
3. ROCK & RULES

Bands, cops and lawyers

Portrait of an American felony

Police have made mugshots of rockers for many different reasons over the years – some more rock than others.

Jimi Hendrix was put in front of the camera by Toronto cops after airport staff found heroin and cannabis in his luggage. He got off with it after claiming it had been put there by a fan – a likely story.

Billie Joe Armstrong of Green Day posed for the polis in 2003 after being done for speeding. You wouldn't believe it from his mugshot though. He looks like he's anything but speeding, metaphorically speaking.

Kid Rock can't be too pleased with his official snap... he's sporting a black eye in it. But the real shocker is that he'd been arrested after a brawl in a waffle house. What an animal!

My favourite mugshot has to be this guy, who insisted on wearing full makeup while he posed. But it's what he got done for: fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, after rubbing a security guard's neck with his scrotum!

That's rock'n'roll. That's Marilyn Manson.

Bogged down

Due to his troubled and well-documented tendency for all things doom and gloom, Nirvana's Kurt Cobain is remembered by most as dour – to say the least.

He was not always so, however. For example, the line from *Smells Like Teen*

Spirit, 'Here we are now, entertain us,' was what Kurt used to say to his mates when he arrived at a party, just to break the ice.

And lyrics found after his death included the far from unfunny line, 'Hope I die before I turn into Pete Townshend.'

One day in 1993 at his Seattle home he locked himself in the bathroom and refused to come out. Courtney Love called 911 and said her husband was about to commit suicide.

But when police arrived, Kurt let them join him in the lavvy and told them: 'I'm not feeling suicidal today. Not at all.

'I'm just hiding from the wife – it's her bad week!'

Agent Brown

Ted Nugent, self-confessed gun freak and killer of what he calls 'Nature's surplus' (ie, anything that moves, he shoots), wasn't keen on joining up when the call came from Uncle Sam during the Vietnam War.

For a start he'd have his hair cut off – all four feet of it. Plus, being fired upon was not part of the Nuge's idea of happy hunting grounds. He preferred his prey to be as hairy as he was, but unarmed.

He remembers: 'I got 30 days' notice of the medical. So I immediately stopped washing my body. Two weeks before the test I stopped eating food with any nutritional value.

'Then a week before it I stopped going to the bathroom. I did it in my pants and they got all crusted up.'

The army doctor took one look at the Motor City madman and decided, quite rightly, methinks, there was no place for a smelly, malnourished hippy in the US forces.

Ted probably didn't go out to celebrate that night.

He would have been too busy washing his hair, among other things.

Subliminal advertising

In 1990 Judas Priest were taken to court in the US after the parents of two teenagers who'd attempted suicide alleged they'd done so due to an alleged 'subliminal message' contained in one of the band's records.

The kids had got bevvied up while listening to Priest's *Stained Class* album and thought they heard Rob Halford say: 'Do it! Do it!' during the cover of a Spooky Tooth song.

Rob represented the band in court. His first point was taken well by the judge and jury: that even if he had said 'Do it!' it couldn't have been translated into: 'Blow your own heads off with a twelve-bore shotgun!'

His second point was the real suckerpunch. Rob said: 'A subliminal message from Judas Priest encouraging their fans to kill themselves would be counter-productive. We'd end up with no fans.'

'Surely, instead of, 'Do it! Do it!' fans should hear, 'Buy lots and lots of our records!'

Case dismissed.

Flying pig's sex change

There's a line in *This is Spinal Tap* where bass player Derek Smalls describes his two bandmates as being like fire and ice, with his role being as peacekeeper; or as he put it, 'a bucket of lukewarm water'.

It's a pity Derek wasn't in Pink Floyd to calm the fiery David Gilmour and the icy Roger Waters.

After Roger left the band in 1985 he filed a lawsuit against Dave, forbidding him from using the giant inflatable pig during Floyd gigs because the design was his.

Dave got round the ban by having a huge pair of testicles added to the flying pig – thus, in the eyes of the law, making it a new design. Roger was, to say the least, bealin.

Following another lawyers' meeting in which the pair slugged it out and generally insulted each other, Roger called into a well known toilet paper manufacturer and commissioned a special product... with Dave Gilmour's face on every sheet.

The long walk

Rob Thomas and his band Matchbox 20 have always been regarded as serious musicians by most of us. But they have a wicked sense of humour – especially when it comes to their support bands.

Take the Feelers, a young New Zealand outfit who supported Matchbox 20 on a sell-out tour of Australia. On the first night, Rob and the boys shrink-wrapped their van and they had to sleep outside the venue till the sun came up and they could find the start of the clingfilm.

On the second night, while the Feelers were onstage, the headliners broke into their dressing room and soaked all the towels in strong detergent. Even the drummer came out in a rash.

But it was on the third night that they really pushed the envelope. Rob found some Canberra cops who were big Matchbox 20 fans, and convinced them to do a pretend drugs bust on the Feelers.

The poor guys didn't even protest as they were thrown into a police van, driven several miles out of town and dumped by the roadside – then handed a note which said: 'You're screwed! See you at the bar!'

Unrepentant Rob said: 'We really liked that band. It's always been a tradition with us. If we like them we try and give them as much crap as possible.'

What do you do to support bands you don't like, Rob?

Rather not see you in court

David Daniel Snyder's band were adopted as our own in the UK, but success eluded them in their native US – some say due to America's slight distrust of blokes in makeup.

That didn't stop him striking a blow for civil rights in 1985, when he testified at the US Senate along with Frank Zappa and, believe it or not, John Denver.

Some quarters were demanding that labels should be placed on albums, warning of offensive language, or in David's case, offensive looks, likely to upset the youth of America.

But David, better known as Dee Snyder, appeared at the hearing without the wig and slap he uses while on stage with Twisted Sister.

Which prompted Frank Zappa to remark: 'Well, I do declare: you're no oil painting as a dude, but it's sure as hell an improvement. Dressed as a chick you are one ugly mother!'

Shown the door

One day in 1969, Continental Airlines flight 172 experienced a bit of bother from a passenger on its way from LA to Houston, Texas.

Jim Morrison of the Doors was the passenger in question. According to the FBI report on the incident, he got out of his seat before the seatbelt light was turned off, lit a cigarette before the smoking light was turned on, and unleashed a barrage of obscene language on the hostess trying to re-seat him.

The report describes him as '5ft 10in with shoulder-length hair, dressed in hippy fashion,' which included a brightly-coloured shirt and bell-bottomed trousers.

Morrison was seen passing a bottle of cognac wrapped in a magazine to his fellow passengers, and when ordered to hand it over he ran to the toilet and locked himself

Look wot you saw

Doing German TV shows can be a boring experience.

There's a lot of hanging around while the cameras are set up, and it usually takes two days before it all goes out live. Tedious stuff.

Unless you've got Noddy Holder with you.

Nazareth caught a flight with Slade and the moment's top pop band, the Thompson Twins, for a telly show in Munich.

The lead Thompson spent the whole flight having his hair lacquered while Noddy and I spent it flicking peanuts into the back of his head.

Once at the studios, we were all allocated caravans to get changed in, and Noddy soon appearing at his window, stuffing Dave Hill's wig down his underpants. No, Dave didn't know; and yes, he wore it later.

After the broadcast, Mr Holder joined us for a drink in our caravan. From his point of view he could see into the pop caravan and was able to watch the girl from the Thompson Twins getting changed.

He burst out laughing and yelled: 'Here lads! I've just seen the Thompson pair!'

in. The captain was informed and confronted Jim, who told him to 'eff off'. He diverted the plane to Phoenix, Arizona, where Morrison was arrested by FBI agents and taken to jail.

The report also reveals the line that upset the hostess most. While doing the safety demo routine she pointed at her oxygen mask, at which point our Jimbo yelled: 'My girlfriend's got one of those – but she calls it a diaphragm!'

We're back and we brought the lawyer

On June 17, 1987, a very unusual lawsuit was filed in St Petersburg, Florida.

Vittoria Hohman, 52, had taken her 15-year-old daughter to a rock concert two years previously in the town's Bayfront Centre. The ringing in her ears went on for days, then months – and 24 months on it was still happening.

Vittoria had to give up her job as a local real estate agent because she couldn't hear what clients were asking her during house viewings.

So she was seeking compensation from the band she held responsible.

Initially they reacted by asking: 'If it's our fault, how come we're not being sued by the other 4,999 people in the audience that night?'

That was hastily retracted by their lawyers, just in case a few thousand other audience members got any ideas.

Eventually, the case – or should that be the hearing? – was settled out of court when the band agreed to pay Vittoria the equivalent of £30,000 if she turned a deaf ear and dropped the lawsuit.

I mean, you couldn't really go deaf from listening to Motley Crue... could you?

Money for nothing

A guy from EMI signed the Sex Pistols on the spot after they played the 100 Club in London in 1976, and handed over £40,000 in cash to seal the deal.

Two months later Queen had to cancel a TV appearance and the Pistols stepped in at the last minute, swearing live on the telly, insulting the presenter and losing him his job.

The following month, after much wrangling with their lawyers, EMI threw in the towel and gave the band another £50,000 to leave the label.

In March 1977, A&M Records paid £150,000 for the Pistols' signatures, which were given in a ceremony outside Buckingham Palace, then invited the band to their

office for a wee party.

The boys trashed the place and upset the managing director by throwing up on his desk. It got their new deal cancelled, but they got another £75,000 in the process.

By the time they signed to Virgin in May 1977, the Sex Pistols had been paid £315,000 just to go away.

Never mind the business...

Collector's item

When Alex Harvey decided to quit his Sensational band, the lawyers had something to say about it.

He arrived for a rehearsal in a London pub ahead of the band's planned 1977 tour. But he sat down at the edge of the stage and told drummer Ted McKenna: 'I can't do this any more.'

Ted told him: 'It's been great, Alex,' shook his hand, and watched the great man leave in a taxi.

Weeks later Eddie Tobin, part of the band's management team, had the task of informing the members they were facing legal action from promoters. But instead of just passing on the official papers he decided the least he could do was deliver them in person. He met Alex on a heath near his house, walking his dogs.

'What's this?' said Mr Harvey on taking the envelope.

'It's a court order,' said Eddie.

'It's signed by a lord,' Alex said delightedly. 'I've never had a letter from a lord before. I'm keeping this as a souvenir!'