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Rolling Stone

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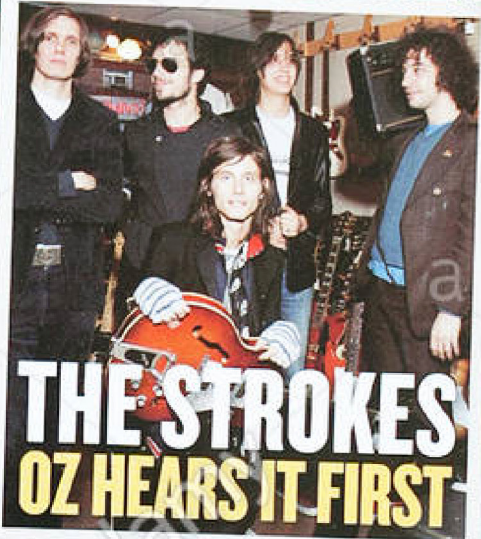
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Pete Doherty

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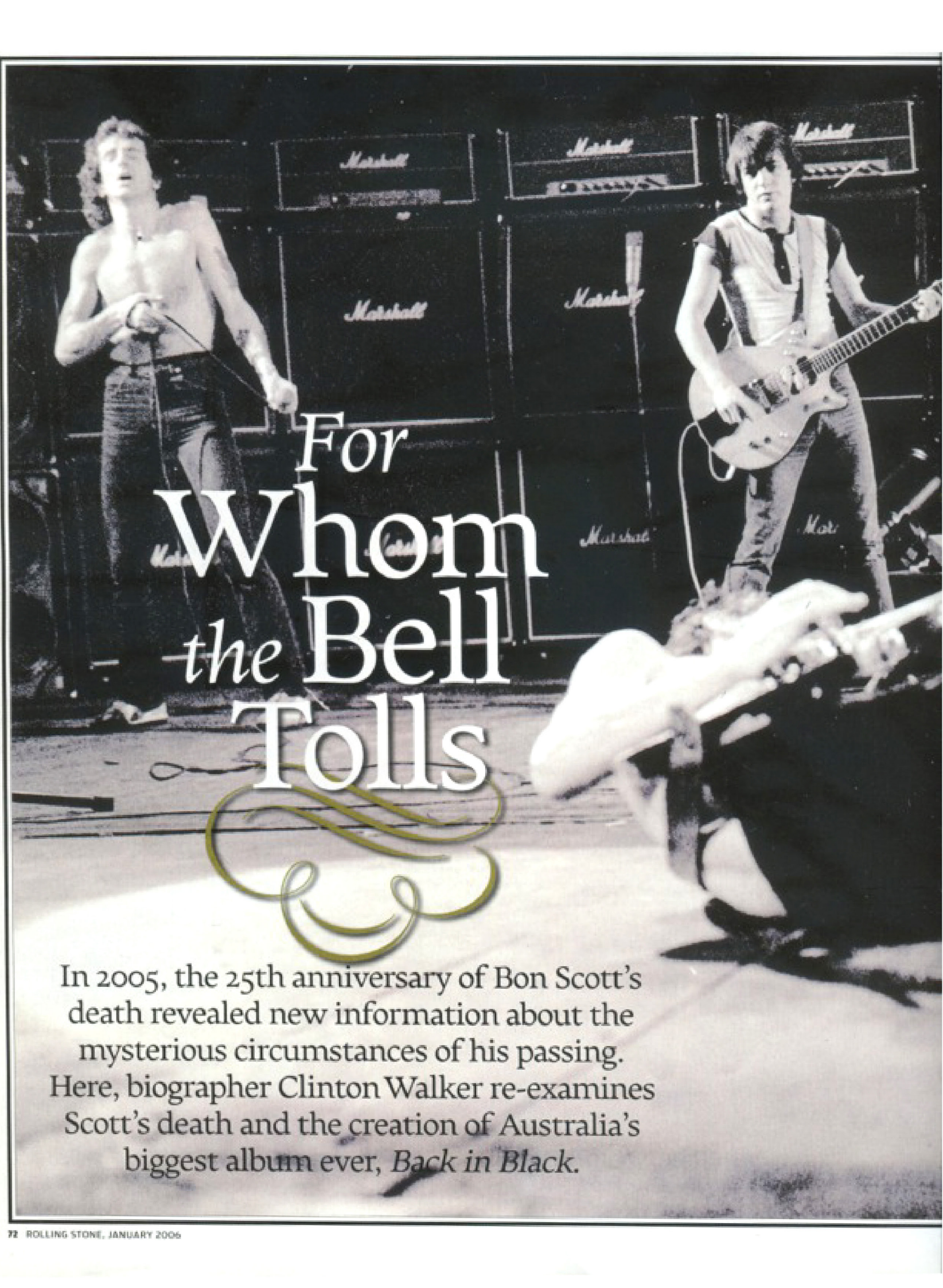
A NEXT MAGAZINE

BACK IN BLACK: 25TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL

AC/DC

The Year Rock Broke

From the Mystery of Bon's Death, to the Biggest Australian Album of All Time

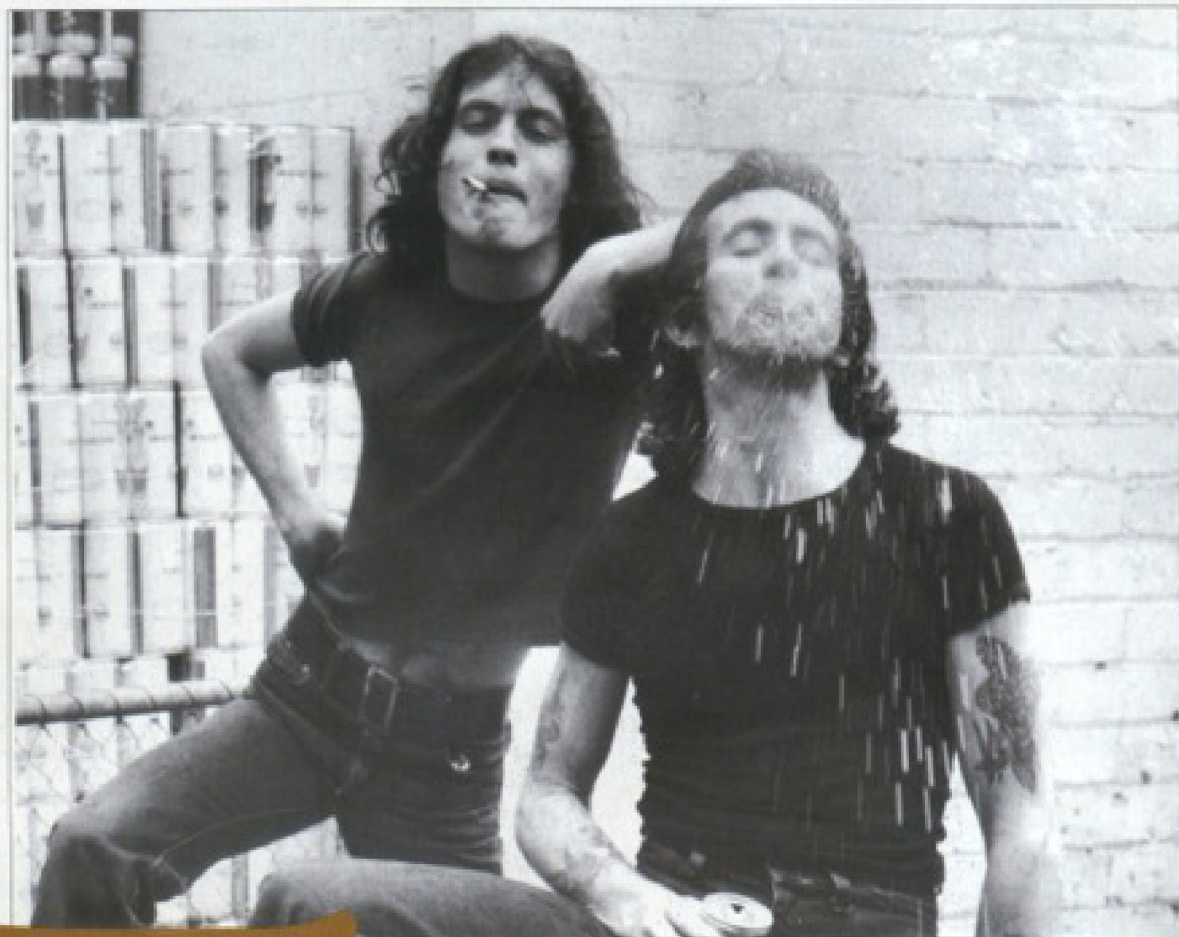


For Whom the Bell Tolls

In 2005, the 25th anniversary of Bon Scott's death revealed new information about the mysterious circumstances of his passing. Here, biographer Clinton Walker re-examines Scott's death and the creation of Australia's biggest album ever, *Back in Black*.



BY Clinton Walker
PHOTOGRAPH BY Ross Halfin



day Scott was found dead in London – February 19th – another Antipodean outlaw, Nick Cave, arrived there to begin his career in exile.

The death of Scott, in a way, might have marked the start of the rest of rock's life. It was out of this tragedy that rose the great triumph of *Back in Black*. Even before 1980 was over, *Back in Black* had sold three million copies and was rewriting the rock & roll rulebook. In 2005, the album is the fifth-biggest album of all time – just behind *Led Zeppelin IV*.

Back in Black didn't so much define a genre or a time as it set a benchmark for pure rock – something that's rarely been matched since. In a fell swoop, it laid the blueprint for both what would become the defining style of the '80s, stadium rock, and its antithesis, '90s grunge. Today, the influence of AC/DC is still pervasive: Just last year, American death-metal band Six Feet Under covered all of *Back in Black* for their album, *Graveyard Classics*. More recently, rising Melbourne act Airbourne incited an international bidding war on the basis that they sounded more like AC/DC than any other band trying to sound like AC/DC.

Certainly, *Back in Black* is the greatest resurrection act in rock history. What other bands have survived the loss of their charismatic lead singer? Not the Doors, INXS or Nirvana. So how the hell did AC/DC do it?

ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF the release of *Back in Black* in June this year, AC/DC were awarded double-diamond status in the U.S., marking sales of more than 20 million. Worldwide, the album has sold twice as many copies. It's an extraordinary success story, considering *Back in Black*'s origins: it was recorded soon after Scott's death with a new singer. It's even more extraordinary that the band didn't fall flat on their face. But, knowing AC/DC, it doesn't seem extraordinary at all.

Scott was cremated in a quiet ceremony at Fremantle, where he grew up, on February 29th, 1980. Malcolm and Angus Young AC/DC's twin guitar axis and the greatest sibling instrumental team in rock history, flew straight back to London afterwards. Within days, the Young brothers were in the rehearsal room, and within a month they'd found singer Brian Johnson. Then, within six weeks, the new-look AC/DC were in a Bahamas studio laying down *Back in Black*.

More than just dedicated to the memory of the band's dead singer, *Back in Black* channels Scott a voice from beyond the grave. And it was a huge hit right out of the blocks, going to Number One in the U.K., Top Five in the U.S. and Number Two in Australia. But unlike a lot of records that are huge in their time, *Back in Black* just keeps on selling. This is why its influence is so pervasive: it continues to turn on successive generations of fans. It was the album Kurt Cobain used to teach himself guitar. It is the album Motörhead relied on

EVERYONE AGREED THAT PETER HEAD HAD chosen his name well. The erstwhile Peter Beagley took his new name around the same time, in the early-'70s, that he formed Headband. Headband were, well, a "head band", a band of heads – hippies who liked to take drugs – making music for hippies who liked to take drugs. And nobody in Adelaide liked taking drugs more than

Head – well, maybe one guy, Bon Scott. Scott was a member of Headband's local allies and rivals, Fraternity, who shared a big communal farmhouse in the hills north of town and spent more

time smoking dope, drinking and dropping mushrooms than doing anything else. The tattooed, pint-sized singer seemed to lead a charmed life.

After a near-fatal motorcycle accident, in 1974, Scott joined a fledgling young Sydney outfit called AC/DC. By 1979, with their sixth album, *Highway to Hell*, AC/DC had broken through to the top level of international touring.

Fate hadn't been quite so kind to Head. In February 1980, he was playing a pub in Alice Springs, a cocktail bar lost in the outback. During a break in a show, he got

a call from his wife, Mouse, at home in Adelaide. On the other side of the world, their old pal Scott, the rock & roll Peter Pan, had been found dead. They were shocked, deeply shocked. Head was in his early-30s, like Scott was, and he'd never known anyone who'd died.

Head shuffled back up onstage and announced that he couldn't continue his set. A wave of shock ran through the dusty room. Everybody loved Scott, even blackfellas in the Centre, who, like everyone, were weaned on Countdown. There was a stunned, sad silence. Peter slowly moved

off to sit and stare into his scotch, and the motley crowd followed, wandering off to sit quietly under the shady gums of a nearby dry riverbed.

That was the sort of impact the death of Bon Scott had – not only in Australia but all round the world. It was one of those events that people remember hearing about – like when, just 10 months later, John Lennon was shot in New York City.

The two deaths neatly bookend 1980. It was a year that saw rock & roll at a crossroads. The year before, Sid Vicious died; the year after, Bob Marley. On the same

believe they've heard a demo of the song, on which Scott sings), but certainly the Youngs and Baba date "Have a Drink with Me" as prior to Scott's death.

"Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" is another curious song. It's been said that this song was the only *Back in Black* track built from the ground up in the Bahamas. However, Baba says Scott arrived at the title after the Ashley Court caretaker, a Mr. Burke, told Scott to turn down the loud music late at night.

There are trace elements of Scott all over the album; titles and couplets that, if he didn't write, certainly do him proud. So either Scott's spirit palpably inhabited the sessions in order to produce material in his good, or Johnson and Co. suddenly got really good at songwriting. There's not a lot of evidence in Johnson's back catalogue to suggest that he would ever evolve into an adequate writer; Malcolm and Angus didn't have a lot of experience in completing lyrics. But perhaps Scott's great muse did inspire them.

Or perhaps the truth lies in the writing. Ian Jeffery and the band's production manager Jake Berry forced their way into Scott's Ashley Court flat after he'd died, and Jeffery has admitted he has a folder containing the frontman's lyrics to 15 songs. This may have something to do with the band's amazing comeback.

If these are the lost scrolls, should they not be revealed? The shutters went up

THE BAND FINISHED RECORDING *Back in Black* in May 1980 and went to New York to mix it. In June, they played a couple of warm-up dates in Holland and Belgium. Brian Johnson and AC/DC appeared to be a marriage made in heaven.

As if to prove the truism that death is a great career move, the British charts were splashed with old AC/DC singles. When *Back in Black* was released in July, it went straight to Number One. During August and September, the band played a 64-date U.S. tour. It was business as usual, the same as it always was. In November, they toured the U.K., by which time the album was peaking at Number Four in the States. Then AC/DC toured through Europe.

On the first anniversary of Scott's death in February 1981 - after *Back in Black* had gone Platinum in the U.S. and the band had just toured Japan for the first time - AC/DC returned to Australia. It was their first tour down-under in four years, but it seemed like a lifetime. In reality, it was a lifetime. Their previous Australian tour, back in the summer of 1976-77, the band were hounded by the tabloids who were

Death by Misadventure

The 25th anniversary of Bon Scott's passing turned up a missing link in the case. Despite this, questions remain. By Clinton Walker.

Early this year, I got a phone call from Richard Jinman, an Australian journalist on secondment to the *Guardian* in London, who was writing a piece on Bon Scott to mark the 25th anniversary of his death. Malcolm Young had released a statement - "Bon has already become part of rock folklore," he said, "Ride on, Bon" - and Jinman wanted me, as Scott's biographer, to comment.

Talk naturally turned to the conspiracy theories. Right from

the start, there were grey areas surrounding Scott's death: accusations that his flat was broken into and cleared out shortly after his death; that he was in the close company of heroin users on the night of his death; that he may have even headed across town to score drugs, if not for himself then for his associates. The AC/DC machine itself cast suspicion and blame on Scott's friends who were hookers, heroin addicts and drug dealers - the type of lowlife that populated and enlivened Scott's songs.

The strongest conspiracy theory - fuelled by the fact that Alistair Kinnear, the man who found Scott dead, seemed to disappear from the face of the earth - stated that Kinnear was an alias used by another person close to the action. According to this theory, "Kinnear" was a friend of Bon's and Bon's ex, Joe Furey, who was a heroin dealer and already had plenty of aliases as it was - Joe Blow, Joe King and Joe Silver. The inference immediately arose that drugs were more involved than originally thought.

The wildest theory, based on the changeable recovered memories of metal band UFO's guitarist Paul Chapman and bassist Peter Way, who were friends of Scott's and also junkies - and given credence in the latest AC/DC book, Paul Stenning's *Two Sides to Every Glory* - was that Scott had gone to Dulwich to see Kinnear, whoever he might have been, to score smack. "Paul Chapman states that once back in his flat, Joe told him he didn't have much smack left [indicating therefore that King was also a user], which allegedly prompted Scott to go off and find some for them," Stenning writes.

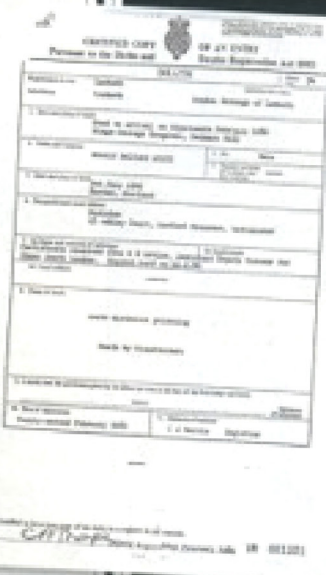
None of these theories added up, even as questions - like the whereabouts of Kinnear - remained unanswered. Scott didn't use heroin. Likewise, the coroner found none in his system. Even if Joe Furey (a.k.a. Joe Blow etc.), the man who was rumoured to be Kinnear, was able to pass himself off as someone else at a coroner's inquest, I found and interviewed him, as no-one else has ever done. And I remain convinced by the consistency of his and Scott's other friends' accounts of those fateful last few days.

After all, the whole series of events were familiar: Scott sleeping it off in the back of a car? People in Australia who knew the singer could remember him doing just that many, many times.

I told Jinman it was my belief that everything on the night of Scott's death was as it seemed - but as long as Kinnear remained a phantom, I could never be 100 per cent certain. I knew that Furey wasn't Kinnear, but after 10 years of searching, I still didn't know who Kinnear was. I told Jinman, exasperatedly, "He just doesn't seem to exist." The *Guardian* ran the piece, closing it on that speculation. A couple of days after the story ran across Britain, the newspaper printed a retraction. Daniel Kinnear, the son of Alistair, had been in touch to say that his father did indeed exist, was alive - if not very well - in the south of Spain, and that the whole matter had already caused his family enough distress without any further aspersions being cast on his father's character.

Stenning managed to extract a response from Daniel, but the only new information was an expression of regret, as Daniel explained his father had "experienced considerable grief and a sense of 'if only...' which he spent a long time coming to terms with". Daniel then disappeared as abruptly as his father had. However, short of his father making any public comment, it was enough that Daniel had finally outed him. The missing piece in the jigsaw fits neatly enough to finally put paid, I hope, to all the harmful speculation.

However, one pressing question remains. It isn't "Who broke into Scott's flat?" I know who that was: it was AC/DC roadies Ian Jeffery and Jake Berry. No, the mystery is: What were Jeffery and Berry looking for? And what did they find?



“Although Bon Scott liked to fly high - and he often crashed hard - he was always first in the hotel lobby the next morning, ready to go.”

around AC/DC almost from the moment Scott was gone. Jeffery is still in the music game today, living in Japan and working on the road with bands like U2. But like everyone else in the AC/DC camp during that period - not only the band, but also Lange, Mensch, Berry and more - Jeffery has never really spoken about Scott's death and the genesis of *Back in Black*. And it doesn't look like he, or anyone else close to the band, will start discussing it now.

There are questions that remain: When Baba asked Jeffery for her possessions that were at the flat, he told her it was all packed to be sent to Scott's parents. Yet Scott's parents got a suitcase with a couple of pairs of jeans in it and not much else. Why couldn't Baba get her keepsakes back? And why couldn't Silver reclaim the furniture she'd lent the singer?

And, of course, what ever happened to Scott's many diaries, notebooks and photo albums he treasured? Where are his records and tapes? Or his bongos? And just what happened to all the lyrics he was working on?

intent on a punk-rock shock. AC/DC even had some of their gigs banned. This storm in a teacup caused the band to basically renounce Australia - which, of course, they could afford to do because they had much bigger fish to fry overseas. But this also meant that Scott would never again step foot on Australian soil. When AC/DC finally did return in '81, Johnson was a veteran frontman, with around 100 gigs under his belt.

Playing shows in the five major capitals, Berry worked wonders on the venues. Now armed with the props (their own Hells Bell) and pyrotechnics they'd once disdained (their lighting rig was bigger than the KISS set, they claimed), AC/DC were leading the charge into '80s arena rock.

Despite the ticket price, high demand resulted in extra shows in Brisbane and Melbourne. But even as AC/DC were fine-tuning one of the most spectacular large-scale touring operations on the international circuit - and certainly one of the loudest - the band's homecoming was tainted somehow.



Dark Side of the Booze

He was drinking a bottle of scotch a day. I mean, what he was getting in wages wouldn't have covered his scotch bill," says Silver Smith, Scott's girlfriend in 1976-77. "I couldn't deal with seeing this incredible, together, really wonderful person that half the world was in love with, and then seeing this dribbling mess you could have no respect for. He wasn't like that all the time either, but when he went, he went. He wasn't aggressive, he was just unmanageable. He wouldn't know what city he was in."

Rock star dies after drinking bout

by John Stevens
 BOB SCOTT, lead singer with the top rock group AC/DC, was found dead last night in a friend's car parked outside a South London bar.
 Scott, 27, had been left to sleep in a room at Henry's Hotel and was found by a friend, Alisdair Stewart, who later found the victim apparently unresponsive.
 Scott was found on arrival at King's College Hospital. Police say there are no suspicious circumstances.
 Following Scott's identification by Dr. David Reid, East Strathclyde, a doctor told the

Stewart described the drinking bout which led to the 27-year-old's death. "I got up with him to go to the toilet. He had a bottle of scotch with him. When we got there he was drinking from a bottle straight in a glass of a drink."
 Stewart is a long guitarist, and had to get Scott to his feet and carry him to the car. "I just could not move him. I carried him with a blanket and took him to the car. I was low to get to my feet to see he could get in. I was low to get to my feet to see he could get in. I was low to get to my feet to see he could get in."

when I went out to the car and I saw something was wrong immediately. He had developed a liver problem when they were in North Queensland about six years ago. They were in the States and had some very bad liver problems. He was very fit and had a very good physique. He was very fit and had a very good physique. He was very fit and had a very good physique."



BOB SCOTT—found unresponsive in a car.

The announcement was made on April 8th. The new line-up spent a couple of weeks finding their feet with Lange, honing material for the album. Then they set sail for the Bahamas. The famous Compass Point Studio was chosen for tax reasons – plus Lange, who'd worked there before, felt its vibe would suit the band. That is, the vibe of the studio, not the island: For the spotty Young boys, a tropical paradise would mean nothing to do, except work. And Lange was a renowned marathon man in the studio. Born in South Africa, Lange was a musician raised on country sounds (which might explain his current incarnation as Shania's Twain's husband). Often credited with inventing lycra-metal in the '80s, going on to work with Def Leppard after AC/DC, Lange is today probably one of the richest producers in the world. But in 1980, both he and AC/DC were still just knocking on the door, so their relationship was mutually beneficial.

The vibe in the studio was convivial and confident, the band going out of their way to make Johnson feel at ease. Naturally, the singer was nervous, but he performed well considering only weeks earlier he was working under cars in the garage.

Highway to Hell succeeded because Lange made AC/DC sound bigger, smoothing out some of their rough edges. Back in Black succeeded because it sounded even bigger again. Within that massive, enveloping ambience, AC/DC could afford to restore some of their sharper edges. Highway to Hell may be a warmer, more well-rounded collection, but it's the vast dynamic crunch of Back in Black that makes it irresistible.

"Black in Black" was the first track the band recorded at Compass Point. A classic slice of self-aggrandisement as Scott did so well on songs like "TNT", "Back in Black" was a monster from the moment Lange got it down on tape. The album's eventual opening track, "Hell's Bells", is one of the slowest dirges AC/DC have recorded. Putting the brakes on the tempo was key to opening up the sound, but this was a

second side closes strongly – "Have a Drink on Me", "Shake a Leg" and "Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution" – it's the title-track and big single that are worth the price of admission alone.

With the assistance of Lange, AC/DC stripped it back even further. Back in Black is all about is the relationship between drums and guitars, and tension and release – not so much what's there as what's been left out. Although its rhythms and textures were more mechanistic – not as loose as, say, Led Zeppelin – Back in Black has a funkiness that other such pillars of metal, like Black Sabbath and Deep Purple, can only dream about. Johnson may have lacked the twinkle in his eye that made Scott so endearing, but the sheer drive of the material swept up everything in its path. These qualities that make AC/DC unique are also very Australian: rejection of artifice, essential modesty, grittiness and saltiness.

Scott, of course, was a larrikin, whose presence on Back in Black isn't so much an absence as a shadow or an embedding, like tattoo ink under skin. It's one thing though, to say that Back in Black is driven by the spirit of Scott, but something else again to find concrete elements of his input. One conspiracy theory refuses to go away, however: Scott hasn't received the credit he was owed for his contributions to Back in Black.

Malcolm and Angus, again, always maintained they weren't interested in "grave-robbing" any of Scott's musical ideas, just like they didn't want a clone of him – and, in Brian Johnson, they didn't get one. But given the way the renowned Young-Scott-Young writing team worked, it's hard to imagine that some of Scott's ideas didn't carry over to Back in Black, if only by osmosis.

At worst, the allegation is that there are songs and lyrics on the album actually written by Scott. Listening to Back in Black, it's possible to hear things that could be Scott's work – just as it is possible to

Angus phoned Malcolm. Ian Jeffery got a call at about midnight, and he and AC/DC manager Peter Mensch went to the hospital to identify Scott. And Malcolm phoned Bob's parents.

The news hit the Evening Standard on Wednesday afternoon and quickly bounced down to Australia. The band closed ranks and Malcolm and Angus accompanied Scott's body back to Perth.

AT THE FUNERAL, SCOTT'S PARENTS, Chick and Isa, implored Malcolm and Angus that they must go on, they couldn't quit the band. It was brier Scott's stoicism all round. But if it seems at all graceless that the Youngs began working on the new album just two days after returning to London – the fact is, the brothers have never been big on social niceties. AC/DC had made it to where they were thanks to a take-no-prisoners attitude, and they weren't about to start going soft now. Like their music, they were suspicious of airs and embellishments; there was an austerity about their insular regimen. So it was business as usual, even if their blood brother was still warm in the ground. The gift in all this was Scott's incoherence. His generosity of spirit, even in death, paled anything most people could muster in life.

In a rehearsal room in Pimlico, South London, Malcolm and Angus worked on song ideas. It was different, a bit weird without their leader but they could still

hear him, sort of, when they got pumping on a riff. He was, as he himself had said, "the lightning bolt in the middle" that charged the two poles on either side.

The band have said that they resisted management and record-label pressure to find a replacement for Scott. They couldn't have protested too strongly – within a fortnight, they were auditioning new singers in front of the eyes and ears of producer Mutt Lange and Peter Mensch. A list of nine names was drawn up and the call

"Unlike a lot of records that are huge in their time, Back in Black keeps on selling. It's the album Kurt Cobain used to teach himself guitar, the album Motörhead relied on to tune their PA."

went out. Former Easybeat Stevie Wright was never a contender, due to his drug problems; the same could be true of the Steve Marriott rumour. And the band was wise to reject former Heavy Metal Kid Gary Holton (he would die in '85). They were wiser still to take on Brian Johnson, who'd been languishing in Newcastle since his band, Geordie, broke up in 1977, and who impressed with versions of "Whole Lotta Rosie" and "Nutbush City Limits". "He's got the range," declared Lange. Scott wasn't four weeks gone and Johnson was named the new singer of AC/DC.

funeral march. AC/DC had made a tradition of 10-track records, five songs per side. Of the remaining four tunes on Side One, only "Shoot to Thrill" and "Giving the Dog a Bone" measure up; "What Do You Do For Money Honey?" and "Let Me Put My Love Into You" are quite ordinary. It's the double punch of Side Two's opening sequence – the title-track followed by "You Shook Me All Night Long" – that cements the album's impact. "You Shook Me All Night Long" might be one of the few pop songs that AC/DC have done; while "Back in Black" is still the Greatest Riff of All Time. The

hear other things that quite clearly aren't. "Some songs on Back in Black," says Anna Baba. "I could have explained too well, with much confusion and tears. They who call themselves mates and declare they don't do it, but have done it, with cool cheek – sneaky! 'Shake a Leg', 'Rock and Roll Ain't Noise Pollution', 'Have a Drink on Me' and others [are] obviously his, no-one else's."

Scott had already sat in on rehearsals for "Have a Drink on Me" and "Back in Black". It seems unlikely he wrote his own epitaph (although some people still seem

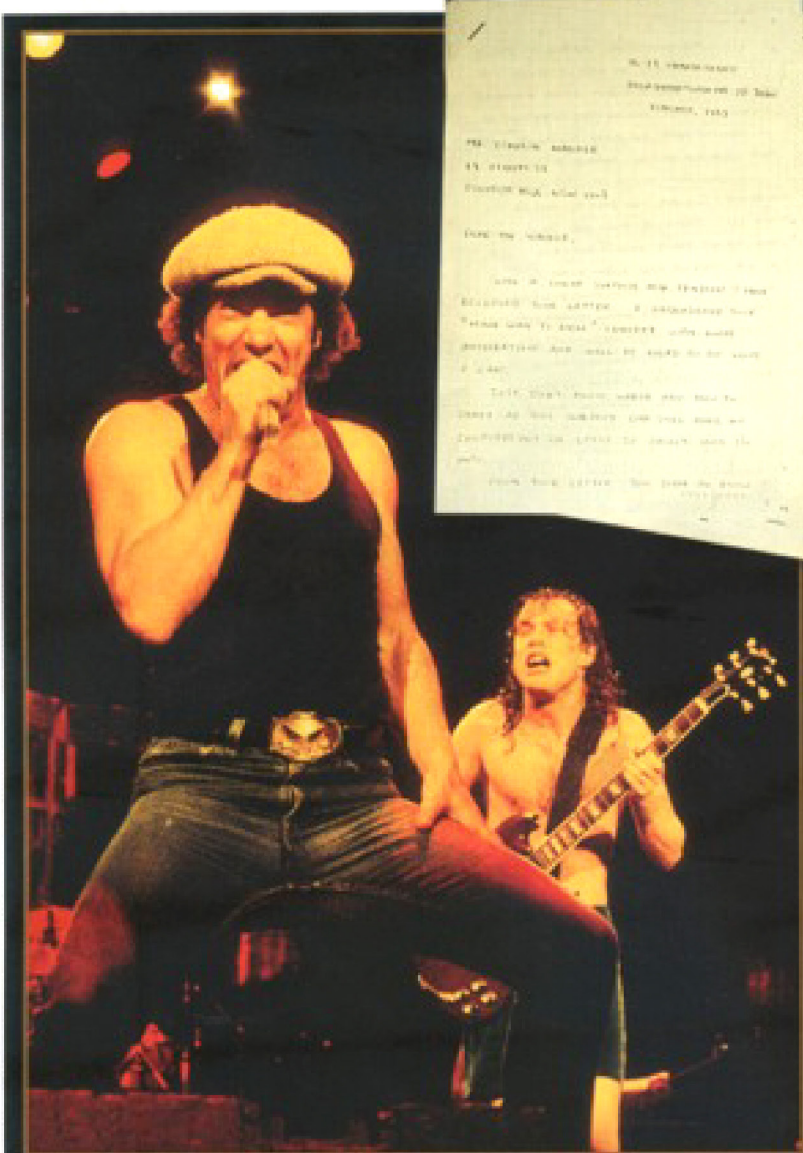
After opening the tour in Perth at the Entertainment Centre on February 13th, at which gig Scott's family were guests of honour, AC/DC moved on to Adelaide to play Memorial Drive on February 17th. On Thursday the 19th, a year to the day that Scott had died, a typical late summer storm rolled in over Sydney. The next day, when the gig – and tour wrap party – was scheduled to go on at the Showgrounds, the weather had turned bitter and the show was postponed. The concert was postponed on Saturday night, too. But when it finally kicked off on the Sunday night, it truly went off. After all, Angus would get itchy fingers if his routine was interrupted, and he doesn't know how to give less than 130 per cent.

Australian fans took Johnson straight to heart. But as warmly as he was received, as celebratory as the crowd and the band's experience was, there was still something... incomplete. The absence of the prodigal son was conspicuous. There was the chiming echo of Scott in every song, note and beat the band played on their Australian tour.

Still, after the Sydney performance came another trophy night. Everyone was there, except Scott and Angus. AC/DC's backstage set-up now included a hospitality area in the form of a complete, mock English pub. Johnson liked an ale or 10, and so did Malcolm. The band were presented with a massive 40 Gold and Platinum albums in front of the cream of the Australian rock scene. And each industry figure there had some form of investment in the band's past life with Scott. For example, there was the link with the support bands, Swanee and the Angels: Swanee frontman John Swan is Jimmy Barnes' half-brother, and both of them had tried to fill the spot of Scott; the Angels were another Adelaide band, virtually discovered by Scott after he first met them jamming with Peter Head. For many of these people, AC/DC's backstage celebration was bittersweet, a sort of homecoming without a King. It was a little like the fake pub backstage; you didn't need props like that when Scott was around, because he was a walking, talking, one-man party.

Mark Evans was there, too, and he knew how it felt to be left behind by AC/DC. Evans had played bass in the band between 1975 and '78, on TNT, Dirty Deeds and Let There Be Rock, and he was a loyal foot-soldier – he knew what it was like to have to carry an inebriated Scott home. But when the bass player's services were no longer required, he was oh-so-seamlessly replaced by Cliff Williams. For people like Evans, there was a sense of a wall being up around the machine (he eventually won an out-of-court settlement concerning unpaid royalties).

Angus just disappeared. His absence backstage was almost as conspicuous as Scott's. He'd slipped away to have a quiet cup of tea and a fag before going to bed, or maybe he was painting. For him, it was just business as usual. Or was it?



Coming on Like a Hurricane

Making their triumphant return to Sydney Showgrounds on February 23rd, 1981, AC/DC came armed with props, including a massive purpose-built "hell's bell", and a light show they claimed rivalled KISS. Most importantly, they returned with the distinctive razor voice of Brian Johnson. Inset: Scott's Japanese girlfriend Anna Baba's 45-page account of his last days, sent to Clinton Walker in 1993.

"Highway to Hell is a warmer, more well-rounded collection, but it's the vast dynamic crunch of *Back in Black* that makes it irresistible."

The following day, the band had to fly to Brisbane for the first of two nights at Festival Hall. It was here that the AC/DC machine started to unravel. A couple of cars got torched after the gig, Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Peterson's storm-troopers were remarkably caught off guard. But that wasn't going to happen in Melbourne. AC/DC's appearance in the Victorian capital sparked controversy,

with police surrounding the Myer Music Bowl, intent on nipping in the bud any public drunkenness or petty vandalism. On the first night, they made 30 arrests as the crowd dispersed after the show.

On the second night, AC/DC played as if cowed, but that didn't stop police from arresting another 30 concert-goers. For the band, there was a genuine sense of déjà vu about proceedings; it was another

storm in a teacup. Once again, AC/DC left the country with no plans to head back anytime soon. Indeed, they wouldn't touch down in Australia for seven years, at least in a professional capacity (both Malcolm and Angus still call Australia home.)

Considering the band's tumultuous time since Scott's death, and the trouble that awaited them in Australia, you would be forgiven for expecting that AC/DC might take a break, just to catch a breath. But it wasn't to be: Malcolm and Angus were relentless, pushing their machine harder and harder – and that's how it all finally caught up with them.

After Australia, AC/DC never really went off the road. They continued touring the U.S. from March till June '81, and in July went to Paris to start recording a *Back in Black* follow-up with Lange. The sessions became fraught. The band was drying up, running aground. The album that resulted, *For Those About to Rock* – which was out even before Christmas that year – was almost an empty vessel. It was the first AC/DC album that didn't outsell its predecessor and, as a consequence, the last to be produced by Lange.

If there was ever a sense of insularity about AC/DC, it had now escalated into full-blown paranoia. For drummer Phil Rudd, it was never the same after Scott died, and he began to go off the rails. Subsequent AC/DC albums like 1983's *Flick of the Switch* and 1985's *Fly on the Wall* were even worse, clearly lacking the quality songs the band seemed to turn out at will when Scott was alive. The band were falling apart. After sacking Lange, Malcolm and Angus kicked off a purging of the unit, sacking Rudd, manager Mensch and others.

Even if AC/DC had recovered from this mid-'80s nadir and found a born-again energy, they've never quite scaled the heights of their first seven years and first seven albums. The guts of their live set, to this day, is drawn from the six records that Scott made with the band, plus his post-humous *Back in Black*. Only occasional tracks from the subsequent 25 years – like "Thunderstruck" or "Who Made Who" – have remained AC/DC standards.

Melbourne City Council renamed one of its bluestone back alleys AC/DC Lane in 2004 – the band got the same honour from a town in Spain, and snared a star on Hollywood Boulevard – and now there's talk of a public monument to Scott in Fremantle. The coach of the Fremantle Dockers AFL team, Chris Connelly, is supporting the push; he uses Scott's songs to inspire his players. So Scott may be dead, but he's a long way from gone.

CLINTON WALKER is the author of *Highway to Hell: The Life and Death of AC/DC Legend Bon Scott* (Picador).