



“For Those About To Rock”:

The History of AC/DC

From 1976 - Present

By: Olivia Bower

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Letter From the Author:

Many people have discovered AC/DC through their parent’s obsession with the band. However, growing up in East Tennessee with a very conservative family, I was not aware of the band until my middle school years. I found the band by simply doing a YouTube search to see what all the fuss was about. After listening to the *Back in Black* album, I was immediately hooked. At the time, my parents were very strict on the music that I was allowed to listen to, and AC/DC did not make the list of appropriate bands. Despite my parent’s disapproval, I would sit in my room with my headphones on listening to their albums over and over again. To avoid being caught, I would have two tabs open on my browser, one with a Christian album playing and one with AC/DC playing. I did this so if I heard my parents opening my door I could quickly close down the page of electrifying music and pretend to be listening to hymns the entire time. My love for AC/DC was never meant to be an act of rebellion, but that is what it ended up becoming. My parents never found out that I was an AC/DC fan until I was eighteen years old and living on my own. They were not mad, but they were shocked. I highly recommend anyone who has not heard an AC/DC song before to check some of their work out. I can not guarantee that you will like it, but I can promise you that

How the Band Name Came Together

Angus, Malcom, and George Young were born in Scotland and then moved to Sydney, Australia. Malcom and Angus Young started to gain interest in music at an early age, taking after their brother George. When Angus and Malcom decided to form a band they created a band name that would show the electric energy of the band's music. After their sister, Margaret, saw the abbreviation on her sewing machine that read "AC/DC" meaning "alternating current/direct current", it sparked the band's interest in the name AC/DC.

The Early Years

In November of 1973, Malcolm and Angus Young formed AC/DC and Larry Kriedt, Dave Evans, and Colin Burgess joined them. The first major gig that the band played was at a New Years' Eve bash at Bondi Lifesaver¹. Soon after their first gig, the Young brothers started looking to replace Dave Evans, their lead vocalist, because he did not show enough rock in him. The band's first manager, Dennis Laughlin, started replacing Evans on stage because Laughlin had a more desirable sound, which led to more of a falling out between the band and Dave Evans.

In September of 1974, a friend of George Young replaced Dave Evans; his name was Bon Scott. After Scott joined the band, they re-released "Can I Sit Next to You Girl" on their 1975 album *T.N.T.* By October of 1974, the band recorded their album *High Voltage* in an astonishing ten days. The next few months, the band started to stabilize and featured the Malcom Young and Angus Young on guitar, Bon Scott on vocals, Mark Evans on bass, and Phill Rudd on

¹ A beach in New South Wales, Australia.

the drums. Later in 1974, the band released their first major rock hit called “It’s a Long Way to the Top”. In the following years, AC/DC became one of Australia’s biggest rock groups.

International Success

In 1976, AC/DC signed an international deal with Atlantic Records and began their tour through Europe. Their tour was strategically named ‘Lock Up Your Daughters Summer Tour’. During their international success, they supported some other classic rock acts such as Black Sabbath, Kiss, Aerosmith, and Styx. The first album to be offered worldwide was a 1976 blend of their two previous albums *High Voltage* and *T.N.T.* This album was titled *High Voltage* after their second album. This album has sold over three million copies worldwide and has gained the following of the British punk audience. Their next international album, entitled *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap*, was released in 1976. Unfortunately for U.S. citizens, the *Dirty Deeds* album was not released in the United States until 1981.

In 1977, AC/DC started recording their next album *Let There Be Rock*. Once they finished recording, the band made the decision to fire their bassist, Mark Evans, to pursue someone that would be able to also sing backup vocals. Evans was replaced by Cliff Williams. During their international success, AC/DC inspired the appearance of the British heavy metal wave in the early 1970s. This wave included bands such as Saxon and Iron Maiden.

AC/DC’s first American appearance was through a Michigan radio station in 1977. The radio station’s manager hired AC/DC to play at the Flint’s Capitol Theater. The success of the band continued to flourish in the United States. In 1979, the band released the LP *Highway to Hell*, which broke into the US. Top 100, and peaked at number 17.

The Death of Bon Scott

The year was 1980 and AC/DC had started working on their next album *Back in Black*. However, Bon Scott, lead vocals, passed away due to pulmonary aspiration of vomit from a night of heavy drinking. The official cause of death was listed as “acute alcohol poisoning”. Scott’s family had his burial in Fremantle, Western Australia, where they migrated to when Scott was only a young boy. There were some inconsistencies regarding the story of his death which sparked some conspiracy theories that he was murdered or that he died from an asthma attack instead of alcohol poisoning.



The Band’s Rebirth

After the death of lead vocalist Bon Scott, the band considered calling it quits. Fortunately, Scott’s parents told the band members that he would have wanted them to go on without him. After these words of encouragement, the band started looking for the newest band member. There were many artists considered for the job, but in the end the band ended up choosing ex-Geordie² singer Brian Johnson. During his audition, Brian Johnson sang “Whole Lotta Rosie” from *Let There Be Rock* and Ike & Tina Turner’s “Nutbush City Limits”. It only took the band a few days to agree on Brian Johnson as their new frontman.



With the new addition of Brian Johnson, the band started back up on finishing the *Back in Black* album. The recording process started only a few months after the death of Bon Scott.

² Geordie was a glam rock band from England in the 1970s.

The band did not know that this album would be their biggest hit with famed songs like “Hells Bells”, “You Shook Me All Night Long”, “Rock and Roll Ain’t Noise Pollution”, and the title track of “Back in Black”. After the release of the album, it hit the No. 1 in the United Kingdom and No. 4 in the United States. In the United States it remained on the *Billboard 200* album chart for 131 consecutive weeks.

In their next album *For Those About to Rock We Salute You* , the band also hit the top 20 in the UK and the US. Following the release of this album, AC/DC split with their record company in order to get back in touch with their original sound.

Phil Rudd’s Exit and the Fall From Fame

Phil Rudd, drummer for AC/DC, battled with drug and alcohol addiction. Rudd’s addiction put a strain on the relationship that he had with the band, in particular with Malcolm Young. After a physical confrontation, Rudd was fired. When Rudd was fired, the band was in the middle of recording another album, so B.J. Wilson was



brought in to help finish the album. However, Rudd’s drumming was used in the end result and B.J. Wilson was replaced by Simon Wright in 1983.

Following Phil Rudd’s exit and the band leaving their record company, AC/DC produced two albums that were not celebrated as their previous albums. The first album was *Flick of the Switch* (1983) and was described by critics as unmemorable. Their next album, produced by the Young brothers, *Fly on the Wall* (1985) was labeled as directionless.

Back in the Public's Eye

In 1988, AC/DC recorded their album *Blow Up Your Video*. This album reunited the original producers, Harry Vanda and George Young. This album relaunched AC/DC's popularity and reached No. 2 on the UK charts, which was the band's highest ranking since their 1980 album *Back in Black*. The album featured songs like "That's the Way I Wanna Rock 'n' Roll" and "Heatseeker". In February of 1988, AC/DC started their *Blow Up Your Video* world tour. In April of 1988, Malcolm Young announced that he would be taking a break from the tour to recover from his alcoholism. His nephew, Stevie Young, took his place on the tour. After the tour, Simon Wright, drummer, left the band to work on an upcoming album with the band Dio. Chris Slade, former drummer of Manfred Mann's Earth Band,³ ended up replacing Simon, and helped the Young brothers continue working on their next album.

The album *Razor's Edge* was released in 1990 and sparked another huge rise in the band's popularity. This album featured songs like "Thunderstruck" and "Are You Ready". During the 1991 *Razor's Edge* tour, many of their songs were recorded for their *Live* album. In January of 1991, at one of the *Razor's Edge* tour concerts, three fans were killed trying to rush the stage in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In 1994, Angus and Malcolm Young invited former band member Phil Rudd for collaborations and Phil Rudd ended up rejoining the band. After the return of Rudd, AC/DC recorded their next album, *Ballbreaker*, that would be released in 1995. In 1997, the band released a box collection of four previous albums entitled *Bonfire*. They also released two

³ A popular English rock band in the 1970s.

movies, *Live from the Atlantic Studios* and *Let There Be Rock: The Movie*. In the early 2000s, many of the AC/DC albums were digitally remastered and re-released to the public.

Black Ice

In 2008, AC/DC released their album *Black Ice* that was their first studio release in eight years. The album was exclusively released on the band's website and at Walmart and Sam's Club in the United States. This album included the hit "Rock 'n' Roll Train". *Black Ice* ended up No. 1 on album charts in 29 different countries. The Black Ice tour was extremely successful all over the world, but had to have several cancellations because Brian Johnson went into surgery for ulcers. After Johnson's return, the band released the album *Backtracks* which was a collection of studio and live performances that were not previously released.

A Change in the Band

In April 2014, Malcolm Young became seriously ill and was unable to perform. Later in the year, the AC/DC announced that Malcolm would be retiring. In August of 2014, AC/DC confirmed rumors that Stevie Young, Malcolm Young's nephew, would be replacing Malcolm in the studio and on tour. At this time, AC/DC also revealed the name of their next album, *Rock or Bust*, which was to be produced that same year.

Also in August of 2014, drummer Phil Rudd released his first solo album, *Head Job*. After the release of his first solo album, Phil Rudd parted ways with the band after he was charged with drug possession, threatening to commit a murder, and attempt of murder. In November of 2014, AC/DC was photographed with former drummer Chris Slade at a charity event and later confirmed that Slade would be returning to the band to replace Rudd. In April of

2015, Phil Rudd plead guilty in New Zealand for drug possession and threatening to kill his former assistant. He was immediately removed from the band and Slade officially took his place. In July of 2015, Rudd was sentenced to eight months of home detention at his home in New Zealand.

In March of 2016, the band announced that their final ten concerts of the Rock or Bust World Tour would be cancelled because Brian Johnson's doctor instructed him to immediately stop touring. Johnson faced severe hearing loss and was told that if he continued, then he would eventually become deaf. Many speculated that the hearing loss came from his 36 years being the lead singer for AC/DC, but he denied those claims on *The Howard Stern Show* and stated that it was due to his love for auto racing that caused him to have a ruptured ear drum. This news lead to his departure from AC/DC that was less than amicable.

In April of 2016, AC/DC made a statement announcing that Axl Rose, frontman for Guns 'n' Roses, would be joining the band as their new lead vocalist temporarily. AC/DC then rescheduled their previously cancelled shows and finished the Rock or Bust Tour with Axl Rose as their new frontman. On September 22, 2016, AC/DC's record label, Alternative Nation, stated that Axl Rose had been hired full-time as the new lead singer. Axl Rose has since been praised by magazines like *Rolling Stones* as being the "perfect match for AC/DC.

AC/DC Awards & Recognition

March 2000 – Leganes, Spain named a street in honor of the band
March 2003 – AC/DC was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

May 2003 – The Young brothers accepted the Ted Albert Award for Outstanding Service to Australian Music

October 2004 – Corporation Lane in Melbourne was renamed AC/DC Lane

2007 – AC/DC sold over 1.3 million CDs in the U.S.

2009 – AC/DC became the fifth-best-selling band in US history

November 2012 – AC/DC albums were made available on iTunes

April 2010 – AC/DC released the soundtrack for the movie *Iron Man 2*

2016 – AC/DC's album *Back in Black* is still the second-best-selling album worldwide

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