This time Pop was holding the reins; *Lust For Life*, as its name suggests, is rock, albeit a new kind of rock. "See, Bowie's a hell of a fast guy," said Pop. "I realised I had to be quicker than him, otherwise whose album was it gonna be? The band and David would leave the studio to go to sleep, but not me." Guitarist Ricky Gardiner wrote the brilliant riff for *The Passenger*, while Bowie worked out the title track on the least futurist instrument available, the ukulele. Again Bowie was to have a hit with a song from the album: *Tonight* (minus Iggy's terrifying spoken intro but plus Tina Turner).

After a brief break for, possibly, coffee and sandwiches, Bowie, Visconti and Eno reconvened to make another album. *Heroes* is a less sketchy, more focused album than *Low* and in the title track contains one of Bowie's greatest songs. With a lyric that Visconti claims is about his affair with singer Antonia Maas, the track *Heroes* features Robert Fripp, whose guitar playing was matched only by his fondness for obscure sexual similes like "waving the sword of union". Bowie's desire to experiment continued with his use of Eno's randomising Oblique Strategies cards and, as with *Low*, a side of instrumental tracks.

After the completion of his fourth album in 12 months, Bowie appeared on Marc Bolan's TV show *Marc* (Bolan fell off the stage during the recording, prompting Bowie to enthuse: "Oh, that's really Polaroid!"). The pair's reunion was short-lived. Bolan was killed in a car crash the same month. Bowie also recorded *Peace On Earth/The Little Drummer Boy* with Bing Crosby for a TV special. "I was wondering if he was still alive," Bowie told me in 1999. "He was just… not there. He was not there at all. And he looked like a little old orange sitting on a stool. It was the most bizarre experience." In November there was a Kenyan safari with his son, Best Man duties for his driver in December, and that was it. Oh, apart from doing the LP narration of Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf*, making it technically five albums recorded in a year.

And that was it for 1977. In those 12 crammed months Bowie had gone from being a recovering LA rock star stuck in an eternal Sunset Boulevard of the mind, to someone who would change popular music for the next 10 years. The introspective music of *Low*, *Heroes* and *The Idiot* was in fact a way of bringing Bowie out of himself. And a man nearly wrecked by drugs and success was saved by, of all things, art and intelligence. Best of all, a radical change of scene from a man who'd claimed he was always crashing in the same car resulted in four of the greatest albums of all time. What most artists would be able to call the fruits of a long and successful career took David Bowie a year. And what a year.

David Quantick

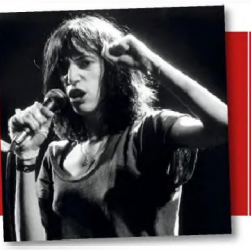
THE FACTS
LOW/HEROES

RELEASE DATE
Low
14 January, 1977
Heroes
14 October, 1977
LABEL
RCA
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
Low
UK No.2
US No.11
Heroes
UK No.3
US No.35
PERSONNEL
David Bowie
Vocals/producer
Brian Eno
Various instruments
Carlos Alomar
Guitar
Dennis Davis
Percussion
George Murray
Bass
Robert Fripp
Guitar on Heroes
Tony Visconti
Producer
THE REVIEWS SAID
Heroes: "A cold sometimes impenetrable album, but Bowie makes all these unlikely ingredients work."
ZigZag

Pink Floyd release Roger Waters's overlooked masterpiece, *Animals*.

"IT WAS A BIT OF A RETURN TO THE GROUP FEEL. QUITE A CHEERFUL SESSION, ACTUALLY."
NICK MASON, PINK FLOYD

Singer/poet **Patti Smith** breaks her neck after falling 15 feet into the orchestra pit at a gig in Tampa, Florida.



Ex-Fleetwood Mac leader **Peter Green** is committed to mental care after attacking his accountant.

Arty Manchester punk band **Buzzcocks** release their landmark debut EP, *Spiral Scratch*.

THE STORY BEHIND THE ALBUM

Double trouble: Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf.

Bat Out Of Hell

Meat Loaf

Disco had John Travolta in a white suit. Rock had a 350-pound behemoth in a frilly shirt. This was war...

Meat Loaf: When I first met Jim [in 1973] he was sharing an apartment on 102nd Street with I don't know how many people. His bed was in the kitchen – it's headboard was the refrigerator.

Jim Steinman: Meat was the most mesmerising thing I'd ever seen. He was much bigger than he is now, fucking huge. His eyes went into his head when he sang, like he was transfixed.

Meat Loaf: We knew we were gonna make a record together.

Jim Steinman: We used to do all our practice in a hotel room. I'd written most of the piano parts without a piano. A lot of them had been pinched from some of my previous pieces, the rest I just put down.

Meat Loaf: We were just a duo, voice and piano. We were doing songs like *Bat Out Of Hell*, and most of the others, in fact.

Jim Steinman: We thought we had enough material, so that's when we started making rounds of the record companies. That was a true disaster. A medley of the most brutal rejections you could imagine.

Meat Loaf: We didn't do demo tapes, we'd do it live. People would just look at us: "What are you *doing*?"

Jim Steinman: Producers hated it too. We'd go to producers and they'd say: "You can't do this on a record – it's theatre music. No one's gonna buy it." The only person who believed in it was Todd Rundgren. Either he believed in it or he didn't care.

> *"WHEN I HEARD IT, I ROLLED ON THE FLOOR LAUGHING. IT WAS SO OUT THERE."*
> TODD RUNDGREN

Todd Rundgren (producer/guitarist): When I heard the record, I rolled on the floor laughing. It was so out there. I said: "I've got to do this."

Jim Steinman: Todd essentially bankrolled it. Bearsville, which is Todd's label, were going to put it out. But then Warners, who owned Bearsville, rejected it.

Todd Rundgren: For about four months, we didn't know whether it would come out or not. Then we found this little label called Cleveland International.

Steve Popovich (owner of Cleveland Records): It was the day and age of the wimpy-looking, Peter Frampton-types. Then here comes Meat Loaf, this huge guy with an amazing voice.

Todd Rundgren: Steinman was highly influenced by Bruce Springsteen – the theatrical nature of the material, the suburban teenage angst. Every Springsteen song was about that.

Jim Steinman: The title song is the least-understood element of the album. *Bat Out Of Hell* is about obsession. Anyone who's obsessed is funny. But it's also a noble sentiment.

Todd Rundgren: Somebody suggested we make *Two Out Of Three Ain't Bad* sound like an Eagles song, cos the Eagles were enjoying a string of hit singles.

Meat Loaf: Todd mixed the record in one night. He started at six o'clock and finished about four o'clock in the morning.

Jim Steinman: I didn't want it just to be a bunch of songs, I wanted to be a cinematic experience.

Meat Loaf: Over-produced? Bullshit. I was at Motown, so I know what 'over-produced' really means.

Jim Steinman: This was the days of disco, of *Saturday Night Fever*, of John Travolta in his white suit, pointing to the heavens. We had a huge, fat Meat Loaf about to collapse...

Todd Rundgren: I don't think it got any good critical notices.

Jim Steinman: It was a big success overseas long before America. It took about a year to get big in America.

Todd Rundgren: The success was a complete shock to all us. Nobody came into that record with any expectations. We were fortunate to get it done at all.

Jim Steinman: How many did it sell? It all depends on which accountant you talk to.

GETTY

THE FACTS
BAT OUT OF HELL

RELEASE DATE
October 1977
LABEL
Cleveland International/Epic
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.9, US No.14
PERSONNEL
Meat Loaf *Vocals*
Jim Steinman *Keyboards, percussion*
Todd Rundgren *Guitar, keyboards*
Kasim Sulton *Bass*
Edgar Winter *Saxophone*
Max Weinberg *Drums*
Ellen Foley *Vocals*
THE REVIEWERS SAID
"Swell, but... entirely mannered and derivative... The principals have some growing up to do"
Rolling Stone

The Spirit Of 1977

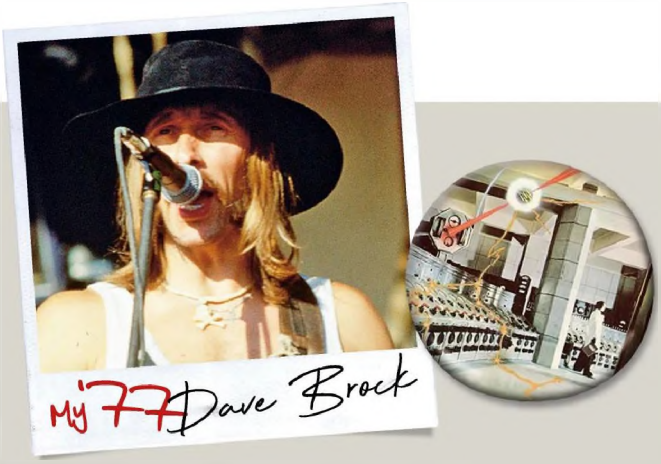
Fleetwood Mac release *Rumours*, their 11th album. It will go on to sell 40 million copies.

Original **Sex Pistols** bassist Glen Matlock is fired. He is replaced by Sid Vicious.

David Coverdale releases his debut solo album, *White Snake*.

"IT'S VERY INWARD-LOOKING. IT WAS AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF DEEP PURPLE."
DAVID COVERDALE

Keith Richards is arrested in Toronto after police find heroin in his hotel room.



My '77 Dave Brock

Gun-running, police hassle, mushroom tea... Just another quiet year for **Hawkwind**'s ace spaceman.

1977: how was it for you?
It was an interesting year. There were a lot of changes for Hawkwind. A lot of it was spent down in the mill house at Rockfield Studios. Overall we spent years and years there, on and off.

Hawkwind's *Quark, Strangeness & Charm* album was recorded at Rockfield in February 1977 and released that June. It's an underappreciated record.
Yes. It has *Spirit Of The Age* on it. *Hassan-i Sabbah*, which we also still play live, was on there too.

JJ Burnel of the Stranglers was a fan of the title track.
Was he? I didn't know that.

He's played it in his solo shows, and once said that he wishes he'd written it.
It's a great song. Bob [Calvert, late vocalist/lyricist] and I wrote that one. *'Einstein was such a handsome fellow/Nobody ever called him Al/ He had a long moustache to pull on, it was yellow/I don't believe he ever had a girl.'* That's great.

Hawkwind had some chart success early in the decade, but is it fair to say that by '77 you'd slipped down the ladder a bit?
Yeah, maybe we did. We'd worked with David Gilmour [who mixed the song *Kerb Crawler*] on the previous album [*Astounding Sounds, Amazing Music*] in 1976. A single from that album, *Back On The Streets*, went into the charts. But after that, yeah... things became a struggle.

Your relationship with Calvert was very up and down. You tried to leave him behind in Paris after a gig on the tour for *QS&C*...
[Laughs] Bob, who was always hyperactive, had one of his moments. He tried to cut [bassist] Adrian Shaw's throat with a sword. After the show, Bob went a bit nutty while doing some interviews He must have been going on about the replica starting pistol that he used onstage – he would spin it around and play Russian roulette with it. I had the gun in my guitar case. This was the same time that the Baader-Meinhof gang were on the run, so the hotel manager must have heard about the gun business and some gendarmes burst into my room to get me out of bed.

Though Bob wasn't informed, we decided the tour just couldn't carry on. Down came Bob the next morning, still wearing his camouflage stage outfit, cigarette holder in mouth and shouting loudly. Our tour manager said he'd take Bob back to England and put him in a sanatorium and the rest of us decided to do a runner.

Everybody piled into this gold Mercedes we had and tried to pull away from the hotel, but Bob spotted us and chased after the car. We got stuck at these traffic lights and he almost caught us, but I went up on the pavement and jumped the lights. That's one of my most memorable moments of 1977.

The punks despised the hippies, and yet Hawkwind seemed to get away with it.
We were still doing lots of free festivals and we had a foot in both camps. We were always quite revolutionary with our ideas. Just like the song [from *QS&C*] says, those were *The Days Of The Underground: 'No need for machine-guns/'Cos the system was crumbling/Our leaders were fumbling/We broke every rule.'* Those were very good words.

John Lydon was a Hawkwind fan.
Yeah. He came to see us with some big minder. He told us if it wasn't for Hawkwind then he wouldn't be doing what he was doing.

Did you see the link he was making?
Yeah, definitely. Our music was geared towards fighting what was going on. The Establishment took a dim view of us. I know for a fact that my phone was tapped. And we were served with injunctions trying to forbid us from going to Stonehenge.

> *"BOB CALVERT TRIED TO CUT OUR BASSIST'S THROAT WITH A SWORD."*

Really?
Yeah. It was quite scary. I got stopped a lot by the police. But it wasn't just me. It happened to a lot of people that became involved in traveller culture.

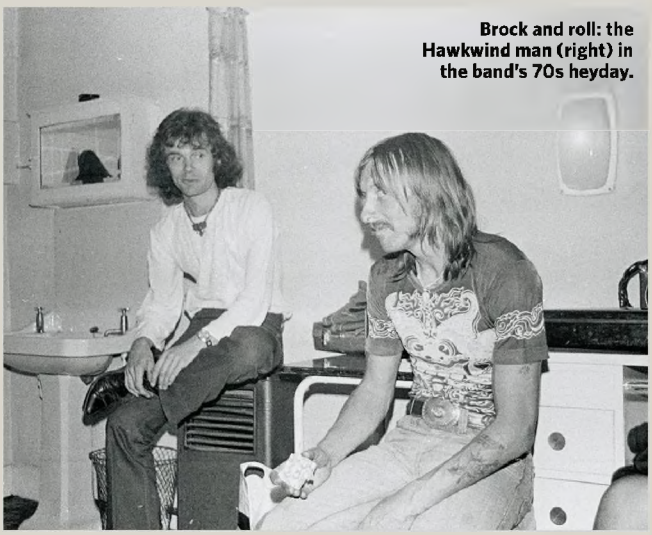
Hawkwind have been involved with the traveller movement.
1977 was the year in which it really started to rise. We played a lot of free festivals. We played at Stonehenge in 1977. It was a great experience. I still recall that Bob Calvert got hit over the head with a mallet by [violinist] Simon House's son, Thor.

What was the acid like in 1977?
I don't think I was taking it back then. It was mushroom tea for me.

And which albums were you listening to in '77?
Steve Miller, the one that had *Going To Mexico* on it [*Number 5*, released in 1970] or the *Mothers Of Invention* [who had split up by '77]. What year was Cheech And Chong's *Up In Smoke* [movie] released? [1978].

Were there any sartorial mistakes you made back then?
[Laughing] Now *there's* a first – a journalist has never asked me about fashion before. What would I have been wearing in 1977? My jeans, my T-shirt, and a pair of cowboy boots that I bought while touring in America. In fact I've still got them on.

Dave Ling



Brock and roll: the Hawkwind man (right) in the band's 70s heyday.

REX/GETTY X2

At a Pink Floyd show in Montreal **Roger Waters** spits on a fan, sowing the seeds for *The Wall*.

Elvis Costello release his debut album, *My Aim Is True*.

"THE ONLY TWO THINGS THAT MATTER TO ME ARE REVENGE AND GUILT."
ELVIS COSTELLO

US band **Ram Jam** score a huge hit with a souped-up cover of Leadbelly's *Black Betty*.

Led Zeppelin play their last ever US date, at Oakland Colisseum, California.

My '77 Steve Perry

The singer helped steer **Journey** from jazz rock oblivion to AOR megastardom.

1977: how was it for you?
I had a band called the Alien Project, and I was about to be signed to Chrysalis or Columbia, and my bass player, Richard Michaels, was killed in a car accident on 4th July weekend. I called my mom and said: "I don't think I'm supposed to do this." I told her I'd already given my 30 days notice to the apartment block; I was gonna come home. She kept on saying something will happen. She was the eternal optimist for me.

Fast-forward a week or so, I get a phone call from Herbie Herbert saying: "I got your tape. Journey's looking for a singer." The record executive who was going to sign me had played it for him.

You'd met guitarist Neal Schon briefly the year before?
Yeah, I knew all about Neal Schon. I finally got to meet him in San Francisco through a childhood friend of mine, Larry Luciano. He was hanging around Santana, and he knew Neal. That began a little bit of familiarity. Then Herbie heard my tape, and he put two and two together and said: "Oh, you're Larry's friend."

There's a famous story that Herbie smuggled you on the road to check out Journey without telling them. Is it true?
It is a bit true. Herbie believed in me. He was telling them: "This is the guy for you. Get used to it." He did that as he had sort of made a bit of a verbal commitment to another singer, Robert Fleischman. They were sort of romancing that idea and doing a few little gigs here and there, one of which I was privy to watch. I was one of the roadies' cousins, that's what Herbie said.

What did you make of them?
I thought they had more talent than they ever needed. They were in the virtuosity phase. They were trying to participate in the Mahavishnu/ELP thing, which did not leave a lot of room for vocals. I thought it wasn't going to be easy to carve out some vocal room. But we worked hard on that together.

Apart from Herbie, where was the desire to change coming from?
Do you want the truth? Well, I didn't find this out until years later, but the record label had made two albums at least of the musical direction that they [Journey] wanted, and they were not going to support that through another record. They wanted to make a conscious musical change in the band. That filtered to Herbie.

Did it feel like your last chance?
I was totally excited, nervous, apprehensive. There was also a side of me that was a bit controlling over some of their musical ideas, because I felt like, as a kid coming from central San Joaquin valley, a farm community, with a dream of getting into the music business, and all of a sudden I'm in a band that's signed to a record company. Listen, I was extremely committed to not letting this slip away. So I think there were times when I was a bit controlling, if I can tell on myself.

The Boston record had come out in late 1976.
Yes. And then *Rumours* came out, and it set a precedent of selling five million copies, which was kind of unheard of. People would buy that many records? Really? I remember listening to *Rumours* a lot, and *Boston* a lot. I was 100 per cent of the belief that Journey had what it took to do that.

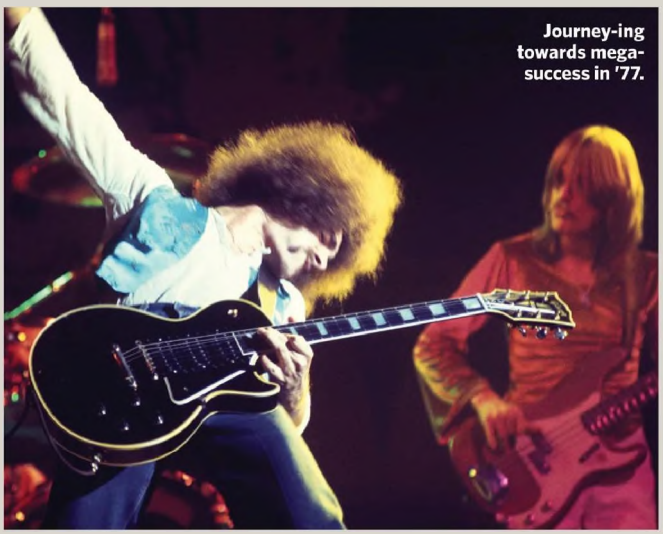
You and Neal Schon very quickly wrote *Lights* together, which proved that you had something.
I actually had the song sketched in my brain when I was living in LA. I was up at Griffith Park Observatory many nights looking out over the lights of Los Angeles. And being a country boy, it just astonished me how it would go on forever. One morning, very early, the sun was coming up and the lights were slowly starting to go down. And the original line was: '*When the lights go down in the city, and the sun shines on LA*'. When I was in Studio Instrument Rentals on Folsom Street in San Francisco, rehearsing the *Infinity* record, I told Neal about this idea, and he liked it and wrote the bridge with me. It quickly switched to going over the Golden Gate Bridge and observing the same thing: the lights going down, and then of course the '*sun shines on the bay*'.

> *"PUNK WAS SO RAW AND HAD SO MUCH FUCK YOU IN IT. I REALLY LOVED IT."*

What pops into your head when you think of the last months of 1977, recording *Infinity*?
Roy Thomas Baker. Let's just start there [laughs]. He's a very interesting character. A brilliant English engineer. Columbia suggested Roy because he'd done the trilogy of Queen records.

We moved into a studio just south of Market in San Francisco called His Master's Wheels. He brought along this 40-track Stevens machine he'd had made by a man in Burbank who'd found a way to get 40 tracks on a two-inch head stack. So I started stacking eight voices across the bottom channel, and then bouncing them up to one channel and wiping those eight voices, and then doing eight voices for the third harmony, and so on. From that you get three times eight or four times eight of Steve Perry on '*Lights in the city*'.

Did you like working that way?
Yeah. We kind of just went with him. I've gotta tell you, Roy Baker was a bit of a rocker. He had some sort of a fetish for fire extinguishers.



Journey-ing towards mega-success in '77.

GETTY X 3

The Spirit Of 1977

Thin Lizzy release *Bad Reputation*, their last LP with Brian Roberston.

"I ALWAYS WANTED ROBBO BACK. I WANTED THE FAB FOUR BACK TOGETHER."
SCOTT GORHAM, THIN LIZZY

Generation X, featuring a pre-MTV Billy Idol, release their debut single *Your Generation*.

The **Grateful Dead** play in front of 110,000 people at Old Bridge, New Jersey.

The 10th Crystal Palace Garden Party stars **Santana**, **Elvis Costello**, **Brand X** and **Crawler**.

I guess in England they're all CO_2 or whatever – cold foamy dry-ice stuff. When he was making the Queen records, he and Freddie Mercury would chase one another around with them.

One night we all had sushi, and some people got a little too deep in the saki, got shit-faced. We got back in the studio and Scotty, one of our road techs, decided he would mess with Roy Baker and grabbed this fire extinguisher. Roy Baker grabs one too and chased Scotty into the control room and on to the sidewalk. What Roy didn't know was that it was a dry chemical extinguisher, which filled the room with a fine particle dust; it killed all the oxygen in the room. Finally, when it settles, we go back in and the console is covered with dust. The faders gritted when you moved them.

Needless to say the owner of the studio came down. He punched Roy Baker in the face. We had to come to Los Angeles to a place called Cherokee to finish the vocals, and Columbia got into a whole lawsuit with the guy who owned the studio.

Punk was beginning to filter from Britain to America around this time. What did you make of it?

I was sort of devastated by the Clash and the Sex Pistols because it was so raw and had so much 'fuck you' in it. I really loved it, and was sort of watching it at a distance and seeing how it was going to navigate itself in the US culture. I don't think I've ever heard a better name for a band than the Sex Pistols – probably second only to the Rolling Stones. I didn't feel threatened by them at all. It was just one end of what was happening.

What do you think when you see pictures of how you looked back then?

The androgynous thing? It's pretty amazing how it felt so natural and so right... anti-establishment, dressing in mass androgyny. It was the Stones, it was us, it us Queen, the New York Dolls, everybody. I just loved it. I still look back at it with awe. I would do it again in a second the way I did it back then.

Right now, I'm about to get my hair cut tomorrow because it's three inches below my shoulder. Back then... phew, sweetheart, she was hot [laughs].

Jon Hotten

THE STORY BEHIND THE ALBUM

Smooth operators: Dan duo Walter Becker (left) and Donald Fagen.

Aja
Steely Dan

It took a year to make and cost a fortune, but with it they achieved their dream of the perfect jazz-pop masterpiece.

Steely Dan's sixth studio album turned them from a collegiate cult into platinum superstars. Songwriters Donald Fagen and Walter Becker retired the band from live work in 1974 and concentrated on achieving their dream of making the perfect jazz-pop masterpiece with a massive cast of stellar musicians. Fagen and Becker were in complete control, emotionally and technically. They'd always pushed their players to breaking point, but on *Aja* they found musicians of the highest calibre who could take the sadism: guitarist Larry Carlton, drummer Steve Gadd and vibes man Victor Feldman, among others, were at the top of their game.

Sessions for *Aja* began in late 1976. As usual, progress was slow and methodical. Eagle Timothy Schmit, a go-to backing vocalist for the Dan who had appeared on *Pretzel Logic* and *The Royal Scam*, sang on the title track. "They were a strange eccentric couple," he says. "Very demanding taskmasters but also funny. They have this East Coast cool wit. They demanded perfection. They were like mad scientists."

"The way we record is like workshop theory," says regular Dan producer Gary Katz: if it doesn't work, try again. Some people can't take that. But when a song like *Peg* is a hit the end justifies the means."

Having taken a year, *Aja* cost a fortune to make. ABC Records were staggered by the bill, but they were rewarded with an album that spent a year in the US Top 40 and produced three hit singles. Even though it was released in September 1977, at the height of new wave, reviewers were impressed. Jazz legend Wayne Shorter's tenor sax solo on the title track was described as "suitable for framing".

Aja won a Grammy for Best Engineered Album (1978) and is held up as a paradigm for technical, almost fetishist, sonic brilliance. It does sound indecently elegant. With songs that soundtrack night-time California and the decadence hidden in the Hollywood Hills, it's perfect night-time driving music for the high hipsters Steely Dan made their target.

Donald Fagen reckons the album is their greatest achievement. "It had soul and rhythm, great jazz chords. Fantastic musicians. It's pretty good."

Max Bell

THE FACTS
AJA

RELEASE DATE
September 1977
LABEL
ABC
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.5
US No.3
PERSONNEL
Donald Fagen
Vocals/keyboards
Walter Becker
Guitar/bass
Gary Katz
Producer
Plus numerous session musicians.
THE REVIEWS SAID
"What underlies Steely Dan's music is its extreme intellectual self-consciousness."
Rolling Stone

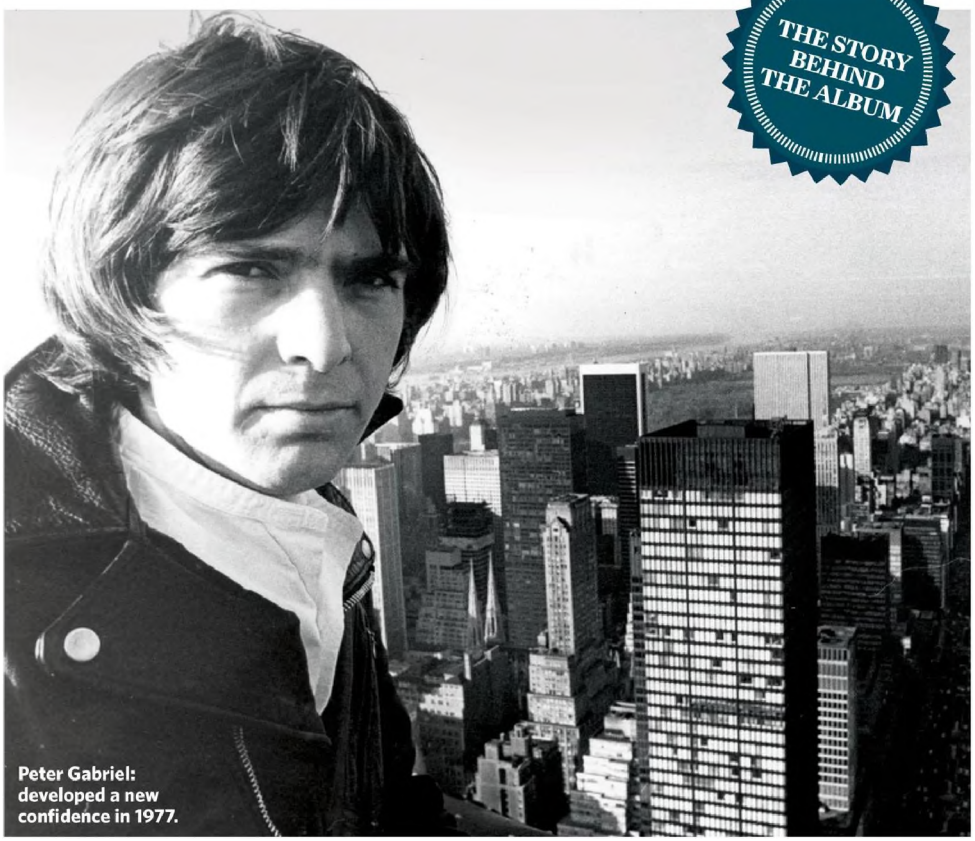
Former glam rock idol **Marc Bolan** is killed when his car hits a tree in Barnes, South London.

The Stranglers release their second album of 1977, *No More Heroes*. It will peak at No.2 in the UK album chart.

Rock'n'roll warhorses-in-waiting **Motörhead** release their debut album.

"PUNKS? ROCKERS? I DIDN'T CARE WHO LISTENED, AS LONG AS THEY BOUGHT IT."
LEMMY

New York art-punks **Richard Hell & The Voidoids** release their debut album, *Blank Generation*.



Peter Gabriel: developed a new confidence in 1977.

Peter Gabriel

Peter Gabriel

Cooped up inside success, he walked out of the Genesis machinery and into a brand new, mumble-free dawn.

"It was important to him that he step out and be recognised as an individual talent," legendary producer Bob Ezrin says of working on Peter Gabriel's debut solo album. "Peter is a larger-than-life personality. Even though he presents in a fairly gentle, humble way, there's so much fire, energy and creativity. There are many different personalities in there that he has to be able to let out. The only way for him to do that without constraint was to leave Genesis and do it on his own."

Gabriel had announced to his former Genesis bandmates/schoolfriends during the band's epic *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* tour of 1975 that his Genesis years were done. Taking time out to be with his wife and new child, after the tour was finished and he'd cut the cord, he felt both liberated and guilty. He'd felt "cooped up inside the success we had wanted", he wrote in an open letter to fans, "and it affected attitudes and spirit". He added: "There is no animosity."

"PETER OPENED HIS MOUTH AND IT SOUNDED LIKE THE VOICE OF GOD. I BURST INTO TEARS."
PRODUCER BOB EZRIN

As drummer Phil Collins took over as Genesis's lead vocalist, and the band triumphed with *A Trick Of The Tail* – an album that many fans now consider to be the best of the band's early period – Gabriel pondered his next move.

"I didn't know whether I had messed up other people's lives as well as, potentially, my own," he recalls in the band's biography *Chapter & Verse*. "Then when the band had more success without me, I felt as if people were re-evaluating the old work and thinking: 'Maybe Peter was just the guy who wore the masks.'"

Ezrin had first laid eyes on Gabriel's masks years earlier, when Genesis had opened for Lou Reed in Toronto. "Usually you ignore the opening act, but I was spellbound," he recalls. "I met Lou after the show to talk about producing *Berlin*, but when I got home I said to my wife: 'I'm really looking forward to working with Lou. But boy, I wanna meet that kid with the flower on his head!'"

For his part, Gabriel deliberately began writing songs that sounded a whole world away from his former band's baroque prog rock epics.

"When I started writing seriously again, I tried to come up with songs that would be as different as possible from the Genesis sound," Gabriel said. "It was a scary thing to put an album together with other musicians… I was concerned about how I was going to express what I wanted. I had no idea how to communicate with real session musicians, who seemed like strange, foreign people."

Ezrin, who had made his name working with Alice Cooper, Lou Reed and Kiss, and went on to produce Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, had been approached by Gabriel's management to see if he'd be interested in working with him. He was. Ezrin reckons that while recording in Toronto, he and the musicians brought Gabriel out of his shell.

"From my point of view the sessions were easy," he recalls. "From Peter's, I think not so much. He wasn't used to being with someone so North American and… aggressive as me. I came from a tradition of having to get things done quickly, on time and on budget, making decisions, sticking to them. Peter was at a stage where he wanted to be more experimental. He's said that he maybe would've been happier if he'd been allowed more time and latitude to try a few other things.

"But we had a fabulous rapport. There was no fighting whatsoever. He was a joy to work with, so smart and witty. It was just that sometimes he was a little overwhelmed by the speed and intensity of the sessions.

"A British interviewer came out to Toronto to meet him; then the headline declared: "A Mumble-Free Gabriel!"

The Spirit Of 1977

Fans riot during a sold-out show on the **Clash**'s White Riot tour at the Rainbow in London.

The **Sex Pistols** sign to Virgin Records for £15,000. They'd been dropped by A&M and EMI.

Tom Petty plays his first UK show, supporting **Nils Lofgren** at the Cardiff Capitol.

Woking mod/punks **The Jam** release their debut album, *In The City*.

"THE 70s WAS FUCKING DULL FOR KIDS MY AGE. WE HAD TO MAKE OUR OWN FUN."
PAUL WELLER, THE JAM

With us he developed a new confidence and swagger. Prior to that he was a bit shy. He had to learn to shout to get through to us. There were just so many characters in their own right involved."

Ezrin praises the contributions of guitarists Steve Hunter and Dick Wagner, bassist Tony Levin, synth player Larry Fast and other key players. "We put a fantastic band together. They were like the Dirty Dozen – each of them was a psychopathic expert in their particular field of destruction. It felt like letting the crack criminals out of prison and putting them together in a gang for the Big Job. "Peter said: 'Well, could I at least have one Brit?' So he brought in [guitarist Robert] Fripp, which was great. Fripp was a totally buttoned-down English gentleman, with these American wild men, yet they all got on very well. Peter stayed with many of them for years afterwards."

The album, titled simply *Peter Gabriel* (aka Car), released in February 1977, sold well enough and established Gabriel as more than just 'the guy who wore the masks'. From it, the Top 10 hit *Solsbury Hill* obliquely referenced his split from Genesis ('*Thought my life was in a rut… which connection should I cut*'); *Modern Love* packed a rock-riff punch; and grandiose epics like *Here Comes The Flood* and *Slowburn* proved his ambitions remained lofty.

Ezrin recalls that arranging the barber-shop quartet for *Excuse Me* was "thrilling", and cites *Humdrum* as the most stirring moment.

"He opened his mouth and it was like the voice of God. I burst into tears. It was among the most beautiful things I'd ever heard. That's a great album. It's timeless."

Chris Roberts

THE FACTS
PETER GABRIEL

RELEASE DATE
25 Feb, 1977
LABEL
Charisma
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.7,
US No.38
PERSONNEL
Peter Gabriel
Vocals, keyboards
Steve Hunter
Guitar
Dick Wagner
Guitar
Robert Fripp
Guitars
Tony Levin
Bass
Allan Schwartzberg
Drums
Larry Fast
Synthesiser/ programming
THE REVIEWS SAID
"Bursting from an unusually ambitious artist, this is an impressively rich debut album."
Rolling Stone

GETTY x3

My '77 Ted Nugent

For the Motorcity Madman, it was all about hunting, shagging and 'loincloth containment'.

1977: how was it for you?
It was a grand year. The band I had in 1977 – Rob Grange on bass, Cliff Davies on drums, Derek St Holmes on guitars and vocals – were so connected. We all revered the black heroes: James Brown, Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry. We were weaned on that original, soulful, outrageous, defiant music.

The album you made in 77, *Cat Scratch Fever*, is a classic.
Absolutely! That record soars, intensely and sonically. It was a sexual, sensual, spiritual, physical orgy. I was singing about my love of women and my love of the great outdoors. I was a natural predator on all levels.

Is the title track about syphilis?
Are you fucking kidding me? I never had syphilis! It's about the disease of boys craving girls. I'm sure even you Limeys can figure that shit out.

Another famous track on that album is *Wang Dang Sweet Poontang*. Do you think there has ever been a more beautiful love song?
Only my other love song, *Wango Tango*, could possibly kick ass on *Wang Dang Sweet Poontang*. Nothing else is even close.

Did you find time for hunting during your busy schedule?
In 1973 I made a decree that I would never miss a hunting season. Every year I would cleanse my soul away from the intensity of my touring. Hunting is a higher level of awareness.

How many animals do you think you killed in 1977?
I'm sure I killed 40 or 50. It was a slow year [laughs].

Jimmy Carter became US President in 1977. Did you vote against him?
I didn't vote. I hadn't wised up. I was politically active, but only on specific issues: in particular, gun rights, which were being chiselled away by the America-hating left.

What was happening in your personal life in 1977?
I married my first wife in 1970, my daughter was born in '74 and my son in 76. And these were awakenings to me – to contain my *Wang Dang Sweet Poontang* diet. But I did not do a great job of containing it.

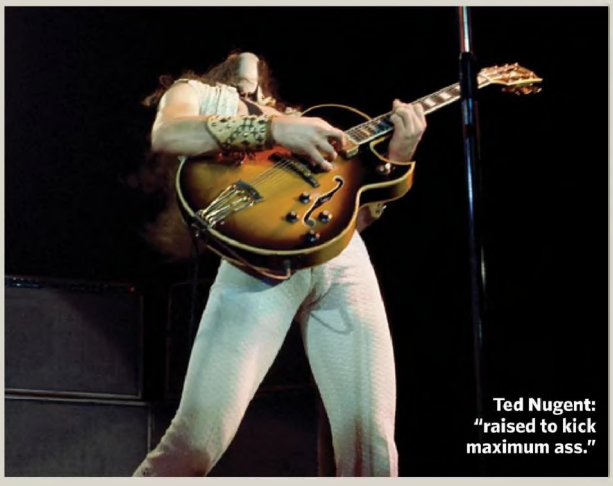
Was it difficult to contain yourself while wearing just a loincloth on stage?
The first time I wore the loincloth, in '67, I had nothing underneath, and this girl decided to help herself – right in the middle of a show! That taught me a lesson. I had a new loincloth created that had a containment system.

You sported an impressive moustache on the cover of *Cat Scratch Fever*.
I was proud of my life overall, and the moustache was part of it. I've never been short of confidence.

"I KILLED 40 OR 50 ANIMALS IN 1977. IT WAS A SLOW YEAR."

What's your favourite album from 1977?
Aerosmith's *Draw The Line* or AC/DC's *Let There Be Rock*. Those records are phenomenal.

And what's your best memory of that year?
We were incapable of taking the stage and not winning. This was my modus operandi in '77. I was raised to kick maximum ass.
Paul Elliott



Ted Nugent: "raised to kick maximum ass."

ELP begin a US tour with a full orchestra in tow. At $200,000 a week, it's the most expensive in history.

Star Wars opens in 32 screens in America. It earns $210 million in 1977. Cinema is never the same again.

UFO release their sixth album, *Lights Out*. It just misses the UK top 50.

"THAT'S WHEN IT ALL KICKED OFF. GREAT TIMES FOR US. *CRAZY* TIMES FOR US!"
PHIL MOGG, UFO

Tom Waits is arrested for disturbing the peace at Duke's Tropicana Coffee Shop in LA.

Here are the young men: the Damned led the advent of punk rock.

SMASH IT UP!

The Sex Pistols may have got all the headlines and The Clash the critical acclaim, but it was **The Damned** who trumped them all by bringing out the first ever punk rock release. But did they sacrifice quality for speed on *Damned Damned Damned*?

Words: **Rob Hughes** Portraits: **Peter Gravelle**

You'd hardly know it was there. Unprepossessing, you might call it. A converted workshop in a tiny alleyway in suburban Islington, Pathway Studios promises a 'small and busy' space for up to eight musicians. There's a square room the size of a modest kitchenette. And, at six-and-a-half feet wide, a control booth that's positively Lilliputian by comparison.

It's late September 1976 and shoehorned inside are four young upstarts from London, a producer still in the midst of learning the ropes and a modest tangle of recording gear. Newly signed to Stiff Records – the pioneering indie label set up by Jake Riviera and Dave Robinson – The Damned have just finished cutting their debut single, a startling shot of pure adrenalin called *New Rose*. "We didn't have a clue what we were doing," remembers drummer Rat Scabies. "Or whether it was going to be loved or even listened to. But the first playback was one of those moments you never forget. It just hit the spot and captured a moment. It was like taking off in a jet."

New Rose was released a month later. It may not have troubled the charts, but it heralded a new era. Urgent, primal, unstoppable. *New Rose* was the first recorded acknowledgement of punk, a form of music that aimed to sweep aside everything in its path. Or at least cause a fair bit of bloody mayhem trying.

The Damned were punk's prime movers. The Sex Pistols and The Clash may have been more feted by press and public alike, their reputations funded by major labels and massaged by calculating managers, but The Damned repeatedly beat them to the gate. They were the first to release a single, the first to tour the US and the first to release an album. They weren't the most proficient of players, but God were they effective. And nothing illustrated that more explicitly than their debut LP from early 1977 – *Damned Damned Damned*.

So just who the hell were The Damned? Revisionist history tends to portray punk as the result of a single glorious Big Bang that happened sometime in 1976. But the truth was much more ambiguous. All of the new breed of British musicians looked to the past for inspiration. The Damned's songwriter and guitarist Brian James had grown up in thrall to the Pretty Things and The Yardbirds, before discovering US underground legends like The Stooges and The MC5. As a Crawley teenager in the early half of the 70s, he'd formed his own band – Bastard. "We couldn't get a gig here to save our lives," he explains today. "No one had heard of

GETTY

Iggy and the Stooges and the only band in this country who had any kind of attitude was the Pink Fairies. Otherwise it was people like Genesis and Emerson, Lake & Palmer or glam rock, which seemed very thin. So I ended up in Belgium for a couple of years, playing with Bastard."

Another Fairies fancier was Captain Sensible, whose other great love was The Groundhogs. Then known as Ray Burns, Sensible was guitarist for Croydon-based proto-punks Johnny Moped. "One of our first gigs in the Croydon area was at the Beaulieu Heights festival, an open-air park gig," he says, "and the reviewer said that I played with a 'punk sensibility'. And we're talking 1974 or something. The Moped band had bags of attitude. We didn't give a flying fuck about anything."

When James returned from Belgium in late '75, The Damned began to slowly take shape. "I answered an ad in *Melody Maker*," he says. "They actually mentioned The Stooges and were looking for a drummer and guitar player, so I went down there." The band was London SS, headed up by a pre-Clash Mick Jones and Tony James, later of Generation X. The drummer who answered the call was Chris Millar, aka Rat Scabies, who'd previously played for the Surrey-based outfit, Tor.

"Tony and Mick wanted to be in Mott The Hoople, because that was what they looked like – leather trousers, frilly shirts and very long hair," recalls Scabies.

"But Brian just stood out. He had really spiky hair, drainpipe jeans and pointy shoes. He was fucking great and played the guitar great. He and I just hit it off."

Around the same time, Brian James saw his first Sex Pistols gig. "That made me realise that London had changed in the two years I'd been away," he says. "There was definitely a smell in the air, suddenly there were people you could relate to."

There followed another short-lived band called Masters Of The Backside, overseen by local scenester Malcolm McLaren, which featured Chrissie Hynde, Scabies and his co-worker in Croydon's Fairfield Halls, Captain Sensible. But James, Scabies and Sensible had bigger plans.

> ***"BRIAN JUST STOOD OUT. HE HAD REALLY SPIKY HAIR, DRAINPIPE JEANS AND POINTY SHOES. HE AND I JUST HIT IT OFF."***
> ***RAT SCABIES***

"We'd go into Bizarre Records in Paddington," says Rat, "and look at copies of *Punk* magazine. There'd be pictures of The Ramones, Blondie, Television and Richard Hell and you'd have to guess what they sounded like, because they didn't have any records out. The rest of the people in the music establishment were still listening to Yes and Jeff Beck and all those muso-based players. But none of them were really doing anything that meant much to an 18-year-old kid in London."

All they needed now was a singer, someone who looked the part. Cue a trip to London's Nashville Rooms to see the Sex Pistols in April '76. "There were two guys in the audience who looked like they had something about them," says James. "One was Sid Vicious and the other was Dave Vanian. We went up to them both: 'Look, we've got a rehearsal next Thursday, come on down and try out as our singer.' And Dave was the only one to turn up, so that's why he got the job. We couldn't wait around for anybody."

The Damned's first proper gig was as support to the Pistols at the 100 Club on July 6, 1976. At that point, the word 'punk' had yet to gather weight.

"The funny thing was that of all the bands who were around, what became the class of '77 if you like, none of us were using the 'p-word'," says Sensible. "I'd be talking to Malcolm McLaren or the people who went on to form Generation X and The Clash; none of them thought of themselves forming a punk group. It was only people like [journalists] Caroline Coon and Giovanni Dadomo who grouped us all together."

Ever the opportunists, The Damned soon found a kindred soul in Jake Riviera at Stiff. "Jake and Dave Robinson were kind of DIY, make-it-up-as-you-go-along people," says Sensible. "That's what I liked about Stiff and that's how we beat the Pistols. We signed with a proper indie punk label while everyone else was waiting for the big bucks."

James remembers being instantly struck by Riviera's attitude. "He just knew about things," he explains. "He was into The Stooges, The MC5, ↦

Richard Hell and the Heartbreakers. And he looked like one of us. So we did the single. It was Jake who really plumped for *New Rose*, and I remember having a copy in my hands and thinking: 'If it all stops now at least I've got a great single to show for it.' Then he said: 'Look, how about us managing you and putting out an album?' Of course we all jumped at it."

But not before they took their place on the ill-fated Anarchy Tour of December 1976, a nationwide jaunt organised by McLaren and Bernie Rhodes that also included The Clash and Johnny Thunders & The Heartbreakers. On the back of the furore caused by the release of *Anarchy In The UK* – issued four weeks after *New Rose* – and the Pistols' potty-mouthed appearance on Bill Grundy's Tonight show, all bar three of the dates were cancelled. The Damned were booted off the tour even earlier though.

"We were expecting to get kicked off anyway," offers Scabies. "There was an obvious animosity between Jake and Malcolm. We were only on that tour because we'd been gigging a lot and sold tickets, whereas nobody had seen the Pistols before the Grundy show."

Undeterred, they headed back into Pathway Studios in January '77 for their debut album. A head-spinning blast of noise, *Damned Damned Damned* found the band tearing through a dozen songs in just over half an hour. It was utterly devoid of any of the preening rhetoric of The Clash or the Pistols' misanthropic bile. Instead it was a riotous explosion of fun. Speed was key, in more ways than one. "I've honestly smoked less spliffs than Bill Clinton," claims Sensible, "but we used to do a bit of sniff and we had a few nosebleeds too. For a fast-paced punk set, it seemed to suit it all quite well."

Alongside *New Rose*, there was the irrepressible *Neat Neat Neat* and sinister beauties like *I Fall*, *Born To Kill* and *So Messed Up*. *Feel The Pain* alluded to illicit bouts of S&M, while *Fan Club* examined the wobbly lines between band worship and manipulation.

Produced by Nick Lowe, conventional wisdom has it that the album was all done in ten days. "Ten?" snorts Sensible. "It was done in four. The music was boshed down onto tape in two and the mixing lasted another two days. I didn't actually see Nick do anything, other than send out for bottles of cider. But he had the right idea. The way to produce The Damned was not to fucking produce us! That was the masterstroke. The guitars don't sound good at all, they're in your face and distorted to fuck. For me it encapsulates everything that punk should be. It's raw and lo-fi, but also gloriously exuberant and fun and exciting. It's just a succession of great riffs."

James is similarly keen to flag up Lowe's role. "He captured our live sound and I can't imagine anybody else getting it better than that. We'd go in to start, then the first thing Nick would say was: 'Right, let's go down the pub!' He'd get us all loosened up, then we'd go back to the studio and bang it down." Lowe's great gift, by all accounts, was knowing when a track was nailed. "We hardly did many takes at all," recalls Scabies, "though I think we ended up doing *New Rose* two or three times. I listened to the multi-tracks not so long ago and at the end of the take you can hear Nick come in and say: 'At last!' Which I remember thinking was very ironic at the time."

The second single, meanwhile, remains a favourite of Scabies. "*Neat Neat Neat* always stays with me," says the drummer. "There's something about it that nothing else has. And the other song I really love is [Stooges cover] *I Feel Alright*, just for its purely chaotic, destructive sense of fun."

That same sense of merriment extended to the album cover itself. Not for them the blank-generation stare of their more earnestly self-conscious peers. The front of *Damned Damned Damned* finds the foursome in the aftermath of a pie fight. It might have been a real-life episode from *The Beano*, or a still from a rowdy school trip in *Please Sir!*, but it was entirely apposite for the band. "None of us knew anything about it," says James. "It was a conspiracy between Patti Palladin and Judy Nylon, with photographer Peter Kodick, who was married to Patti. I was going out with Judy and they concocted this little plan."

Sensible: "Patti and Judy made the flans and poured in the shaving foam with the baked beans and all the rest of it, then threw it all at us. I was very pissed off because I never thought we'd make more than one album and you couldn't see my face on the front cover!"

Adds James: "It sort of destroyed everything that had gone before it, in a sense. No one wants to look shitty on their own album sleeve."

Damned Damned Damned was released on February 18, 1977 – Brian James's 22nd birthday. It was duly lavished with praise by the band's main cheerleaders, *Sounds* and *Melody Maker*. By the time it peaked at No.36 in April, The Damned had left for their inaugural swing around America, having just toured the UK first as headliners, and then as support to Marc Bolan's T.Rex.

"It was so funny because the album came out and we only had those songs," explains the Captain. "Quite often we'd find ourselves having played a gig and the club manager would say: 'Sorry, I can't pay you because we booked you for an hour and you only did 25 minutes.' So we'd go back on and play the whole album again. People would be looking at each other and going: 'What the fuck's this?' What we were doing was so different that we used to drive people to the door. At one show in High Wycombe, we whittled it down to four people."

"I remember one gig where the Captain drove all the people out because he did nothing but complain about beards and facial hair and hippies," laughs Scabies. "And we did another one

"IT ENCAPSULATES EVERYTHING THAT PUNK SHOULD BE. IT'S RAW AND LO-FI, BUT ALSO GLORIOUSLY EXUBERANT."

CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

"IT WAS WILD AND EXOTIC!"

Damned über-fan Duff McKagan salutes *Damned, Damned Damned*.

There are a few records from our youth that make those big impacts on us. If you go on to actually start a band and play music as a way of life, those impactful records become almost a bible and benchmark; informing the musician of what is possible, and what is 'cool'. The Damned's first record, *Damned Damned Damned*, was one of those records for me.

I was only about 13 years old when that record came out, and the vision of those four pie-slathered dudes on the cover of the album spoke volumes to my teenage mind. It was cartoonish, wild, exotic, and PUNK! Brian James instantly became our punk-rock guitar hero in Seattle. He was the shredder that we suddenly thrust into a category with Bill Nelson of Be Bop Deluxe and – yes! – Eddie Van Halen. Rat Scabies will always remain acknowledged as one of the most electrifying rock drummers, if only for his work on this one album. Captain Sensible was the genius man-behind-the-band. And Dave Vanian was everything everyone else wanted to be; mysterious, melodious, dark, and cool. *Neat Neat Neat*, *So Messed Up*, *Fan Club* and *Feel The Pain* all became instant classics for me.

Fifteen years later, GN'R started to cover *New Rose*. But every song on this first Damned record was worthy. This album is how rock music is supposed to be. It is young, loud, snotty, and rough. They were just starting to bubble as a band, and the energy of this record still has few competitors.

Ready to embark on a series of punk rock firsts.

The Damned: back alley kids making a racket.

REX/GETTY

in Luton to a crowd that didn't know what to do with us. They wrote to *Sounds* that week, saying that Brian James played like he was wearing boxing gloves, which of course Jake immediately blew up to poster size and put on the wall at Stiff. People were sort of bemused, some of them got it and some didn't. But on the nights they got it, that's when I started thinking that perhaps we were doing something right."

The US gigs proved a triumph, especially the opening three-night stand at CBGB. One reviewer proudly proclaimed it as 'The Day Punk Arrived In America'. Back home by May, The Damned immediately set out on the road again, this time with another of Stiff's new charges, The Adverts.

Punk was by then very much part of the modern lexicon, though it didn't always rest easy on the tongue. Perhaps the most infamous gig on that tour took place at the Drill Hall in Lincoln in mid-June. "I'll never forget that night," says Scabies. "The local authorities and the local football hooligans decided that punk needed a good kicking. At the end of the night there was a very large mob outside the venue, trying to break down the doors and turn the whole place over, including us. They trashed all the vans while the police just sat watching. But our tour manager was an ex-paratrooper called Big Mick and knew what was coming. He bolted the doors while bricks were coming through the windows. Then he arranged us all in a line: 'If they come in, nobody run.' I was standing next to Gaye Advert and holding a mic stand, with Tim [TV Smith] on the other side of her. It was the most useless line of defence you could imagine, but Big Mick's military training paid off. Once they saw we were ready for a fight and had some heavy equipment, they were off. But that was the general public's feeling about punk. Even the police and authority figures had somehow worked out that we deserved it. If you didn't toe the line you were regarded as an outcast. There was no place for you anywhere."

The dawn of The Damned had been one constant mad dash, and by the end of the year the strain was beginning to show. Midway through a European tour in September, Scabies announced he was quitting. His final recorded contribution was on *Music For Pleasure*, the band's ill-starred, Nick Mason-produced second album, which lacked the fire and brevity of The Damned's classic debut.

"There were so many internal problems by then," Sensible declares. "It was such a dark time. We were all at each others' throats and were heading into what I affectionately term The Chaos Years."

James sounds rueful when he talks about the album. "Rat decided he'd had enough and we just weren't the same band anymore. Plus the punk scene was becoming a parody of itself. What were once symbols of rebellion had just turned into a uniform. The leather jacket and the skull ring didn't mean a damn thing anymore. The third generation of punk bands were just imitators." By February 1978, The Damned had split up.

They've enjoyed a healthy resurgence since of course, albeit in different guises – goth, pop and schlock-rock among them. Vanian has been the sole constant member, though he's been joined by Sensible in the current incarnation. The band's legacy as punk progenitors, meanwhile, seems to be a confused one. Maybe it's the cartoon capery, maybe it's the myriad changes of personnel and style. Or just the plain old fact that they've lasted this long. Whatever the reason, peers like the Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks and The Clash are regularly garlanded with more kudos than The Damned.

"The Damned have almost become a by-line," admits James. "It's like The Beatles and the Stones with The Pretty Things. For a lot of people The Pretty Things were the real deal. They were dirty, had the longest hair and played their R&B in the most convincing we-don't-give-a-fuck way. And I think the same thing has happened to The Damned."

And what of that first album now, 35 years on? It's telling that both The Damned in its current guise, plus James and Scabies – who've been playing together as a duo – have revisited *Damned Damned Damned* live this year.

"The original idea was to be noticed," concludes Scabies. "And we did that alright. I think record companies felt threatened by us and we put paid to a lot of shitty bands. But we never set out to influence people or change anybody. We were just grateful to be given a shot."

PRINCE OF THE DAMNED

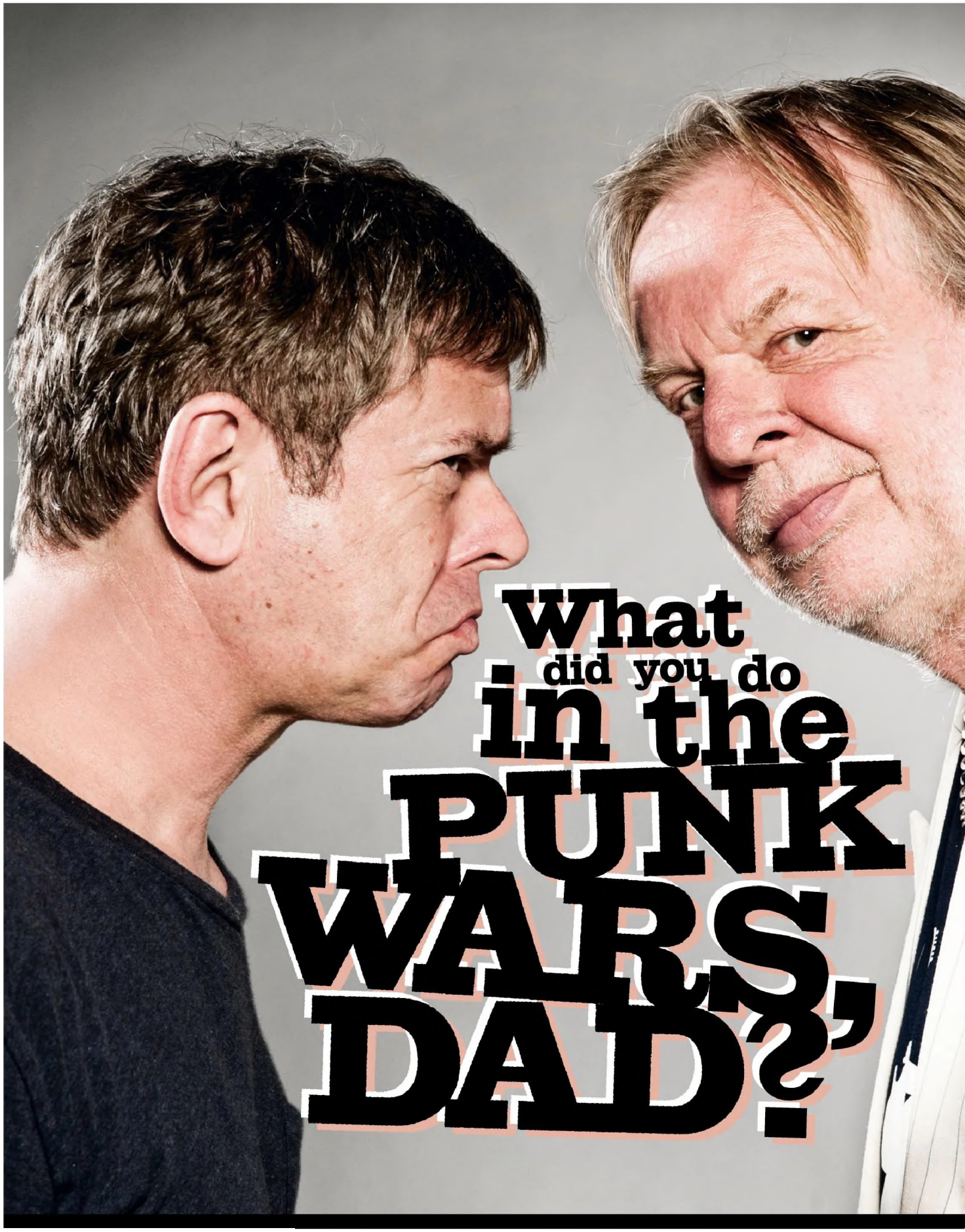
The Damned's founder guitarist has got a thing for the blues...

Those only familiar with Brian James through his work with The Damned and the Lords Of The New Church might be surprised to learn that his most enduring passion is American blues. "The first riff I ever learnt was Hubert Sumlin's for Howlin' Wolf on *Smokestack Lightning*. When I first started it'd be on acoustic guitar, sitting around in parks with friends and playing mostly stripped-down, blues-based stuff."

His latest venture, the Brian James Gang, is a return to all that. Formed in 2006, their first show took place, fittingly, at the 100 Club, where The Damned first played in 1976. Their self-titled debut was a potent mix of voodoo blues and snarling punk, but despite plenty of live activity since, we've had to wait a few years for the follow-up. "I'm halfway through doing a new Brian James Gang album," he explains, "which will be a real guitar-driven thing. I love the blues and it's strange that I've got the same harp player with me now who I used to hang around with in the park all those years ago. It's like my life has come full circle."

There's plenty more on the agenda too. He calls the forthcoming Brian James Gang disc "an antidote to the acoustic album" he recently released with Simple Minds keyboard player Mark Taylor, billed as Brian James Grand Cru. This year also sees the 30th anniversary of the Lords of the New Church, the proto-goth warlocks founded by James and Dead Boys frontman Stiv Bators in 1982. "Dave [Tregunna, bassist] and I have dipped our toes in reunions before, but now we've got a really good singer from Chicago called Adam Becvare. Obviously Stiv's not around any more [he was hit by a car in 1990], but Adam is a really big fan, so we're looking to do a gig at the 100 Club." Where else? The anniversary is being saluted by a box set, *The Gospel Truth*, due later this year.

And what of The Damned? James took part in a couple of reunions at the turn of the 90s, but most recently he's been revisiting the past by gigging with Scabies and playing *Damned Damned Damned*. "It's just for the fun of it," he explains. "Though to tell you the truth, those old Damned songs took a bit of relearning."



What did you do in the PUNK WARS, DAD?

"1977 WAS THE LAST BASTION OF PROG. WE'D SEEN PUNK COMING."
RICK WAKEMAN

INSETS: JJ BURNEL/REX FEATURES; WAKEMAN: GETTY

One is a prog rock titan who saw the writing on the wall in 1977. The other is a punk hard man who spent the year brawling with other bands. So when former Yes man **Rick Wakeman** and The Stranglers' **JJ Burnel** got together 35 years on, you'd expect bickering, bloodshed and epic keyboard solos, right? Wrong.

Words: **Jerry Ewing** Portrait: **Will Ireland**

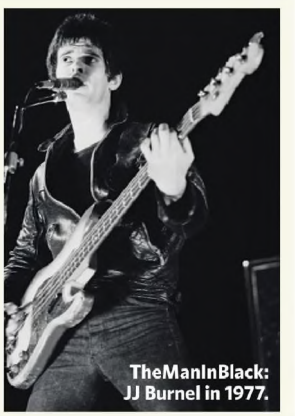
"Let me ask you a question. What's all this about?" Stranglers bassist Jean-Jacques Burnel, looking about as fit and healthy as a 60-year-old can, is leaning forward in his chair and enquiring with some intent as to why he's sitting next to the rather less buff, 63-year-old former Yes keyboard player and all-round prog overlord Rick Wakeman.

Allow us to explain. As part of *Classic Rock*'s celebration of all things 1977, we decided to bring together two men from opposite ends of the musical spectrum to find out what things were really like on the front line all those years ago. In 1977 Wakeman had spent six months in Queen's Mountain Studios in Montreux working on Yes's *Going For The One* album. In stark contrast, The Stranglers were preparing to release not one but two albums, six months apart: *Rattus Norvegicus* and *No More Heroes*. For Yes it marked the end of their imperial phase. For The Stranglers it was the beginning of theirs.

Surprisingly, given the fences that divided them back then, when the two men meet they greet each like old friends. It turns out that this is because they *are* old friends, their paths having crossed several times over the years.

"1977, then," booms Wakeman, settling back into his chair. "I'm not certain either of us will remember that far back…"

Caped crusader: Rick Wakeman in his 70s heyday.



TheManInBlack: JJ Burnel in 1977.

For JJ, 1977 would have been the start of an adventure, whereas Rick had, to put it bluntly, been round the block a few times.
RW: [Laughing] Thank you.

JJ: Well, for me it was the start. It was the first time we'd released an album. We felt something was going on. A bit of a revolution. And with every revolution you chuck the baby out with the bath water. It was a Year Zero for many people, so anything that had gone before was automatically excluded. It was only years later that people actually started admitting to having liked anything before Year Zero.

How long did that take?
JJ: A long time. I do remember [The Damned's] Captain Sensible at the time, without any irony, admitting he liked Abba; and when I saw the Sex Pistols they were playing old Monkees covers. There was a dichotomy between what people were doing and what they were claiming in the press. A lot of the bands claimed punk had nothing to do with drugs. I was like 'What?!' We used to get called hippies because we smoked dope. Because everyone was broke and tight, speed was the drug of choice because it was cheap.

What was 1977 like for you, Rick?
RW: In 1977 I'd just rejoined Yes and we were recording *Going For The One* in Switzerland, which took took six months…
JJ: Six months! We recorded our first two albums in 10 days!
RW: A lot of that time was spent with Alan [White, drummer] going skiing, Steve [Howe, guitarist] tuning his guitars, and trying to wake Chris [Squire, bassist] up! But [label boss] Ahmet Ertegun came to us and said: "I don't know how much longer I can keep funding records like this." ↪

Burnel, left, and Wakeman: the odd couple.

We realised that this was the last bastion of prog rock as we knew it. We were aware of punk. I'd seen it coming a few years earlier when I saw The Tubes and took them to A&M, who signed them.

JJ: Oh, really? We used to love The Tubes.

RW: We were aware that something was going on. And what happens when something new comes along is that it kills off what went before it, at least for a bit. When prog came along, it did away with the old beat and psychedelic groups, the way the beat groups had done away with the crooners before them.

JJ: When something new comes along, everyone wants to be a part of that peer group, to the extent that they'll deny their history. It's only when they've gained some confidence that they can start to admit where that history actually came from. Up until that point it's almost politically incorrect to admit your influences. But you can tell by just listening to the music. On our first album, the nearest thing we had to a prog rock song was this four-part piece called *Down In The Sewer*. That was about 11 minutes long and it was a suite. Prog rock, essentially, even if it was prog à la Beefheart and The Doors.

How did get you away with that?

JJ: A few people accused us of being hippies. But there was a lot of hypocrisy involved at the time. Like people claiming to be working class when they weren't. I remember Joe Strummer crying on my shoulder when we were the first band to support Patti Smith and the Ramones. He was in a rhythm and blues band called The 101'ers, and was going: "Oh I wish I had a band like yours." He used to live in the Notting Hill squats at the time. No one knew his dad was a diplomat.

"I DO REMEMBER JON ANDERSON FROM YES. IS HE STILL INTO ELVES?"
JJ BURNEL

Was there a rivalry between the punk bands at the time?

JJ: Not at first. Not until success kicked in. I remember meeting Steve Jones and Paul Cook from the Sex Pistols when we supported Patti Smith in 1976, and all Steve said to me was: "We're going to be famous in six months' time. I like your haircut!" Then a year later I remember having a punch-up with Steve and Paul and Paul Simonon from the Clash at the old Dingwalls. That's when the rivalry seemed to start – when we started outselling everyone.

Did that kind of rivalry exist in prog, Rick? Did you have any dust-ups with ELP or Genesis?

RW: No. The press tried to stir things up, between myself and Keith Emerson especially. But we were great friends and we used to laugh about it all. We let it go on because it fuelled press.

But that rivalry did exist between punk bands and prog bands?

JJ: We used to laugh at things like Pink Floyd taking years to make an album. But we've just taken two years to make our latest album [*Giants*]. The creative process can take time, because you're not on an assembly line. And you have a life outside of the band as well.

"Come on, Rick, how about a prog-punk supergroup?"

The two worlds did occasionally meet: Freddie Mercury bumping into Sid Vicious in the studio, members of Led Zeppelin turning up to punk gigs…

JJ: I don't really recall fraternising with any bands from the previous generation apart from Dr. Feelgood. When I was a kid I'd go and see bands like Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac and Black Cat Bones, who became Free, and I felt that kind of vibe in Dr. Feelgood. Our keyboard player, Dave Greenfield, was a prog rocker, though. When I first met him he had platform boots on, his jacket had frills, and he had long hair and what we called a semi-pro moustache. He introduced me to *In The Land Of Grey And Pink* by Caravan. I did like that. I do remember the Yes singer [Jon Anderson] though. Is he still into elves?

RW: Jon has his own little world. When he doesn't like what's happening in the real one he retreats into his own one. He's a big fan of yours, though, JJ. We were touring together last year, driving around in the same car, listening to all sorts of music. We played some Stranglers, and he said to me: "You know, there's a few of their songs that Yes could have done." He was right. Certainly something like *Golden Brown*.

JJ: I'll tell you something about *Golden Brown* that I've never told anyone before. It actually developed out of a prog rock suite. We were recording the *La Folie* album, and Hugh [Cornwell] and I were pissed off because we seemed to be writing all the songs. So we said to Jet [Black, drummer] and Dave: "Right, you two are going to write a song. We're off to the pub. Have it written when we get back." We fucked off to the pub all afternoon. Now, with Dave being a prog rocker and Jet being a jazzer, when we got back they presented us with this six-part piece of music. And we were like: "Fucking hell, we can't record this." We went: "Don't like that bit… don't like that… oh, wait a minute, we could something with that." And the part we did like formed the basis for *Golden Brown*.

1977 has retrospectively been cast as The Year Of Punk, but the biggest-selling albums of the year were *Bat Out Of Hell* and *Rumours*. Has there been a bit of rewriting of history?

RW: Well, up until 1942 the Germans were winning the second World War!

JJ: Have you seen these re-runs of *Top Of The Pops* from 1977 on telly lately? What a load of shite! It's like karaoke central.

So, 1977: was it fun?

JJ: It certainly was. I knew a year later that things were changing, though. I had a bank account, and I went in and the teller was a young girl with streaks of green in her hair. The great British assimilation had begun.

RW: It becomes mainstream.

JJ: Yes. It had become the norm. And nobody turns a blind eye.

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David Bowie

Heroes

Although Bowie's Berlin-period anthem was initially something of a commercial failure, it became his most life-changing single.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

One afternoon in July 1977, David Bowie was looking out of the window of Hansa Studio in Berlin when he noticed a couple kissing near the Berlin Wall.

"I always said it was a couple of lovers by the Wall that prompted the idea for *Heroes*," Bowie tells *Classic Rock*. "Actually, it was [Bowie producer] Tony Visconti and his girlfriend. Tony was married at the time, so I couldn't talk about it. But I can now say that the lovers were Tony and a German girl [Antonia Maass] that he'd met while we were in Berlin. I think possibly his marriage was in the last few months. And it was very touching because I could see that Tony was very much in love with this girl, and it was that relationship which sort of motivated the song."

The basic track had already been started by Bowie and Brian Eno in the weeks before, with Visconti behind the mixing desk. Their working method during Bowie's so-called 'Berlin period' was to build layered tracks that would later inspire lyric and melody, like making the frame before the picture. And using Eno's 'oblique strategies' cards (aphorisms that encouraged lateral thinking), they would often give themselves creative dilemmas within that frame.

"Maybe I'd write out five or six chords," Bowie explains, "then discipline myself to write something only with those five or six chords involved. So that particular dogma would dictate how the song is going to come out, rather than me and my sense of emotional self."

On a broader level, living in Berlin itself was an oblique strategy for Bowie. As he said at the time: "I find that I have to put myself in those situations to produce any reasonably good writing. I've still got that same thing about when I get to a country… I have to put myself on a dangerous level, whether emotionally or mentally or physically, and it resolves in things like that: living in Berlin, leading what is quite a spartan life for a person of my means, and in forcing myself to live according to the restrictions of that city."

Bowie threw his restricted chord progression out to the band, and they ran with it, building an eight-minute groove into a triumphant crescendo. The underlying riff of *Heroes* came from guitarist Carlos Alomar, with the hypnotic pulse provided by bassist George Murray and drummer Dennis Davis. "With such great musicians the notes were never in doubt," Bowie later said. "We looked at 'feel' as being the priority."

From the start, Eno described the music as "grand and heroic", and said he had "that very word, 'heroes', in mind." After the basic track was done, he overdubbed shuddering atmospherics by twiddling knobs on his EMS Synthi, a mini-synthesizer built into a briefcase.

The final touch was added by guitarist Robert Fripp. What the King Crimson leader later called "hairy rock'n'roll" was more a soaring series of aria-like feedback loops. Fripp marked with adhesive tape the spots on the studio floor where he could lock into certain singing tones. For a guitarist known for playing while seated, it's interesting that one of his most enduring performances came from stepping and swaying.

The finished track sat for weeks. There have been rumours that *Heroes* was intended as an instrumental (hence Fripp's wall-to-wall soloing). But Bowie says he was just waiting for the right lyrical spark, which eventually came from the lovers by the Wall.

Delivered in one of his greatest vocal performances, the us-against-the-world theme of his lyric was full of odd poetic touches, like the lines about the dolphins. As Bowie says, he often used a William Burroughs-inspired cut-up method of writing, taking random text from a book or magazine and reshuffling it.

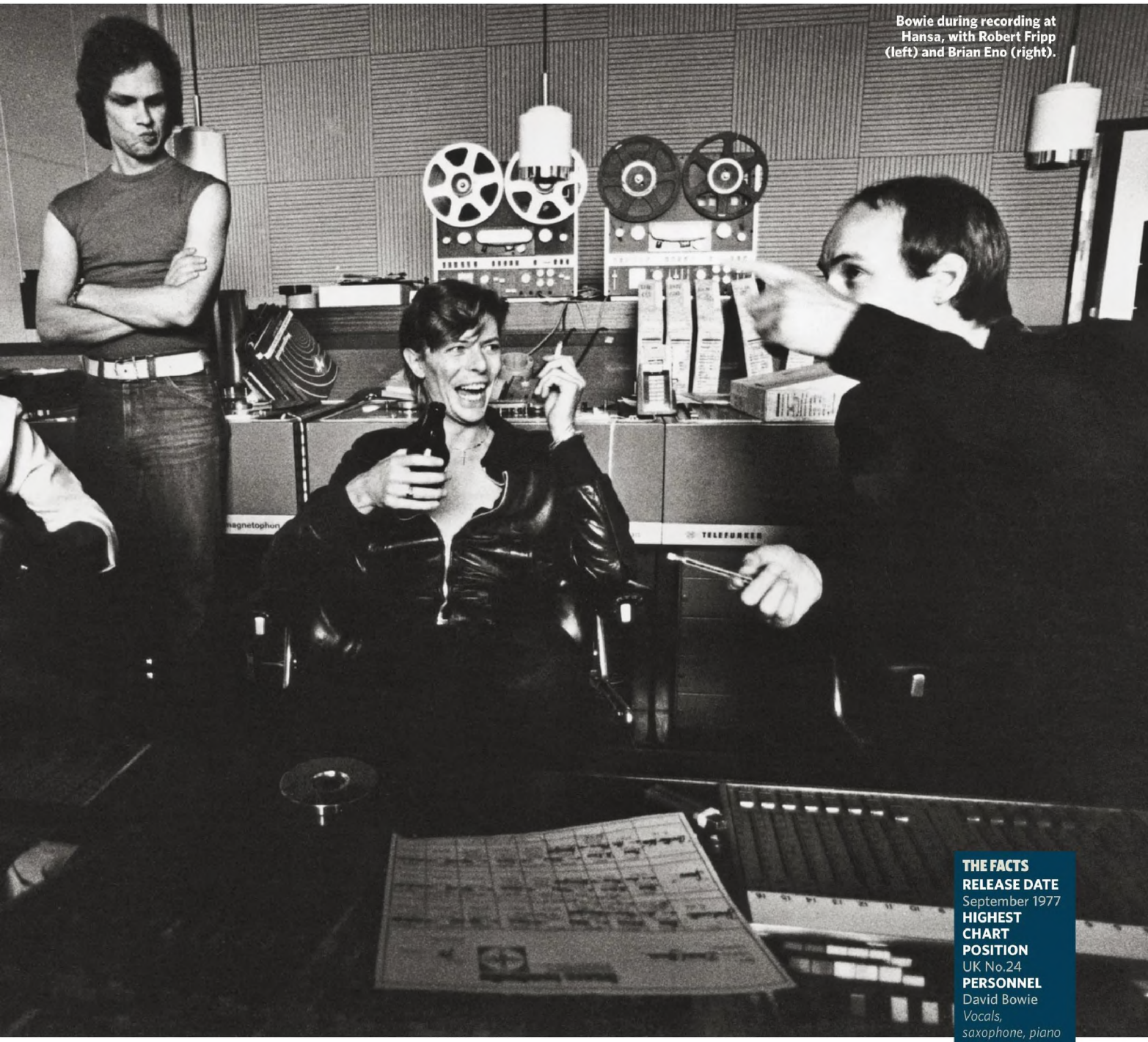
"I'll use that idea to provoke a new set of images for me," he explains, "or a new way of looking at a subject. I still find it incredibly useful as a writer's tool. And I'm amazed these days at the amount of cut-up sites that are now on the internet. It's quite phenomenal. There are at least ten, and two or three of them are excellent. I've used them too. I've put a bunch of pieces of text into the thing, then hit the 'cut-up' button and it slices it up for me."

Heroes was released as a single in September 1977. It only reached No.24 in the UK, and didn't chart at all in the US. But the emotional power of the song would continue to resonate, as it became one of Bowie's theme songs, along with the likes of *Space Oddity* and *Changes*.

Its most memorable moment would come 10 years later, when he performed it live at the Platz der Republik Festival, right across from the studio in Berlin where it was conceived.

"I'll never forget that," he recalls. "It was one of the most emotional performances I've ever done. I was in tears. They'd

MOTOR HEADS
In keeping with its German origin, *Heroes* borrows a beat known as 'motorik'. Associated with Krautrock bands such as Can, Kraftwerk and Neu!, the word is a combination of 'motor' and 'musik'. And indeed motorik has a kind of relentless, forward-feeling motion to it, almost like driving down an open motorway. Other motorik songs include *Autobahn* by Kraftwerk, *Hallogallo* by Neu! and *I Can't Stay Long* by Ultravox.



Bowie during recording at Hansa, with Robert Fripp (left) and Brian Eno (right).

backed up the stage to the Wall itself so that it was acting as our backdrop. We kind of heard that a few of the East Berliners might actually get the chance to hear the thing, but we didn't realise in what numbers they would. And there were thousands on the other side that had come close to the wall. So it was like a double concert, where the Wall was the division. And we would hear them cheering and singing along from the other side. God, even now I get choked up. It was breaking my heart. I'd never done anything like that in my life. And I guess I never will again.

"When we did *Heroes* it really felt anthemic, almost like a prayer," Bowie continues. "I've never felt it like that again. However well we did it later, it was almost like walking through it compared to that night because it meant so much more. That's the town where it was written, and that's the particular situation that it was written about. It was just extraordinary.

"In 2002 we did it in Berlin again. This time, what was so fantastic – it was in the Max Schmeling Hall, which holds about ten to fifteen thousand – is that half the audience had been in East Berlin that time way before. So now I was face-to-face with the people I had been singing it to all those years ago. And we were all singing it together. Again, it was powerful. Things like that really give you a sense of what a song and performance can do."

"[By the Wall] was one of the most emotional performances I've ever done. I was in tears... God, even now I get choked up."

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
September 1977

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.24

PERSONNEL
David Bowie
Vocals, saxophone, piano
Robert Fripp
Lead guitar
Carlos Alomar
Rhythm guitar
George Murray
Bass
Dennis Davis
Drums
Brian Eno
EMS Synthi synthesiser, treatments

WRITTEN BY
David Bowie & Brian Eno

PRODUCERS
Tony Visconti & David Bowie

LABEL
RCA

TEAR DOWN THE WALL

He had a little black book with his poems in – and he turned them into a massive, multimedia masterpiece that ultimately destroyed his band. *Classic Rock* looks at how Roger Waters and **Pink Floyd** took some "unlistenable" demos and built *The Wall*.

Words: **Glenn Povey** Illustration: **Magictorch**

In the final months of the 70s, two double albums were released that, true to the punk-torn music scene of the times, couldn't have been more different. One of them was by a band that seemed to represent all that punk stood for: anger, anti-establishment attitude, and youth rebellion. The other was by a bunch of millionaire rock stars. Both albums, it could be said, had apocalyptic themes. But while one was clearly about partying in the face of disaster – full of humour and good times – the other was caustic, unforgiving and nihilistic in its portrayal of post-war Britain and the education system, as well as a cynical critique of rock stardom itself. Amazingly, it was this angry double album that produced a new youth anthem, sung by kids everywhere – 'Hey! Teacher! Leave those kids alone!' – and immediately thrust to the No.1 spot.

So how, exactly, did millionaire rock dinosaurs Pink Floyd manage to 'out-punk' The Clash's *London Calling*? What forces brought the kings of blissful prog rock to create their troubled, angst-ridden epic album *The Wall*?

It would be difficult to determine what Pink Floyd meant to the man in the street in 1979. It had been two years since their last album, *Animals*, released at the fag end of the first wave of punk. And while Lydon famously customised a Pink Floyd t-shirt with the words 'I hate…' Floyd certainly weren't short on album sales: their supporting tour had once again slogged around the stadiums and arenas of North America and Europe, playing to capacity crowds. Yet in many ways Pink Floyd were still a cult band – because they had never recorded singles, they slipped silently in and out of rock's consciousness with each successive album and tour, known only to a certain breed of rock fan.

While The Clash's single *London Calling* stalled at No.11, Pink Floyd, who hadn't released a single in 10 years, shot into the No.1 spot with *Another Brick In The Wall Part 2*, where it remained over the entire Christmas period. The accompanying video, a hastily assembled (hastily because no one thought the single would sell enough to get the band on *Top Of The Pops*) montage of disturbing animation and bizarre footage of a giant schoolteacher puppet, was as bewildering as it was inventive. Worryingly and weirdly, *Another Brick In The Wall Part 2* also had the feel of a novelty record. What was going on with Pink Floyd?

➔

The members of Pink Floyd – David Gilmour, Nick Mason, Roger Waters and Richard Wright – had been slowly drifting apart from one other with each successive album and tour since the making of 1973's *Dark Side Of The Moon*, and consequently the story behind *The Wall* is a deeply complex one, involving money, ego and a battle for creative control.

Despite their recent successes, almost everything Floyd had earned from record sales and tours to date had been wiped out, thanks to some naïve investments via City brokers Norton-Warburg. Waters: "We lost a couple of million quid – nearly everything we'd made from *Dark Side Of The Moon*. Then we discovered the Inland Revenue might come and ask us for 83 per cent of the money we had lost. Which we didn't have."

Using this misfortune as a convenient lever, the ever-resourceful Waters, who had positioned himself as spokesman and chief lyricist of the band, proposed bailing them out with one of two possible album projects that he had envisaged and part written and demoed since the *Animals* tour: Bricks In The Wall (later known simply as *The Wall*) and *The Pros And Cons Of Hitch-Hiking*. Barely resembling what would later evolve into one of their most successful albums, Gilmour – at odds with Waters's later view – remembered them well.

"The demos for both *The Wall* and *Pros And Cons* were unlistenable, a shitty mess," the guitarist told me in September 1987. "[They] sounded exactly alike, you couldn't tell them apart."

> **"In an all-night session I rewrote the record. I used all of Roger's elements, but I rearranged their order and put them in a different form."**
>
> ***The Wall* producer Bob Ezrin**

In the end it was decided that *The Wall* was the better prospect. The finished album told a desperate story of isolation and fear, far more complex than anything previously tackled by Waters.

"The idea for *The Wall* came from 10 years of touring," Waters explained. "Particularly the last few years in '75 and in '77 when we were playing to very large audiences, most of whom were only there for the beer, in big stadiums. Consequently it became rather an alienating experience doing the shows. I became very conscious of a wall between us and our audience, and so this record started out as being an expression of those feelings."

Many of the scenes in the album also represented actual events in Waters's or the band's personal history. "It is partially autobiographical," Waters confessed. "It's a lot about my early life. I mean my father being killed [in the Second World War]. And some of it's about Syd [Barrett] and some of it's drawn from other experiences."

Indeed it had taken Waters some 10 months before his demos were in a fit state to play to anyone. "I started in September [1977]," he recalled, "and it was the next July ['78] when I played it to the other guys in the band. Then we started rehearsing it and fiddled about with it, and started really recording it properly in April [1979]."

According to Gilmour, to begin with the band were "just sitting around and bickering, frankly", but the confrontational nature of the process seemed to bring out the best in Waters, their chief songwriter. "Someone would say: 'I don't like that one very much,' someone else might agree, and then Roger would look all sulky and the next day he'd come back with something brilliant. He was pretty good about that during *The Wall*."

Inevitably the album is seen as partly autobiographical: Pink, the central character, played by Waters, is a successful rock star facing the break-up of his marriage while on tour (mirroring Waters's own separation from his wife, Judy Trim, in 1975). This leads Pink to review his whole life and to begin to build a protective wall around himself, each brick representing the things that have caused him to suffer: a suffocating, over-protective mother, vicious schoolteachers, a faithless wife, stupid groupies. Pink imagines himself elevated to the position of a fascist dictator, with the audience his obedient followers. At the story's climax he faces up to his tormentors, and the wall finally crumbles. But as soon as this wall has fallen, another one slowly begins to rise, suggesting a perpetual cycle of imprisonment.

It was an ambitious project by any stretch of the imagination. From its inception Waters envisaged a three-pronged attack: album, tour and film. Initially it was hoped that all three would be in simultaneous production, but almost at once it became evident that the sheer magnitude of effort in the recording process alone would make that plan unfeasible.

Aside from the sheer complexity of the project that lay ahead, Waters needed an outside producer to collaborate on ideas, to help co-ordinate efforts and in many cases act as arbiter between himself and Gilmour once they had started the recording process. That job went to Canadian-born producer Bob Ezrin.

Ezrin's task was a formidable one, but he succeeded in moulding the then sorry story into a workable shape. Much later he said: "In an all-night session I rewrote the record. I used all of Roger's elements, but I rearranged their order and put them in a different form. I wrote *The Wall* out in 40 pages, like a book, telling how the songs segued. It wasn't so much rewriting as redirecting."

"I could see that it was going to be a long and complex process, and I needed a collaborator who I could talk to about it," Waters said. "Because there's nobody in the band that you can talk to about any of this stuff: Dave's just not interested, Rick was pretty closed down at that point, Nick would be happy to listen because we were pretty close at that time, but he's more interested in his racing cars. I needed somebody like Ezrin who was musically and intellectually in a more similar place to where I was."

Ezrin recalled that "there was an awful lot of confusion as to who was actually making this record when I first started," complicated by the fact that a young producer, James Guthrie, was also brought in to act as co-producer/engineer. "So he brought me in, I think, as an ally to help him to manage this process through. As it turns out, my perception of my job was to be the advocate of the work itself, and that very often meant disagreeing with Roger and others and being a catalyst for them to get past whatever arguments might exist."

Ezrin also led the band in directions they would otherwise have ignored. *Another Brick… Part 2* leaned heavily on disco – a phenomenon well off Pink Floyd's collective radar, as Gilmour recalled: "He [Ezrin] said to me: 'Go to a couple of clubs and listen to what's happening with disco music.' So I forced myself out and listened to loud, four-to-the-bar bass drums and stuff. Then we went back and tried to turn one of the *Another Brick In The Wall* parts into one of those so it would be catchy. We did the same exercise on *Run Like Hell*."

The whole recording process lasted from September '78 until just before the release of the double album in November '79, with initial pre-recording demos beginning in earnest at Britannia Row in London. This quickly shifted to France when the band were forced to retreat into tax exile following the Norton-Warburg crash, and with their families in tow relocated to various rented accommodations in and around Nice.

Sessions began at Superbear in Berre-des-Alpes and Studio Miravel in Le Val. Curiously, the band chose to work within civilised office hours, commencing at 10 in the morning and finishing by six in the evening. However, tensions started to run high even at this early stage. Ezrin: "There was tension between band members, even tension between the wives of the band members. Roger and I were having a particularly difficult time. During that period I went a little bit mad and really dreaded going in to face the tension. I preferred not to be there while Roger was there."

"Most of the arguments came from artistic disagreements," David Gilmour says. "It wasn't total war, though there were bad vibes – certainly towards Rick, because he didn't seem to be pulling his weight."

If Mason and Wright's contributions were minimal, Gilmour contributed some outstanding music for the album's three more tuneful compositions: *Young Lust*, *Run Like Hell* and *Comfortably Numb*, for which he received one of only two shared writing credits on the album (the other went to Ezrin for his contribution to *The Trial*). Indeed *Comfortably Numb* features one of rock music's most iconic guitar solos, and was a live staple in Pink Floyd's post-Waters shows and also on Roger Waters's own solo tours.

Offering a rare insight into their unique partnership during the making of the album, Gilmour confessed that "Roger was certainly a very good motivator and obviously a great lyricist. He was much more ruthless about musical ideas, where he'd be happy to lose something if it was for the greater good of making the whole album work. So, you know, Roger would be happy to make a lovely sounding piece of music disappear into radio sound if it was benefiting the whole piece, whereas I would tend to want to retain the beauty of that music. We often had long, bitter arguments about these things."

Indeed what is so utterly compelling about the whole piece is the lyrical content; the depth and maturity of Waters's songwriting is breathtaking.

The summer break undoubtedly saved the Ezrin-Waters partnership. But the same could not be said of Wright who was, by his increasing lack ↦

GETTY

David Gilmour and Roger Waters share a mic, if not the same views and ideas.

The *Wall* shows utilised one of the most spectacular stage shows ever seen.

All fall down: the audience file out at the end of a *The Wall* concert at London's Earls Court in 1980.

Scarfe's Nazi-like 'Hammer Guard' stage projections.

ALL GETTY

of commitment, becoming the brunt of Waters's hostility. Already frustrated by Wright's belief that he should continue to be paid a quarter-share of the production credits, when it was clear he was in no way contributing to this element at all, the crunch finally came when Waters realised that the volume of work still required to complete the record in time for delivery in October could not be met. Via manager Steve O'Rourke, Waters requested that Wright join Ezrin a week ahead of the rest of the band in Los Angeles in order to catch up on the backlog of work. Ezrin reluctantly agreed, but Wright refused outright, telling Waters to "fuck off", commenting that he had seen very little of his children when they were in France as he was going through a tough divorce, and that he was not prepared to go.

Waters found this unacceptable: "So I gave him an ultimatum to do as he was told and finish the record, keep your full share [of the royalties] and leave quietly afterwards, or I'd see him in court."

Wright wrestled with this ultimatum for some time, wondering if he should call Waters's bluff. In the end he resolved to leave the band but, in a final, yet illogical, act of commitment, agreed to stay and perform on the live shows. "It's quite simple," Wright explained. "There was a lot of antagonism during *The Wall* and he said: 'Either you leave, or I'll scrap everything we've done and there won't be an album.' Normally I would have told him to get lost, but at that point we had to earn the money to pay off the enormous back-taxes we owed. Anyway, Roger said that if I didn't leave he would re-record the material. I couldn't afford to say no, so I left."

The album was finally released on November 30, 1979. *Melody Maker*'s Chris Brazier summarised it thus: "I'm not sure whether it's brilliant or terrible, but I find it utterly compelling." Robin Denselow, writing in the *Guardian*, commented: "I sympathise with those who find it too bleak to handle, but the Floyd's new work is frighteningly strong."

With the album done, that left the stage show and the movie. On the live shows, *The Wall* was Pink Floyd's most overwhelming spectacle to date. Presented exclusively at indoor arenas in Los Angeles and New York in February and London in August 1980, and then in Dortmund in February 1981 and again in London in June, it skilfully combined every aspect of the rock theatre genre. A wall was literally constructed from hundreds of cardboard bricks before the audience's eyes, and by the close of the first half it spanned the entire width of the auditorium to a height of some 40 feet. The show also incorporated a circular screen on to which newly designed hideous animations by Scarfe were projected. In addition, three giant puppets made appearances at key points, representing the villains of the piece: a 25-foot-high model of the Schoolteacher, a smaller one of the Wife and an inflatable Mother. There was even a set built into the face of the wall, depicting the motel room where Pink sits, comatose, in front of a TV showing an old war film. One of the most visually striking elements was Gilmour standing atop the wall playing his monumental guitar solo in *Comfortably Numb*.

What pleased Waters most about the whole production was that it was pleasantly removed from the stadium environment he so hated: "I walked all the way around the top row of seats at the back of the arena, and my heart was beating furiously and I was getting shivers up and down my spine. I thought it was so fantastic that people could actually see and hear something from everywhere they were seated. Because after the 1977 tour I became seriously deranged – or maybe *arranged* – about stadium gigs. I do think they are awful."

"A Philadelphia promoter offered us a guaranteed million dollars a show plus expenses to do two dates at JFK stadium with The Wall. And I wouldn't do it."

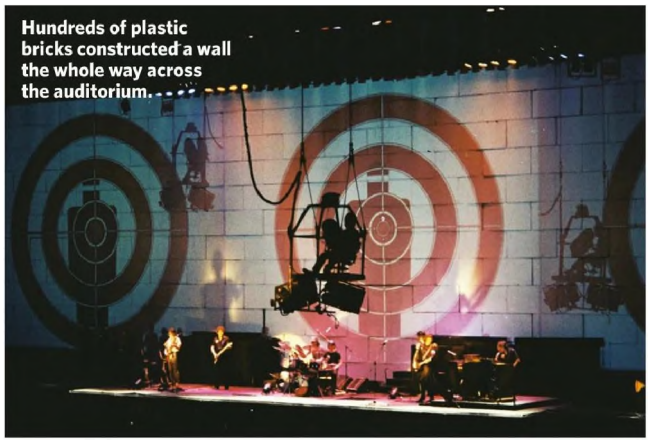
Roger Waters

With immediate sell-outs in both locations and an oversubscribed attendance it was hardly surprising that the band got offers to extend the tour. But the very idea was the opposite of everything *The Wall* stood for.

As Waters explained: "Larry Magid, a Philadelphia promoter, offered us a guaranteed million dollars a show plus expenses to go and do two dates at JFK stadium with *The Wall*. To truck straight from New York to Philadelphia. And I wouldn't do it. I had to go through the whole story with the other members. I said: 'You've all read my explanation of what *The Wall* is about. It's three years since we did that last stadium, and I saw then that I'd never do one again. *The Wall* is entirely sparked off by how awful that was and how I didn't feel that the public or the band or anyone got anything out of it that was worthwhile. And that's why we've produced this show strictly for arenas where everybody does get something out of it that is worthwhile."

Pressure was now mounting on the band to start work on the full-length movie adaptation – the


Gerald Scarfe's giant Teacher puppet looms large on the *Wall* stage.


Hundreds of plastic bricks constructed a wall the whole way across the auditorium.

third and final instalment – of *The Wall*, with Scarfe heading up the animation. Alan Parker as director and Waters assuming the role of producer.

Filming began at Pinewood Studios in Buckinghamshire in September 1981. The original intention had been to use concert footage in the film, but Parker was not satisfied with the results. Having decided to ditch this, he persuaded a reluctant Waters to both drop the live scenes – and to relinquish his role as Pink (it eventually went to Boomtown Rats leader Bob Geldof). Parker's change of plan also upset Scarfe in that his stage-show puppets would be sacrificed to the creation of an entirely new piece of work separate from the stage presentation, although about 20 minutes of his animation would be retained.

It is well-documented that the three men were given to lengthy rows and walk-outs during the filming. Parker resolved the matter by forcing Waters to take a six-week holiday so that he could work unhindered. "In that period I was allowed to develop my vision," Parker said, "and I really made that film with a completely free hand… And then Roger came back to it, and I had to go through the very difficult reality of having it put over to me that actually it was a collaborative effort." Waters described it as "the most unnerving, neurotic period in my life – with the possible exception of my divorce in 1975."

The band also re-recorded some of their works for the soundtrack, using new Michael Kamen orchestrations on *Mother, Bring The Boys Back Home*, and an expanded *Empty Spaces*. In addition, a completely new track, *When The Tigers Broke Free*, was introduced to act as an overture to the film. It was inspired by the death of Waters's father on in Italy during the Second World War.

When the film opened in London it was generally seen as a powerful piece of celluloid rock music, but it did receive a few unfavourable reviews. Some of the more sensitive writers felt they had been subjected to a battering from start to finish. *Daily Express* correspondent Victor Davis wrote: "I got no sleep for the remainder of the night because Parker's shocking images refused to go away." Even Parker admitted that he "wasn't quite prepared for the intensity of the anger that comes off the screen".

Scarfe was particularly shocked to find that, for the filming, a notorious gang of skinheads from Tilbury had been recruited as Pink's 'Hammer Guard', and now had his hammer logo tattooed on their skin. "I was slightly worried that they might be adopted by some fascist, neo-Nazi group as a symbol," the artist confessed.

Soon after the film's release, the band announced the release of additional material used on the soundtrack, as well as some that had been cut from both the album and the film. As Waters explained: "We were contracted to make a soundtrack album but there really wasn't enough new material in the movie to make a record that I thought was interesting. The project then became Spare Bricks, and was meant to include some of the film music."

However, when the album, appropriately titled *The Final Cut*, was eventually released, in the spring of 1983, it was very different from what had been predicted. Waters, inspired by the British Government's military retaliation against Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands, had composed and recorded new pieces of music, almost without consulting the rest of the band. It seemed that he had assumed unilateral responsibility for the direction of the band.

This was Pink Floyd's most turbulent period, with arguments apparently raging constantly over band policy, and album quality and content. "It got to the point on *The Final Cut*," said Gilmour, "that Roger didn't want to know about anyone else submitting material."

It seemed that much of what the rest of the band had cherished as a democracy was fast disappearing. There was at one time a great spirit of compromise within the group. If someone couldn't get enough of his vision on the table to convince the rest of us, it would be dropped. *The Wall* album, which started off as unlistenable and turned into a great piece, was the last album with this spirit of compromise. With *The Final Cut* Waters became impossible to deal with."

Waters himself admitted that it was a highly unpleasant time, but his overriding feeling was frustration at the others' unwillingness – and this applied to Gilmour in particular – to submit to his complete control. "We were all fighting like cats and dogs," he said. "We were finally realising – or accepting, if you like – that there was no band and had not been a band in accord for a long time. Not since 1975, when we made *Wish You Were Here*. Even then there were big disagreements about content and how to put the record together. I had to do it more or less single-handed, with Michael Kamen, my co-producer."

Gilmour refused to have anything more to do with the album's production, and was unhappy with the personal and political content for it to be anything other than a Waters solo piece. He agreed merely to perform, as required, opting for an easy life in preference to endless rows.

The power this granted Waters gratified his now tremendous ego, leaving him free to act as if his bandmates were no more than mere hired hands. Even the sleeve, under Waters's artistic control, carried the subtitle '*A Requiem For The Post War Dream* by Roger Waters – performed by Pink Floyd'. *The Final Cut*, dedicated to Waters's late father, was Pink Floyd's worst-selling record since *Dark Side Of The Moon*, just scraping the top five – a point which Gilmour has gleefully raised time and again to underline the fact that the material was exceptionally weak.

It is a curious irony that Waters's erratic solo career has seen him take some startling U-turns in regard to his beliefs and long-held convictions about all that is bad about the corporate machine, globalisation and stadium touring.

Was the ill-fated all-star recreation of *The Wall* concert in Berlin 1990 a wall too far?

There are no explanations as to why Waters the solo artist chose to tour *Dark Side…* in its entirety in recent years (other than commercial gain) to stadiums across the world, rather than his beloved *The Wall*.

Was Waters finally admitting defeat? That to rail against the corporate machine, to not step in line or to play the game is a fruitless waste of energy? Maybe. After all, you can't bang your head against the wall forever.

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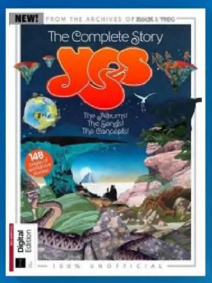

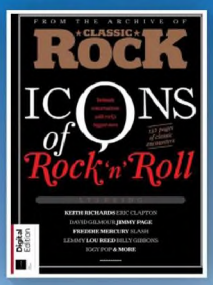

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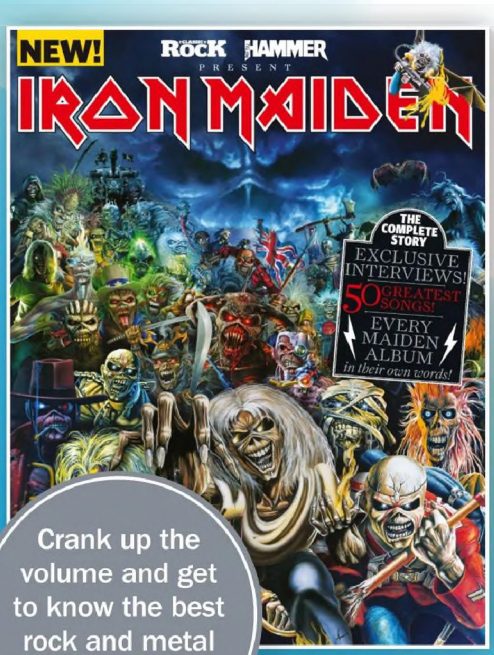

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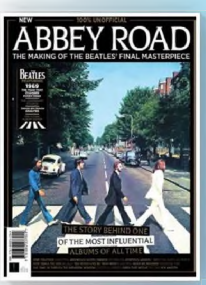

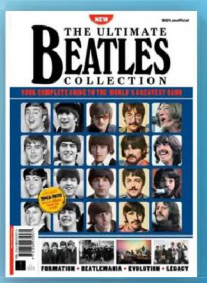

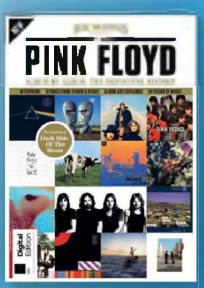

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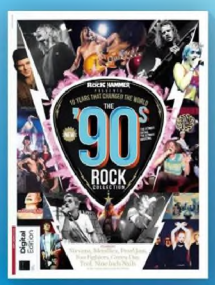

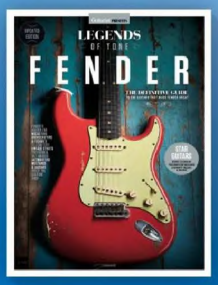

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