



**APPENDIX**  
**The 27 Club: Why Age 27 Is Important**  
by Michael Owen  
(Revised 2018)  
Amazon [ebook](#) and [paperback](#)

As an Appendix to *The 27 Club: Why Age 27 Is Important* I have curated some information about the members of the 27 Club and other “Clubs”. They are mostly rock stars, but not all. Feel free to share.

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## THE 27 CLUB

### JIMI HENDRIX

27 years 9 months 22 days, November 27, 1942 – September 18, 1970.

American guitarist, singer, songwriter and record producer. He died in a London hotel room after asphyxiating on his own vomit. The coroner recorded an “open verdict,” stating that the cause was “barbiturate intoxication and inhalation of vomit.” This was likely a result of combining sleeping pills with wine. His German girlfriend Monika Danneman (June 24, 1945 – April 5, 1996, 50 years 9 months 12 days, illumination of choices and decisions of death and change) found his body. She inherited Hendrix’s estate. In 1996, in the face of a libel action, Dannemann committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning.

The quality of the puer both light and dark is beautifully captured by Pete Townshend’s homage to Jimi Hendrix, voted No. 1 of the top 100 guitarists of all time by Rolling Stone. He said:

I felt The Who were in some ways quite a silly little group, that they were indeed my art-school installation. They were constructed ideas and images and some cool little pop songs. Some of the music was good, but a lot of what the Who did was very tongue-in-cheek, or we reserved the right to pretend it was tongue-in-cheek if the audience laughed at it. The Who would always look like we didn't really mean it, like it didn't really matter. You know, you smash a guitar, you walk off and go, "Fuck it all. It's all a load of tripe anyway." That really was the beginning of that punk consciousness. And then Jimi arrived with proper music."<sup>1</sup>

On August 29, 1970, the day before the Isle of Wight music festival (his last ever gig in the UK), Hendrix told UK music paper *Melody Maker*:

It's all turned full circle. I'm back right now to where I started. I've given this era of music everything. I still sound the same, my music's still the same, and I can't think of anything new to add to it... When the last American tour finished earlier this year, I just wanted to go away a while and forget everything. I wanted to just do recording, and see if I could write something. Then I started thinking. Thinking about the future. Thinking that this era of music—sparked off by The Beatles—had come to an end. Something new has got to come and Jimi Hendrix will be there. I want a big band. I don't mean three harps and 14 violins, I mean a big band full of competent musicians that I can conduct and write for. And with the music we will paint pictures of earth and space, so that the listener can be taken somewhere.... They are getting their minds ready now. Like me, they are going back home, getting fat and making themselves ready for the next trip.

After the Isle of Wight Hendrix launched in to a week-long, six-concert European tour. Chas Chandler, former bassist for The Animals, who had managed Hendrix to stardom but parted ways with him the previous year, said of his Gothenburg concert, "He was wrecked. He'd start a song, get into the solo section and then he wouldn't even remember what song they were playing at the time. It was really awful to watch."

"I'm not sure I'll live to be 28 years-old," Hendrix told journalist Ann Bjorndal just before a disastrous concert in Aarhus, Denmark. "I mean, at the moment I feel I have nothing more to give musically. I will not be around on this planet any more, unless I have a wife and children—otherwise I've got nothing to live for."

At Aarhus, with Hendrix in the grip of a cold, he cut short his set after only three numbers (he had only ever stopped a gig once before). A girlfriend, Kirsten Nefer, recalled that when she met him earlier that day he was "staggering... acting in a funny way" and said to her, "I don't want you to see me like this." Nefer says that he was unable to even tune his guitar before going onstage. Backstage, the venue's manager, Otto Fewser, claimed that "Hendrix collapsed into my arms and we sat him upon a chair". The gig cancelled, Hendrix headed back to his hotel where he spoke once again to Anne Bjorndal. "I love reading fairy tales," he told her, "Hans Christian Andersen and Winnie the Pooh. Fairy tales are full of fantasy and they appeal to your imagination." Bjorndal claims that Jimi then started crawling around, acting out Winnie the Pooh. "Winnie the Pooh is searching. It's winter and the tracks are easy to follow and, oh, now the seasons have changed. I've lost the track...."

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1 [www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/100-greatest-guitarists-of-all-time-19691231/jimi-hendrix-19691231](http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/100-greatest-guitarists-of-all-time-19691231/jimi-hendrix-19691231). The full homage is worth a read.

On September 6, 1970 Hendrix played what was to be his last gig at The Love + Peace Festival on the island of Fehmarn, off the coast of northern Germany in the Baltic Sea. After heavy rain and gale-force winds the day before, the last two songs Hendrix ever played live were Purple Haze and a suitably stormy version of Voodoo Child (Slight Return). The final lines of the song, and the final words that Hendrix would ever sing in public, were:

If I don't see you no more in this world  
I'll meet you in the next one and don't be late, don't be late.<sup>2</sup>

### **BRIAN JONES**

27 years 4 months 5 days, February 28, 1942 – July 3, 1969.

Founder and guitarist for the Rolling Stones. Drowned in the swimming pool of his home in Cotchford Farm, Hartfield, Sussex (once owned by Winnie-the-Pooh author A. A. Milne). The coroner's report recorded "Death by misadventure" and noted his liver and heart were significantly enlarged by drug and alcohol abuse. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards eventually became successful as a songwriting duo and took over as Stones' leaders. After a second arrest for marijuana possession, sporadic contributions to the Stones, substance abuse and mood swings, Jones was told by the other members of the band that Mick Taylor would replace him and that a tour of the US would go ahead without him. He died a month later.

### **JIM MORRISON**

27 years 6 months 25 days, December 8, 1943 – July 3, 1971.

Lyricist and singer of The Doors. Courting the romance of death, he drank and drugged heavily. He was the anarchic-poet-philosopher reading Rimbaud, Blake, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Kerouac and Artaud. The French writer Louis-Ferdinand Celine's *Journey to the End of the Night* can be heard in his song "End of the Night." Morrison took on the persona of the wild child and Linda Ashcroft entitled her book, *Wild Child: My Life With Jim Morrison*. Patti Smith said, "The difference between Jim Morrison and Elvis Presley is that Elvis had humility. I don't think Jim had it."<sup>3</sup>

His angry relationship with his father and his defiant rejection of his father's authority were well-known at the time. At the height of Morrison's fame and at the height of the Vietnam War protests, his father, a Rear Admiral in the US Navy, was the commander of US aircraft carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Morrison's song "The End" began as a goodbye song when he was breaking up with a girlfriend. The spoken part begins, "The killer awoke before dawn / He put his boots on..." This section then reaches a dramatic climax when he says, "Father/ Yes son?/ I want to kill you/ Mother, I want to..." (with the next words screamed out unintelligibly). Ray Manzarek, the keyboard player for the Doors explained: "He was giving voice in a rock 'n' roll setting to the Oedipus complex, at the time a widely discussed tendency in Freudian psy-

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2 <http://archive.classicrockmagazine.com/view/august-2007/50/classic-rock-unearths-eyewitness-accounts-and-unseen-pics-of-jimi-hendrixs-last-gig-a-festival>

3 <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/lists/100-greatest-singers-of-all-time-19691231/jim-morrison-19691231>

chology. He wasn't saying he wanted to do that to his own mom and dad. He was re-enacting a bit of Greek drama. It was theatre!"

In John Densmore's autobiography "Riders On The Storm" he recalls when Jim explained the meaning: "At one point Jim said to me during the recording session, and he was tearful, and he shouted in the studio, "Does anybody understand me?" And I said yes, I do, and right then and there we got into a long discussion and Jim just kept saying over and over kill the father, fuck the mother, and essentially it boils down to this, kill all those things in yourself which are instilled in you and are not of yourself, they are alien concepts which are not yours, they must die. Fuck the mother is very basic, and it means get back to essence, what is reality, what is, fuck the mother is very basically mother, mother-birth, real, you can touch it, it's nature, it can't lie to you."

Fed up with the pressures of his celebrity status, Morrison and his long-time girlfriend Pamela Courson moved to Paris in March 1971 and took up residence in a house formerly owned by poet Arthur Rimbaud. Four months later Courson found him dead in the bathroom of their apartment. No autopsy was done but a heroin overdose was suspected. Three years later on April 25, 1974 Courson was found dead in her Los Angeles apartment of a heroin overdose. She was 27.

## **JANIS JOPLIN**

27 years 8 months 15 days, January 19, 1943 - October 4, 1970.

Singer (Down On Me, Summertime, Piece of My Heart, Ball 'n' Chain, Try (Just A Little Bit Harder), Mercedes Benz, Me and Bobby McGee). Big Brother and the Holding Company, The Kozmic Blues Band, The Full Tilt Boogie Band, and Pearl.

While at high school in Port Arthur, Texas, Joplin said, "I was a misfit. I read, I painted, I didn't hate niggers." As a teen, she became overweight and had bad acne. Other kids would taunt her and call her "pig," "freak" or "creep." On the Dick Cavett show in 1970, when asked if she had been popular in high school, she said that her schoolmates "laughed me out of class, out of town and out of the state." While at the University of Texas she was nominated "Ugliest Man on Campus." She was bisexual and had a life-long sense of inferiority she attempted to compensate for by having relationships with some of the most desirable men of the time—including Joe Namath, Kris Kristofferson, Jim Morrison, and Dick Cavett.

At age 20 she left for San Francisco "just to get away from Texas." Her drug use increased, and she acquired a reputation as a speed freak and occasional heroin user. She was a heavy drinker throughout her career, mostly her favourite Southern Comfort.

In early 1965 she was skeletal and emaciated. She returned to Port Arthur and tried desperately to fit in, longing for the "white picket fence" life that she talked of often. She stopped drugs and alcohol, wore modest dresses and a beehive hairdo, and enrolled as a sociology major. She became engaged to a man who, wearing a blue serge suit, asked her father for her hand in marriage, but the man terminated his plans for the marriage soon afterwards.

Joplin moved back to San Francisco and in 1966 joined Big Brother and the Holding Company. They stole the show at the Monterey International Pop Festival in June 1967. The line-up was a Who's Who of the 1960s—The Mamas and Papas, the Association, the Who, the Byrds, Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Scott McKenzie, Canned Heat, Buffalo Springfield,

Johnny Rivers, Electric Flag, Eric Burdon and the Animals, Simon and Garfunkel, Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, The Grateful Dead, Steve Miller Band, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Moby Grape, Lou Rawls, Otis Redding, Booker T and the MGs, Hugh Masekela, Laura Nyro, and Ravi Shankar.

Success followed rapidly and in mid-1970 we find her engaged to Seth Morgan, an heir to the Ivory Soap fortune. He, incidentally, spent 30 months in jail for armed robbery several years after Joplin's death. Then at age 41, on October 16, 1990 he was arrested in New Orleans for DUI. The next day, leaving a bar, he boarded his motorcycle with his girlfriend (both without helmets) and crashed into a cement bridge embankment. The autopsies found that they both had high blood-alcohol levels and significant amounts of cocaine.

Just before her death Joplin was involved in recording her band's album Pearl – the nickname she took for the hard-living, blues-mama, if-you've-got-it-flaunt-it persona she had adopted. On October 4, 1970 she was found dead in a Los Angeles motel room of a heroin overdose, possibly combined with the effects of alcohol. It was 16 days after Jimi Hendrix died.

Florence Welch of Florence and The Machine said, of Joplin's influence on her:

I learnt about Janis from an anthology of female blues singers. Janis was a fascinating character who bridged the gap between psychedelic blues and soul scenes. She was so vulnerable, self-conscious and full of suffering. She tore herself apart yet on stage she was totally different. She was so unrestrained, so free, so raw and she wasn't afraid to wail. Her connection with the audience was really important. It seems to me the suffering and intensity of her performance go hand in hand. There was always a sense of longing, of searching for something. I think she really sums up the idea that soul is about putting your pain into something beautiful.

## **KURT COBAIN**

27 years 1 month 16 days, February 20, 1967 – April 5, 1994.

I'm going to be a superstar musician, kill myself, and go out in a flame of glory... I want to be rich and famous and kill myself like Jimi Hendrix.

– Kurt Cobain

I'm not worried about what's going to happen when I'm thirty, because I am never going to make it to thirty. You know what life is like after thirty, I don't want that.

– Kurt Cobain

There was no control to the burn.

– Neil Young on Kurt Cobain

Founding member, lead singer, guitarist and songwriter for Nirvana. Suicide by heroin overdose and gunshot to the head. Cobain's parents divorced when he was seven. "I had a really good childhood," he recalled, "and then all of a sudden my whole world changed. I remember feeling ashamed. I became anti-social and I started to understand the reality of my surroundings, which didn't have a lot to offer. People just left me alone.... I always felt that they would vote me Most Likely to Kill Everyone at a High School Dance. I've got to the point where I've fantasised about it, but I'd have always opted for killing myself first."

A female friend of Cobain's remarked that he "made women want to nurture and protect him. He was a paradox in that way, because he also could be brutally and intensely strong; yet at the same time he could appear fragile and delicate." At 5' 7" and sometimes weighing as little as 120 pounds, his moodiness, drug use and charisma could make him intimidating.

Grunge came from the delayed impact of British punk rock on the USA. Adopting the personae of traumatised children (a pose which had a strong basis in reality) Nirvana became role models for the twenty-something "slackers" of Generation X and inspired imitators such as Pearl Jam and Stone Temple Pilots.

Nirvana signed a contract with Geffen Records. The band immediately had a T-shirt printed with the slogan: "Flower-sniffin', kitty-pettin', baby-kissin' corporate rock whores." A second album, *Nevermind* (1991) sold 10 million copies and produced the hit single *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. The sleeve showed a baby swimming underwater towards a fish hook baited with a dollar bill. The band – and Cobain especially – was deeply conflicted about their success. The lyrics of *In Utero*, their third and last album, reeked of self-hatred: "Teenage angst has paid off well. Now I'm bored and old."<sup>4</sup>

A rock journalist summed up the paradox confronting Nirvana: "These guys are already rich and famous, but they still represent a pure distillation of what it's like to be unsatisfied in life."<sup>5</sup>

Along with heroin, suicide became a refrain in Nirvana's music and in 1993 most of Cobain's interviews contained some reference to suicide. At one point, Cobain considered naming Nirvana's third studio album "I Hate Myself and I Want to Die."

Cobain killed himself after battling heroin addiction. Having checked out of a drug rehab facility and been reported suicidal by his wife Courtney Love, Cobain was found at his Seattle home by an electrician who had arrived to install a security system.

## AMY WINEHOUSE

27 years 10 months 9 days, September 14, 1983 – July 23, 2011.

Singer and songwriter known for her smoky contralto, singing R&B, jazz and soul music. The *New Statesman* called Winehouse "a filthy-mouthed, down-to-earth diva," while *Newsweek* said she was "a perfect storm of sex kitten, raw talent and poor impulse control." The *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote: "She's only 24 with six Grammy nods, crashing headfirst into success and despair, with a co-dependent husband in jail, exhibitionist parents with questionable judgement, and the paparazzi documenting her emotional and physical distress."

In 2005 she met Blake Fielder-Civil in a Camden pub. He was a "music video assistant" and they began an affair. He had her name tattooed behind his right ear, and she had his tattooed over her heart. They also had matching scars on their arms (inflicted, so it was said, at Fielder-Civil's "self-harm parties"). After about a year, he went back to his old girlfriend and in the months they were apart Winehouse sank into a depression, out of which emerged her album *Back to Black*.

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4 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/music-obituaries/5061291/Kurt-Cobain.html>

5 Quoted in, Dustin Eaton, "Grounding Icarus: Puer Aeternus and the Suicidal Urge." In Porterfield, Sally F., Keith Polette, and Tita French Baumlin. 2009. *Perpetual Adolescence: Jungian Analyses of American Media, Literature, and Pop Culture*. SUNY Press.

In 2006 she had a hit single "Rehab," about her refusal to attend an alcohol rehabilitation program. By September 2006 she was reported to have dropped three dress sizes and there was speculation as to whether drugs or an eating disorder were to blame. By April 2007 her relationship with Fielder-Civil was back on and in May they married in a £60 ceremony in Miami, celebrated with burgers and chips.

In 2008 she won Grammy Awards for Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best Female Pop Vocal Performance for "Rehab." But Winehouse's partying got more dangerous. On one occasion she woke with scratches on her arm and admitted: "I have no idea. I hate that. The blackouts. Happens too often."

Her performances got more shambolic. At the Eden Project in Cornwall, she forgot her lyrics, hit herself in the face with her microphone and spat at her fans. At Glastonbury she staggered incoherently about the stage and was aggressively heckled by the crowd. In August she and her husband went on a three-day bender fuelled by heroin, ecstasy, cocaine, the horse tranquilliser ketamine and alcohol. After a hospital admission and getting her stomach pumped, she checked into a rehab centre in Essex. She and her husband stuck just three days of the eight-week course.

Over the next two years the spiral continued downwards with those close to her clinging to co-dependent hope that she had finally turned the corner when she got sober for a few weeks. Her doctor, Christina Romete, said her behaviour just before her death fitted a pattern in which she would abstain from alcohol for weeks on end only to hit the bottle again for weeks at a time. Romete said she had repeatedly warned the star of the dangers of her lifestyle. "The advice I had given to Amy over a long period of time was verbal and in written form about all the effects alcohol can have on the system, including respiratory depression and death, heart problems, fertility problems and liver problems."

Winehouse, who was taking medication to cope with alcohol withdrawal and anxiety, was assessed in 2010 by a psychologist and psychiatrist about her drinking but "had her own views" about treatment. "She had her own way and was very determined to do everything her own way," said Romete. "Including any form of therapy. She had very strict views."

The coroner said, "She had consumed sufficient alcohol at 416 mg per decilitre (of blood) and the unintended consequence of such potentially fatal levels was her sudden and unexpected death." The pathologist who conducted the post-mortem said at 200 mg per decilitre someone would lose control of their reflexes and 350 mg was considered a fatal level.

If Hendrix was the blazing star; Morrison, the moody poet; Joplin, the good-time girl, then Cobain and Winehouse were the ones most openly intent on self-destruction. Of all the 27 Club members Winehouse most clearly approximated what clinicians call borderline personality disorder. Whether she was diagnostically borderline is not our concern here, but she had a borderline life and borderline relationships.

The fascination with, fury with (think Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes), and sentimentality about young death is part of the archetype—the nostalgic yearning for "What if..." and "If only..."; the zippered rage at the waste; the knifing loss of bright, bright beauty; the wish for death not to cut life short, at any age; and the razor reminder that all dreams are never fulfilled, completely. In the obits we hear the defensive certainty that it could have been different, the desperate denial of her death in comparing her to those who survived, and the tut-tutting about the shame of it all:

“The terrible tragedy of Amy Winehouse is that none of this was inevitable. It never is. She could have come through it. Many addicts have recovered and gone on to live full and productive lives. And what’s more, she had the talent to make something amazing out of all her suffering. But when you are a junkie, you really are one shot away from self-annihilation. But let’s try not to remember her for this.”<sup>6</sup>

“Last month, I interviewed two 1970s legends – James Taylor and Stevie Nicks – who both spoke frankly about their struggles with anxiety, depression and drugs. The same sensitivities and inner tensions that made them such unique artists also made them vulnerable to addiction. Now in their sixties, both told me that there were times in their youth – and at the height of their fame – when they were desperate and felt themselves destined for an early death. Lost in all that darkness, neither star could have imagined themselves as they are today – both claiming to be happier than they’ve ever been. Taylor was one of the artists who inspired Winehouse to pick up a guitar – it’s a dreadful shame she now won’t follow him in a long and fulfilling life.”<sup>7</sup>

On what would have been her 28th birthday her father, Mitch Winehouse, said that neither Amy’s family, friends nor doctors saw her death coming. “Nobody could have foreseen what would [sic] have happened.”<sup>8</sup>

## THE OTHER 27S

**ALAN “BLIND OWL” WILSON** (27 years 1 month 20 days, July 14, 1943 – September 3, 1970). Singer, guitarist, and harmonica player for Canned Heat. Barbiturate overdose, had suffered depression, suspected suicide.

**ALEXANDER BASHLACHEV** (27 years 8 months 23 days, May 27, 1960 – February 17, 1988). Russian poet, musician, guitarist, and singer-songwriter. Suicide, jumped from the ninth floor window of his apartment on Kuznetsova Avenue in Leningrad.

**ALEXANDRA** (27 years 2 months 13 days, May 19, 1942 – July 31, 1969). German pop singer. Car accident.

**ANDRES ESCOBAR** (27 years 3 months 19 days, March 13, 1967 – July 2, 1994). Colombian soccer player. Shot outside a bar in a suburb of Medellin, Colombia. Possibly in retaliation for scoring an own goal in a World Cup match which resulted in Colombia’s elimination from the tournament and heavy gambling losses for the Colombian drug underworld.

**ANDREW CUNANAN** (27 years 10 months 23 days, August 31, 1969 – July 23, 1997). Suicide by gunshot in a Miami houseboat. Cunanan’s killing spree lasted three months and spanned the USA placing him on the FBI “most wanted” list. His last victim was Gianni Versace. Cunanan committed suicide eight days later, as police were closing in.

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6 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/neilmccormick/8657146/Amy-Winehouse-had-talent-to-burn.-Instead-it-burned-her.html>

7 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/rockandpopmusic/8658878/Amy-Winehouse-Another-burnt-out-case-at-27.html>

8 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/14898601>

**ARLESTER "DYKE" CHRISTIAN** (27 years 9 months 4 days, June 13, 1943 – March 13, 1971). Frontman, vocalist and bassist of the first funk band Dyke & the Blazers. Shot several times while sitting in his car in downtown Phoenix.

**BOBBY BLOOM** (27 years 9 months 6 days, May 22, 1946 – February 28, 1974). American singer-songwriter best known for a 1970 one-hit wonder Montego Bay. Suffered from depression towards the end of his life. He apparently shot himself while cleaning his gun.

**BOBBY SANDS** (27 years 1 month 26 days, March 9, 1954 – May 5, 1981). Irish Republican Army member. Died of self-imposed starvation in Maze Prison after a 66-day hunger strike. After conviction for firearms possession, Sands became the leader of a hunger strike by Irish republican prisoners to regain status as political rather than criminal prisoners.

**BRYAN OTTOSON** (27 years 1 month 1 day, March 18, 1978 – April 19, 2005). Guitarist for American Head Charge. Prescription drug overdose.

**CHRIS BELL** (27 years 11 months 15 days, January 12, 1951 – December 27, 1978) was an American singer, songwriter and guitarist. His Triumph TR-6 struck a wooden power pole and he was killed instantly. Along with Alex Chilton (The Box Tops) he led the power pop band Big Star. Leaving the band in 1972, he struggled with depression and heroin.

**DAMIEN MORRIS** (27 years 7 months, c. April 1980 – December 19, 2007). Singer, Australian death metal band, The Red Shore. Tour bus crash.

**DAVE ALEXANDER** (27 years 8 months 8 days, June 3, 1947 – February 10, 1975). Original bassist for The Stooges. Died of pulmonary edema after being admitted to the hospital for pancreatitis brought on from years of drinking.

**DENNES BOON** (27 years 8 months 21 days, April 1, 1958 – December 22, 1985). American singer, songwriter and guitarist of punk band The Minutemen. Thrown out the back door of the van he was travelling in when it ran off the road in the Arizona desert.

**DICKIE PRIDE** (27 years October 21, 1941 – March 26, 1969). British rock 'n' roll singer, contemporary of Marty Wilde and Billy Fury. Overdose of sleeping pills.

**FAT PAT** (27 years 1 month 30 days, December 4, 1970 – February 3, 1998). Rapper and member of Screwed Up Click. Murdered.

**GARY THAIN** (27 years 6 months 23 days, May 15, 1948 – December 8, 1975). New Zealand-born bassist for the Keef Hartley Band and Uriah Heep. He suffered electric shock at the Moody Coliseum in Dallas, Texas on September 15, 1974 and was seriously injured. Heroin overdose.

**HELMUT KOLLEN** (27 years 2 months 1 day, March 2, 1950 - May 3, 1977). Bassist and singer for German progressive rock band Triumvirat. A mechanic and race car driver, Kollen died

from carbon monoxide poisoning while listening to studio mixes in his car while running the engine with the garage door shut.

**JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT** (27 years 7 months 21 days, December 22, 1960 – August 12, 1988). American artist. Heroin overdose. Friend of Andy Warhol. David Bowie played Warhol in the 1996 film *Basquiat*.

**JEREMY MICHAEL WARD** (27 years 0 months 20 days, May 5, 1976 – May 25, 2003). The Mars Volta and De Facto sound operator. Heroin overdose.

**JESSE BELVIN** (27 years 1 month 22 days, December 15, 1932 – February 6, 1960). R&B singer, pianist and songwriter (“Earth Angel,” “Goodnight My Love”) popular in the 1950s. Died in a car crash in Hope, Arkansas.

**JOHN GARRIGHAN** (27 years 9 months 29 days, April 1, 1983 – January 30, 2011). Guitarist and vocalist for punk band The Berlin Project. Heroin overdose.

**JONATHAN GREGORY BRANDIS** (27 years 6 months 30 days, April 13, 1976 – November 12, 2003). American actor in *The Never Ending Story II* and *SeaQuest DSV*. Suicide by hanging.

**KRISTEN PFAFF** (27 years 0 months 21 days, May 26, 1967 – June 16, 1994). Bassist for Hole. Heroin overdose.

**LES HARVEY** (27 years 7 months 20 days, September 13, 1944 – May 3, 1972). Scottish co-founding guitarist for Stone The Crows and a member of The Alex Harvey Soul Band. Electrocuted by an ungrounded microphone after touching it with his wet hands.

**MALCOLM HALE** (27 years 5 months 13 days, May 17, 1941 – October 30, 1968). Lead guitarist and trombonist for Spanky & Our Gang whose hits included “Sunday Will Never Be The Same” and “Lazy Day.” Died from carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty space heater.

**MIA ZAPATA** (27 years 10 months 12 days, August 25, 1965 – July 7, 1993). Lead singer for the Seattle punk band The Gits. Raped, beaten and strangled.

**PAT TILLMAN** (27 years 5 months 16 days, November 6, 1976 – April 22, 2004). American football player and US Army Ranger. Killed by “friendly fire” in Afghanistan. In May 2002 Tillman turned down a \$3.6 million contract offer from the Arizona Cardinals and enlisted in the US Army. He served in Iraq and Afghanistan, despite holding views critical of the Iraq war. On April 22, 2004 he was killed while on patrol. The Army initially claimed that Tillman and his unit were attacked in an apparent ambush. After an initial cover-up, the US Department of Defense finally concluded that the deaths were due to friendly fire.

**PETE DE FREITAS** (27 years 10 months 12 days, August 2, 1961 – June 14, 1989) Drummer of Echo and the Bunnymen. Motorcycle accident.

**PETE HAM** (27 years 11 months 28 days, April 27, 1947 – April 24, 1975). Keyboardist and guitarist, Welsh rock band Badfinger. Suicide by hanging.

**RANDY “STRETCH” WALKER** (27 years 3 months 9 days, August 21, 1968 – November 30, 1995). American hip hop rapper, founder of Live Squad in the late 1980s. Murdered.

**RAYMOND “FREAKY TAH” ROGERS** (27 years 10 months 14 days, May 14, 1971 – March 28, 1999). Lost Boyz hip hop group. Murdered.

**RICHEY EDWARDS** (27 years 1 month 10 days, 22 December 1967 – c. 1 February 1995). Welsh lyricist and guitarist for the Manic Street Preachers. History of depression, drug use and self-harm. Disappeared from his London hotel, his abandoned car was found two weeks later near the Severn Bridge, a well-known suicide spot. He was presumed dead in 2008 by his family. A quotation from Primo Levi (q.v.) appears on the sleeve of their second album, *Gold Against the Soul*. The quote’s origin is from Levi’s poem “Song of Those Who Died In Vain.” In a TV interview in 1993, he said that “Primo Levi was a beautiful person.”

**ROBERT JOHNSON** (27 years 3 months 8 days, May 8, 1911 – August 16, 1938). Legendary Mississippi bluesman and songwriter (*Travelling Riverside Blues*, *Last Fair Deal Gone Down*, *If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day*, *Love in Vain*, *Hellhound on My Trail*, *Sweet Home Chicago*, *Cross Road Blues*, *Love in Vain*). Drank whiskey laced with strychnine at a country crossroads near Greenwood, Mississippi. When Keith Richards first listened to Johnson, he was convinced he wasn’t listened to a solo guitarist. “Who’s the other guy?” he asked. Eric Clapton famously said, “Up until I was 25, if you didn’t know who Robert Johnson was, I wouldn’t talk to you.” The founding member of the 27 Club.

**RODRIGO BUENO** (27 years 0 months 31 days, 24 May 1973 – 24 June 2000). Argentine cuarteto singer. Car accident.

**ROGER DURHAM** (27 years 5 months 13 days, 14 February 1946 – 27 July 1973). Percussionist for American R&B group Bloodstone. From injuries when he fell off a horse.

**RON “PIGPEN” MCKERNAN** (27 years 6 months 0 days, 8 September 1945 – 8 March 1973). Keyboardist and founding member of the Grateful Dead. Stomach haemorrhage caused by years of heavy drinking.

**RUDY LEWIS** (27 years 8 months 27 days, August 23, 1936 – May 20, 1964). Lead singer for The Drifters. Choked to death in his sleep. Suspected drug overdose.

**RUPERT BROOKE** (27 years 8 months 20 days, August 3, 1887 – April 23, 1915). English poet, known for his idealistic sonnets written during WWI. His most famous line of poetry is: “If I should die, think only this of me: / That there’s some corner of a foreign field / That is for ever England.” Died of sepsis from an infected mosquito bite on a British Navy ship off Lemnos in the Aegean en route to Gallipoli. As the expeditionary force had to depart imme-

diately, he was buried that same night on Skyros. Australian and New Zealand readers will understand the significance of the date and his destination.

**SEAN MCCABE** (27 years 9 months 15 days, November 13, 1972 – August 28, 2000). Lead singer for the hardcore punk band Ink and Dagger. Choked to death on his own vomit.

## **THE 24 CLUB**

**ANDREW WOOD** (24 years, 2 months, 11 days, January 8, 1966 – March 19, 1990). Lead singer for grunge bands Malfunkshun and Mother Love Bone. Heroin overdose.

**BERRY OAKLEY** (24 years 7 months 7 days, April 4, 1948 – November 11, 1972). Bassist and founding member of The Allman Brothers Band. When Duane Allman died in a motorcycle accident, Oakley became devastated, according to drummer Butch Trucks. Oakley started drinking heavily during. He died in a motorcycle accident in Macon, Georgia, just three blocks from where Duane Allman had his fatal motorcycle accident the year before.

**CLIFF BURTON** (24 years 7 months 17 days, February 10, 1962 – September 27, 1986). Bass guitarist for Metallica. Died when the band's tour bus overturned in rural southern Sweden.

**DUANE ALLMAN** (24 years 11 months 9 days, November 20, 1946 – October 29, 1971). Co-founder of the Allman Brothers Band. Motorcycle accident.

**JAMES DEAN** (24 years 7 months 22 days, February 8, 1931 – September 30, 1955). Film actor. Acted in only three films (East of Eden, Giant, and Rebel Without a Cause). Car crash.

**LOUISE DEAN** (24 years 2 months 14 days, April 4, 1971 – June 18, 1995). Singer for UK dance band Shiva. Hit and run accident.

**MATTHEW JAY** (24 years 11 months 15 days, October 10, 1978 – September 25, 2003). English singer-songwriter often likened to artists such as Nick Drake, Badly Drawn Boy and Jeff Buckley. Unexplained fall from the 7th storey of apartment building.

**NICHOLAS "RAZZLE" DINGLEY** (24 years 0 months 7 days, December 2, 1960 – December 9, 1984). Drummer for Finnish band Hanoi Rocks. Car accident. Had a cross tattoo with the text "Too fast to live, too young to die."

**PETER LAUGHNER** (24 years 11 months 0 days, August 22, 1952 – June 22, 1977). American guitarist, songwriter and singer, Pere Ubu. Acute pancreatitis as a result of drug and alcohol abuse.

**STEFANIE SARGENT** (24 years 0 months 19 days, June 8, 1968 – June 27, 1992). Guitarist for Seattle punk band 7 Year Bitch. Asphyxiated on own vomit.

**STEVE "PRE" PREFONTAINE** (24 years 4 months 5 days, January 25, 1951 – May 30, 1975). American middle and long-distance runner. Prefontaine once held the American record in the seven distance track events from the 2,000 meters to the 10,000 meters. Car accident. He has been posthumously nicknamed "the James Dean of track" because both men had a reputation as rebels and loners, and both of them died in auto accidents (in convertibles) at the age of 24.

## THE 25 CLUB

Well Billy rapped all night about his suicide  
How he kick it in the head when he was twenty-five  
Speed jive don't want to stay alive  
When you're twenty-five  
– Mott the Hoople, "All the Young Dudes" by David Bowie

I lose my mind with faraway eyes  
It just feels like I'm paralyzed  
Turning 25 thinking of suicide  
– Hardcore Superstar, "Rock 'n' Roll Star"

**FRANKIE LYMON** (25 years 4 months 28 days, September 30, 1942 – February 27, 1968). Lead singer, The Teenagers. Their first single in 1956, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love," was also their biggest hit. Heroin overdose.

**JAMES HONEYMAN-SCOTT** (25 years 7 months 12 days, November 4, 1956 – June 16, 1982). English rock guitarist, songwriter and founding member of The Pretenders. Heart failure from cocaine overdose.

**JOHN KEATS** (25 years 3 months 23 days, October 31, 1795 – February 23, 1821). English Romantic poet and contemporary of Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Author of Ode to a Grecian Urn, To Autumn, The Eve of St Agnes, and Endymion. Of tuberculosis. Seven weeks after Keats' funeral Shelley wrote *Adonais*, a despairing elegy: "The loveliest and the last / The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew / Died on the promise of the fruit."

**JOHNNY ACE** (25 years 6 months 16 days, June 9, 1929 – December 25, 1954). American rhythm and blues singer. Self-inflicted gunshot wound on Christmas Day.

**JUSTIN CHARLES PIERCE** (25 years 3 months 19 days, March 21, 1975 – July 10, 2000). English-born American actor and professional skateboarder. Suicide by hanging.

**KEN "DIMWIT" MONTGOMERY** (c. 25 years, c. 1958 – September 27, 1994). Drummer for Vancouver hardcore punk band D.O.A., often referred to as the founders of hardcore punk. Heroin overdose.

**MATTHEW FLETCHER** (25 years 7 months 9 days, November 5, 1970 – June 14, 1996). Drummer for UK pop bands Talulah Gosh and Heavenly. Suicide.

**OYSTEIN “EURONYMOUS” AARSETH** (25 years 4 months 19 days, March 22, 1968 – August 10, 1993). Norwegian guitarist and co-founder of black metal band Mayhem. He was also founder and owner of the extreme metal record label Deathlike Silence Productions and record shop Helvete, until his murder by fellow musician Varg Vikernes.

**PAUL KOSSOFF** (25 years 6 months 5 days, September 14, 1950 – March 19, 1976). English rock guitarist best known as a member of the band Free. Kossoff was the son of David Kossoff, the British actor of Russian-Jewish descent. Died on a flight from Los Angeles to New York from drug-related heart problems.

**RANDY RHOADS** (25 years 3 months 13 days, December 6, 1956 – March 19, 1982). American heavy metal guitarist who played with Ozzy Osbourne and Quiet Riot. Light airplane crash as a result of trying to “buzz” the tour bus.

**RICHARD “TOMMY” BOLIN** (25 years 4 months 3 days, August 1, 1951 – December 4, 1976). American-born guitarist who played with Zephyr, The James Gang, and Deep Purple. Heroin overdose.

**TUPAC SHAKUR** (25 years 2 months 28 days, June 16, 1971 – September 13, 1996). American rapper. Murdered.

**WILFRED OWEN MC** (25 years 7 months 17 days, March 18, 1893 – November 4, 1918,). One of the leading poets of the First World War. Killed in action crossing the Sambre-Oise Canal, exactly one week (almost to the hour) before the signing of the Armistice.

## **THE 26 CLUB**

**CASEY CALVERT** (26 years 1 month 2 days, October 22, 1981 – November 24, 2007). Lead guitarist of Hawthorne Heights. Rare fatal drug interaction of citalopram, clonazepam and Vicodin.

**GRAM PARSONS** (26 years 10 months 14 days, November 5, 1946 – September 19, 1973). American singer, songwriter, guitarist and pianist. The Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers. Overdose of morphine and alcohol in Joshua Tree National Park.

**HILLEL SLOVAK** (26 years 2 months 12 days, April 13, 1962 – June 25, 1988). Israeli-American guitarist and founding member of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Heroin overdose.

**JIMMY MCCULLOCH** (26 years 3 months 23 days, June 4, 1953 – September 24, 1979). Scottish musician and songwriter best known for playing lead guitar in Paul McCartney's Wings from 1974 to 1977. Heart failure from heroin overdose.

**MALCOLM OWEN** (c. 26 years, Unknown – July 14, 1980). Lead singer for UK punk band The Ruts. Heroin overdose.

**NICK DRAKE** (26 years 5 months 6 days, June 19, 1948 – November 25, 1974). English singer-songwriter and musician. In the 1980s he came to represent the "doomed romantic." Overdose of amitriptyline, an antidepressant.

**OTIS REDDING** (26 years 3 months 1 day, September 9, 1941 – December 10, 1967). American soul singer-songwriter and record producer. Small plane crash near Madison, Wisconsin on his way to a gig.

**PETRI ILARI WALLI** (26 years, 4 months, 3 days, February 25, 1969 – June 28, 1995). Founder, vocalist, guitarist, songwriter of Finnish psychedelic rock band Kingston Wall. Suicide by jumping off the balcony of the Toololo Church, Helsinki.

## **THE 28 CLUB**

**BRAD NOWELL** (28 years 3 months 3 days, February 22, 1968 – May 25, 1996). Lead singer and guitarist of Sublime. Heroin overdose.

**BRANDON LEE** (28 years, 1 month, 30 days, February 1, 1965 – March 31, 1993). American actor and martial artist. He was the son of martial arts film star Bruce Lee. Accidentally shot and killed in North Carolina while filming *The Crow*.

**DAVID KENNEDY** (28 years 10 months 10 days, June 15, 1955 – April 25, 1984). Fourth of eleven children of Robert and Ethel Kennedy. Overdose of cocaine, Demerol and Mellaril.

**HEATH LEDGER** (28 years, 9 months, 18 days, April 4, 1979 – January 22, 2008). Australian television and film actor. Films included *Ten Things I Hate About You*, *The Patriot*, and *Brokeback Mountain*. Acute intoxication by the combined effects of oxycodone, hydrocodone, diazepam, temazepam, alprazolam and doxylamine. He had been suffering chronic insomnia.

**JASON THIRSK** (28 years 7 months 4 days, December 25, 1967 – July 29, 1996). Bass player for California punk band Pennywise. Had been in rehabilitation for alcoholism and suffered from depression. Self-inflicted gunshot.

**JILES PERRY "J.P." RICHARDSON** (28 years 3 months 10 days, October 24, 1930 – February 3, 1959). DJ, singer and songwriter ("*Chantilly Lace*") known as The Big Bopper. Killed in air-

plane crash in Iowa along with Buddy Holly and Ritchie Valens. The date has become known as The Day the Music Died (from Don McLean's song "American Pie").

**JOHN GLASCOCK** (28 years 6 months 15 days, May 2, 1951 – November 17, 1979). Bass guitarist and backing vocalist for Jethro Tull. Heart valve defect, resulting from an abscessed tooth.

**RICHARD SHANNON HOON** (28 years, 0 months 25 days, 26 September 1967 – 21 October 1995). Frontman and lead singer of Blind Melon. Cocaine overdose.

**STEVEN GAINES** (28 years 1 month 6 days, September 14, 1949 – October 20, 1977). Guitarist and songwriter for Lynyrd Skynyrd. Small airplane crash.

**TIM BUCKLEY** (28 years 4 months 15 days, February 14, 1947 – June 29, 1975). American vocalist and musician. At first a folk musician but over time incorporated jazz, funk, soul, and an evolving "voice as instrument" sound. Died from "acute heroin/morphine and ethanol intoxication." His son Jeff Buckley was also a singer (30 years 6 months 12 days, November 17, 1966 – May 29, 1997). Accidental drowning when swimming in the Wolf River.

**TOMMY SIMPSON** (29 years 7 months 14 days, November 30, 1937 – July 13, 1967). The most successful British cyclist of the post-war years. He infamously died of exhaustion on the slopes of Mont Ventoux during the 13th stage of the Tour de France in 1967. The post mortem found that he had taken amphetamine and alcohol which proved fatal when combined with the high temperatures of that day and the climb of the Ventoux.

**TRACY PEW** (28 years 10 months 19 days, December 19, 1957 – November 7, 1986). Australian musician, bass player for The Birthday Party. History of epilepsy and heavy drug use. Died of head injuries after epileptic fit.

## **THE 29 CLUB**

**BRIAN COLE** (29 years 10 months 25 days, September 8, 1942 – August 2, 1972). Bass guitar player, one of the founding members of The Association.

**CLARENCE WHITE** (29 years 1 month 8 days, June 7, 1944 – July 15, 1973). Guitar player for The Byrds. Killed by drunk driver.

**DANNY WHITTEN** (29 years 6 months 10 days, May 8, 1943 – November 18, 1972). Songwriter, guitarist for Neil Young's Crazy Horse. Drug overdose.

**HANK WILLIAMS** (29 years 3 months 15 days, September 17, 1923 – January 1, 1953). American country music singer-songwriter. Among the hits he wrote were "Your Cheatin' Heart,"

"Hey, Good Lookin'," and "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." Overdose of morphine and alcohol.

**HELNO** (29 years 0 months 28 days, December 25, 1963 – January 22, 1993). Singer for French world music/alt rock group, Les Negresses Vertes. Drug overdose.

**INGO SCHWICHTENBERG** (29 years 9 months 18 days, May 18, 1965 – March 8, 1995). Drummer for German heavy metal band Helloween. Suffered from schizophrenia and drug addiction. Suicide by jumping in front of subway train.

**KEN JENSEN** (29 years, 1966 – Jan. 29, 1995). Vancouver hardcore punk band, D.O.A. House fire.

**MARC BOLAN** (29 years 11 months 18 days, 30 September 1947 – 16 September 1977). Lead singer and guitarist for T. Rex. Car crash. Bolan never learned to drive, fearing a premature death.

**MIKE HAWTHORN** (29 years 9 months, 13 days, April 10, 1929 – January 22, 1959). British racing driver. Winner of the 1958 Formula One Championship. After winning the title, Hawthorn immediately announced his retirement from Formula One, having been badly affected by the death of his close friend and Ferrari team mate Peter Collins (November 6, 1931 – August 3, 1958, 26 years 9 months) in that year's German Grand Prix. Hawthorn had previously lost a kidney to infection and began suffering problems with his remaining kidney in 1955. He was expected at the time to live only a few more years. Only months into his retirement Hawthorn died in a high speed road accident.

**PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY** (29 years 11 months 4 days, August 4, 1792 – July 8, 1822). Major English Romantic poet and famous for his association with John Keats and Lord Byron. Shelley drowned in a sudden storm while sailing back from Livorno to Lerici, Italy, in his schooner, Don Juan.

**RONNIE VAN ZANT** (29 years 9 months 5 days, January 15, 1948 – October 20, 1977). Lead vocalist, lyricist, and founding member of Lynyrd Skynyrd. Small plane crash. According to former bandmate Artimus Pyle and family members, Van Zant frequently discussed his mortality. Pyle recalls: "Ronnie and I were in Tokyo, Japan, and Ronnie told me that he would never live to see thirty and that he would go out with his boots on, in other words, on the road. I said, 'Ronnie, don't talk like that,' but the man knew his destiny." Van Zant's father, Lacy, said, "He said to me many times, 'Daddy, I'll never be 30 years old.' I said, 'Why are you talking this gunk?' and he said, 'Daddy, that's my limit.'"

## THE 30 CLUB

**ANDY GIBB** (30 years 0 months 5 days, March 5, 1958 – March 10, 1988). English singer and teen idol, and youngest brother of Barry, Robin, and Maurice Gibb, The Bee Gees. “We’d lose him over long weekends. He’d come back on Tuesday, and he’d look beat. He was like a little puppy – so ashamed when he did something wrong. He was all heart, but he didn’t have enough muscle to carry through.” “I hear he spent most of his time in his hotel room in front of the TV. I guess he was frightened and insecure. That’s what happens when you’re the baby brother of the Bee Gees.” “Andy was a very charming, vulnerable and charismatic performer. He clearly meant well. He wasn’t being difficult. He was going through [drug] problems he couldn’t deal with. He wanted everyone to love him.” He sought treatment for his drug addiction at the Betty Ford Clinic in the mid-1980s. Died of myocarditis (an inflammation of the heart muscle) caused by a recent viral infection.

**CHRIS ACLAND** (30 years 1 month 10 days, September 7, 1966 – October 17, 1996). Drummer for Lush. Suicide by hanging himself in his parents’ house in Burneside, Cumbria.

**CRISS OLIVA** (30 years 6 months 14 days, April 3, 1963 - October 17, 1993). Lead guitarist of Savatage. Head-on collision with drunk driver.

**JIM CROCE** (30 years 8 months 10 days, January 10, 1943 – September 20, 1973). American singer/songwriter including “Bad, Bad Leroy Brown,” “Time in a Bottle,” and “I’ll Have to Say I Love You in a Song.” Light airplane crash.

**JOHNNY KIDD** (30 years 9 months 14 days, December 23, 1935 – October 7, 1966). English singer and songwriter (“Shakin’ All Over”). Front man for Johnny Kidd and the Pirates. Car crash.

**PETE FARNDON** (30 years 10 months 2 days, June 12, 1952 – April 14, 1983). English bassist and founding member of the rock band The Pretenders. Heroin overdose.

**STEVE CLARK** (30 years 8 months 16 days, April 23, 1960 – January 8, 1991). Lead guitarist for British hard rock band Def Leppard. Multiple drug overdose.

**SYLVIA PLATH** (30 years 3 months 15 days, October 27, 1932 – February 11, 1963). American poet, novelist and short story writer. She married fellow poet Ted Hughes in 1956 and they lived together first in the United States and then in England. After a long struggle with severe depression and a marital separation, Plath committed suicide in 1963 by gas poisoning from her kitchen stove.

**TOMMY CALDWELL** (30 years 5 months 19 days, November 9, 1949 – April 28, 1980). Bassist, Marshall Tucker Band. Car crash.