

Rock and Roll Legends: Exploding the Myths

By E.O.P. of RockScene Magazine

It's amazing how people can make their idols seem almost superhuman. Some of the most respected performing artists both past and present have been glamorized to where they seem to have achieved immortality. The die-hard fans will swear by these "artists" from concert to concert, album to album. They'll litter the stage with their undergarments. They'll do anything necessary to get backstage. Why does this phenomenon exist? That's the subject of a whole other article which I am not capable of writing -- I'll leave that one to the psychologists.

However, what I do specialize in is music, if not informally. A strong background in many styles of music, many years of professional performance in all styles (including everything from rock to metal to Latin to classical,) several songwriting and performance awards, and the open-mindedness to accept all forms of music for what they are put me in the position to bluntly state my opinion. In addition, my "young" age of twenty-two will hopefully give me the edge of "hip," so I can't be told that I'm just an old man who can't accept rock as a viable form of music, or some inane bull defecation like that.

So essentially, what I'm going to do is give you the opinions I have concerning some of the untouchable "deities" of rock 'n' roll. Who am I to state my opinions? I'm a citizen of a country that gives me that right. Besides, I invite you to disagree; opinion is -- after all -- opinion. However, I would be entirely inclined to dismiss anyone's opinion whose main line of logic is, "Guns and F---ing Roses F---ing Rulz!" A statement thus is not entirely unlike an admission of utter stupidity. I choose to evaluate the following "artists" from a musical, entertainment, and overall status as homo-sapiens standpoint.

With that said, let's go on.

Elvis Presley: Okay, here's a man with good looks and sideburns, and he possesses a vocal prowess that not too many people find totally undesirable. Granted, his voice is powerful to many people. And sure, he taught himself a few chords and got a record deal.

So basically, this man sings, gyrates, and blows insincere kisses to his adoring fans, all to music generally *written by someone else*. For this undeniably God-like feat (smell the sarcasm), we crown him the "King of Rock 'n' Roll." If that's all it takes, I'd like to know how *I* can audition for the position. And, considering Elvis is no longer with us (for reasons unspecified -- but hey, we know what Elvis was up to) I can suggest a few people that could -- following the same logic by which Elvis was crowned -- plausibly replace him as "The King." They both have the voice, the looks, and the writers to do everything that Elvis did. Who are they? Barry Manilow and Michael Bolton. (Now if Barry could only sneer...)

Nirvana: A better name for this band would be "Formula." The only differentiation between the chorus and verse riffs in the twaddle that they release is the absence or presence of distortion. And those are the only riffs in the song (see: "Smells Like Teen Spirit, Lithium.) The lyrics are spoken so incoherently that they virtually disprove their own existence.

A twelve-year old with a Sears guitar and two lessons under his belt could write a Nirvana album in a single afternoon. And I suspect that is what happened.

Jimi Hendrix: Start with a guy who's stoned out of his mind --reasonably acceptable at the time -- who can't even figure out which end of his guitar is up (in case you didn't know, Jimi played his guitar upside-down. I guess he rode the small bus to school.). Mix in an overly diluted knowledge of chord theory, predominantly based in the key of E. Add to the mix a repertoire of songs that differ only slightly from each other. Liberally add "feel" (the most common trait usually attributed to guitarists who can't play.) Toss in a small pinch of talent, and a voice that has a range of approximately half a screaming octave. Stir well. Serve lukewarm with a garnish of lyrics that make sense only if you're under the influence of a foreign chemical stimulant.

Guns and Roses:Here's a band with (if nothing else) a shrewd marketing executive at the helm. The release of a double album of predominantly substandard material -- in separate boxes, so the kids would theoretically be able to afford them both -- just when the band was beginning to achieve widespread popularity is one of the most creative and profitable ventures in rock to date (though thankfully not doing as well as predicted.) However, it seems that way back when GnR started, talent was not a priority.

Guns boasts a proudly law-abiding "frontman" who sings as if he has a fork shoved into his throat. Here's a man with so many calluses on his vocal chords (incidentally, they actually exist -- they're called "nodes"-- ask your doctor) that he has to cancel shows because his voice has fallen and can't get up. Not that it was that far up to begin with. Granted, the vain and egotistical Axl Rose is a very talented stage performer -- the city of St. Louis will attest to his ability to get a crowd moving.

The guitarist, Slash -- a man with a slang verb for a name -- also has few redeeming qualities. For a full diagnosis, see my section on Jimi; just subtract a healthy portion of melanin from the recipe. ("But dude, he has so much *feel*.")

Izzy was not smart to leave the band. It's tough to believe, but the material that he and his "Juu Hounds" are writing is worse than the drivel that GnR was putting out. The bassist can't even speak a

complete sentence. But that's okay, because they're all under such heavy sedation that nobody in the band knows the difference. (Apparently, so are most of their fans.)

U2: Clangety-Clangety-clang-clang-clangety... Jangle jangle... Rattle and Yawn. 'nuff said.

Madonna: There is one positive thing I can say about Madonna: The woman is a genius. She pulled off a feat that Lita Ford only started to realize. She managed to take a modicum of talent, half-decent looks, a pair of above-average breasts, and some phenomenal marketing strategies -- and now she has the liquid assets to buy a small country. She can't sing, she can't act -- and let's be realistic, she's really not that attractive from the neck up. But the multi-maned marketing marvel achieved something that a more attractive (though somewhat less talented) Samantha Fox couldn't pull off: she turned her ASSets into a gold mine.

INXS: Okay, here's a band whose songs all sound the same. If you don't believe me, take any two songs that hit it big from *Kick* and layer them on top of each other. Only the musically impaired can't see that the songs are virtually identical.

To put it musically, the INXS formula revolves around a repeated riff that stays firmly on the root of the key. Consistency is a good factor in popular music, but sheer repetition is the mark of either a sellout or a complete lack of originality. Technically, they're a one hit wonder -- they just have more than one hit.

Am I opinionated? *Oh, yeah.* But my opinions are reasonably justified. "He's a god" just doesn't cut it anymore. It's time that the really talented bands were recognized, and time for the ones who have been revered for so long to be buried where they stand. I do not write this to specifically offend the fans of these particular "artists." However, the time has come for the myths to be refuted, and if I have to ruffle a few feathers to make my point, so be it. As I said, feel free to disagree -- but realize just one thing if you do: You're probably wrong.