

PRANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

IMPISH BEHAVIOR FROM THE WORLD OF ROCK

BY CHRIS COLLINGWOOD

NO one enters the music business so they can settle down in the suburbs and act like grownups. This month, in observance of April Fools Day, we look at some famous hijinks throughout music history.

1967: Keith Moon's exploding drum kit

The Who drummer had a legendary affinity for gags, pranks, and acts of wanton destruction. Along with throwing TVs out windows and trashing hotel rooms, Moon was in the habit of putting smoke bombs in his drum kit, which he would detonate at the end of the show as guitarist Pete Townshend smashed his guitar. But for the band's first American TV appearance, on the *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, Moon loaded wayyyy more boom-boom than usual. The result was a blinding, deafening blast that shook the studio and left Townshend deaf in one ear. Which I guess is hilarious.

1973: Elton John rushes Iggy Pop in a gorilla suit

Imagine your worst drug freak-out and then imagine you had the super-human ability to ingest as many narcotics as Iggy Pop. You're playing in a small, crowded club in Atlanta and the noise and energy are overwhelming, when suddenly out of the blurry confusion there's a gorilla coming straight at you. You can barely remember

your own name, and for a split second the thought crosses your mind that maybe you're on safari in Uganda and forgot. For a brief, crazy moment, Pop and bandmates panicked; violence was averted when the future Sir Elton removed the gorilla head.

1992: Megan Jasper punks the Gray Lady

Fake news! Today the CEO of indie label Sub Pop Records, Megan Jasper was a 25-year-old receptionist for the Seattle company when the *New York Times* called, wanting to know more about this "grunge" craze that had put her city in the spotlight. Specifically, was there a slang spoken by grunge scenesters? Jasper concocted a lexicon of 100 percent bullshit words and phrases on the spot, which the *Times* ran in its entirety. My favorites: "bound-and-hagged" (staying home on Friday or Saturday night) and "swingin' on the flippity-flop" (hanging out).

Three-Year Span: Michael Jackson prank-calls Russell Crowe

While promoting movies in recent years, Crowe has told a strange tale: the King of Pop used to repeatedly prank-call him, somehow reaching the actor in hotel rooms where he was staying incognito. He did this for "two or three fucking years," Crowe good-naturedly told the *Guardian* in 2015—despite the fact that the two had

never met. The singer even pulled the, "Is Mr. Wall there? No? Are there any Walls there? No? Then what's holding up the roof?" The most surprising part of this story might be how relatively normal it seems—though maybe more for a teenage boy than a man in his forties.

2014: Arcade Fire bring out "Phat Dunk" at Coachella

The Dead Milkmen's 1987 song "Instant Club Hit (You'll Dance to Anything)" was an awful drum-machine loop with cheesy sound effects and a half-assed rap whose moderate success ironically proved its point. Years later at Coachella, Canadian band Arcade Fire made a similar statement by bringing onstage two guys pretending to be electronic duo Daft Punk (who wear helmets obscuring their faces). The impostors swayed slowly to a half-speed version of Daft Punk's "Get Lucky," fooling seemingly everyone, despite not even bothering to touch the electronic equipment in front of them. To be fair, that would have fooled me, too. What do electronic musicians do after they press "play"? 🎧

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