

# ROCK OF AGES

JÖRGEN ANGEL doesn't need to tell you stories to earn your respect. All he needs to do is show you 50,000 photographs of the biggest rock acts the world has ever known. The Dane, who photographed Led Zeppelin's first ever jam, talks to **Jaideep V.G.** about classic rock and the time Angus Young dropped his pants.

September 7, 1968 was a Saturday and Jörgen Angel was a disappointed 17-year-old kid. As on most Saturday nights, Jörgen had landed up at the Gladsaxe Teen Club in Copenhagen with his mother's holiday camera and father's old flash. He'd been told The Yardbirds would be jamming at the Gladsaxe that night, but when he saw a little sign at the club announcing some band called The New Yardbirds, he was sure no one from the supergroup he worshipped would be on stage.

He was right, there was just Jimmy Page at the club that night. The other three musicians were called Robert Plant, John Bonham and John Paul Jones.

Six months later, they came back to the Gladsaxe and the handbills said: Led Zeppelin (formerly The Yardbirds).

Since then (actually, since a few years before that first Zep jam), Jörgen has stood on stage, back stage, between musicians, behind the drummer and on occasion, at made-to-order strip shows, with just his camera, an old flash and an undying fetish for classic rock, clicking over 50,000 pictures of the biggest bands mankind has known.

When Jörgen says 'Jimmy' he could easily be talking about Hendrix or Page - he's hung out with both of them. When he says he can't really speak for music that's on the airwaves today because 'that's not his music' and in the same breath proclaims, 'that's not to say all the music that was made in the 60s was great, there was a lot of lousy music back then', you know you're talking to a guy who doesn't need to tell you stories to earn your respect. All he has to do is spread 50,000 pictures in front of you.

**Jaideep V.G.: Your first pictures were of Sonny and Cher. You were just 14 when you took those pictures, what was it like?**

Jörgen Angel: It was not at a concert. It was a press reception that somebody took me along to and I took pictures with my Kodak Instamatic. They (the pictures) were not very good. This was at an outdoor thing at the Tivoli Garden. I got to meet the both of them and Cher's younger sister. They signed some of my records.

**J.V.G.: Did you talk to them at all?**

J.A.: I didn't talk very much. I was just a kid. I couldn't get in the way of professionals. I just wanted to take a few photos and get the album signed.

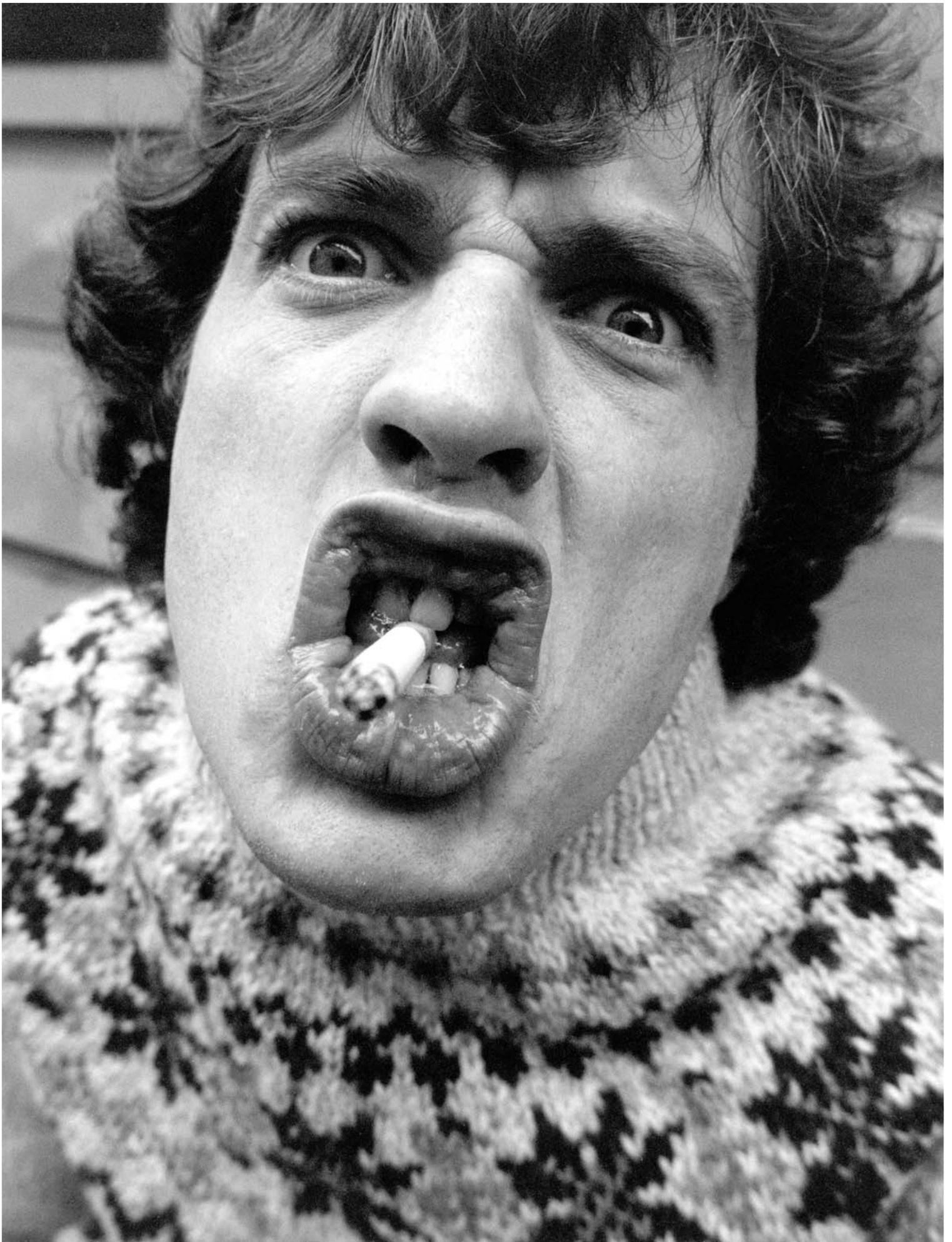
**J.V.G.: Did it hit you then that you wanted to spend the rest of your life taking pictures of musicians?**

J.A.: I am not so sure when it hit me that I wanted to photograph musicians, maybe it was that day at the Tivoli. I was fascinated by photography. I took photos of trees and flowers and my little nephews and I guess music was a natural choice.

**J.V.G.: Why particularly music or musicians?**

J.A.: Well, that's a tough one. I love music, but obviously you can't take a picture of music, so I suppose it was the music as an expression made by musicians that I took pictures of.

Facing page: Angus Young, AC/DC, Mid 70s



## CLASSIC ROCK

**J.V.G.: Most of your photos are of live acts. Does the energy work better for you?**

J.A.: Well, you couldn't meet all artistes off-stage. Of course there's a lot more energy on stage when they are performing, but when I had the chance, I would take pictures off-stage. Some people might be more interesting off-stage. Some acts were very serious on stage while others were into making a great show of things.

**J.V.G.: Let's talk about the centerpiece of the story - photographing Zep jamming for the first time. What was it like, that show? Did you have a clue as to how big these guys would get?**

J.A.: First of all, I was pretty disappointed because The Yardbirds were supposed to play that night. It was sometime in the evening that I heard a band called The New Yardbirds would perform. I thought maybe that has nothing to do with The Yardbirds. Maybe there's just one person left from The Yardbirds, which turned out to be right, it was only Jimmy Page from The Yardbirds who played that night. And the others I had never seen or heard of. But when they went on stage it was something very special and different and spectacular.

**J.V.G.: What were they like as a band? Were they tight?**

J.A.: They were full of energy and they were different. I had no idea they were going to be big. Actually, this little club, The Gladsaxe Teen Club, where they played had a lot of big acts jamming there. Deep Purple played there, before Gillan and Glover joined the band and Nice played there. So did Ten Years After. Lot of bands that were known or soon to be known played there. I mean, Ten Years After didn't get world famous till Woodstock. We were used to seeing fairly well known bands there. That's why The Yardbirds were supposed to be there that night, but it turned out to be someone else.

**J.V.G.: Who impressed you the most among the four?**

J.A.: When I look at the photos, I can see I've taken many photos of Robert Plant because usually it's the singer who is the most visual on

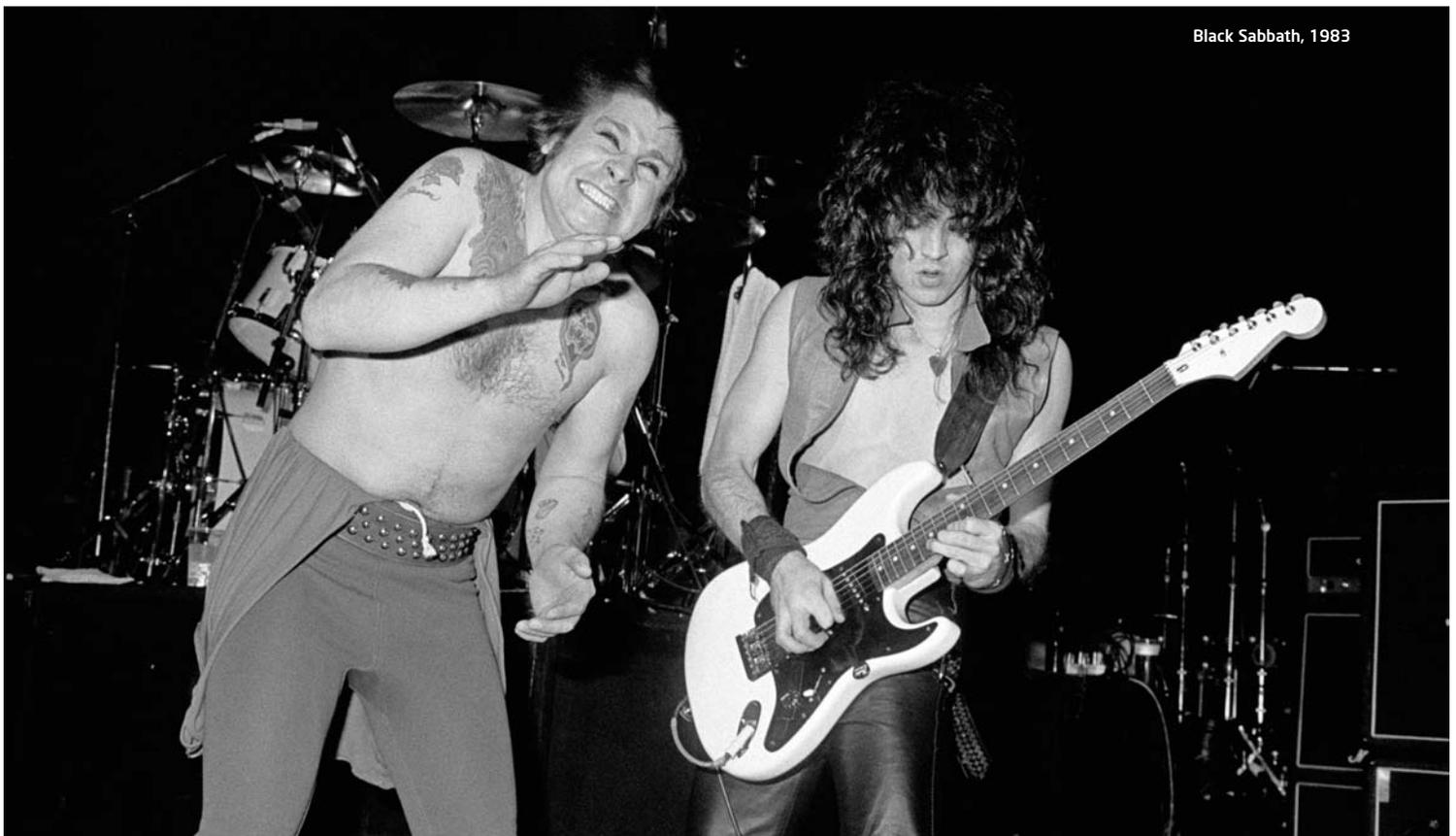
stage. But I took pictures of Jimmy Page as well. When I look at the old negatives I see I actually walked all around the stage when they were playing, but one time I went in between John Paul Jones and John Bonham to take a shot of Bonham. I can also see that I came down to where the audience was to take a group shot because I thought that this was a unit more than one person. When I think back, this may not be true, but I think I told myself that I should get a photo of the whole unit, not just of the frontman.

**J.V.G.: Did you speak to the guys at all?**

J.A.: I don't think I did, but they came back about six months later at the same club and I talked to them in the dressing room and I took some photos of them. The funny thing is when they came back, when they changed their name to Led Zeppelin, Zep was not that well known yet, so what the club did to get people to come to the concert was put up a sign saying 'Led Zeppelin and in brackets 'formerly The Yardbirds,' so people would come and watch this unknown band called Led Zeppelin.

**J.V.G.: I know you really like The Pretty Things, but which act do you think is fantastic as far as stage presence goes?**

J.A.: Well, I think the best live act ever was the J Geils Band, but funnily enough, I haven't put any live shots of them on the site because nobody is interested in them any more. But they had such incredible energy on stage, not only because the singer Peter Wolf is spectacular, but the other members on the band are great as well. Uriah Heep in the early 70s were an excellent live band, I would also mention Queen. There was a band called Geordie, the singer was Brian Johnson who is now with AC/DC, they toured a lot in Denmark and I spent a lot of time with them and took photos. They were really good on stage. There are two other names I'd like to mention: Arthur Brown and Screaming Lord Sutch. Arthur Brown has the best voice in rock history ever, along with Freddie Mercury, perhaps.



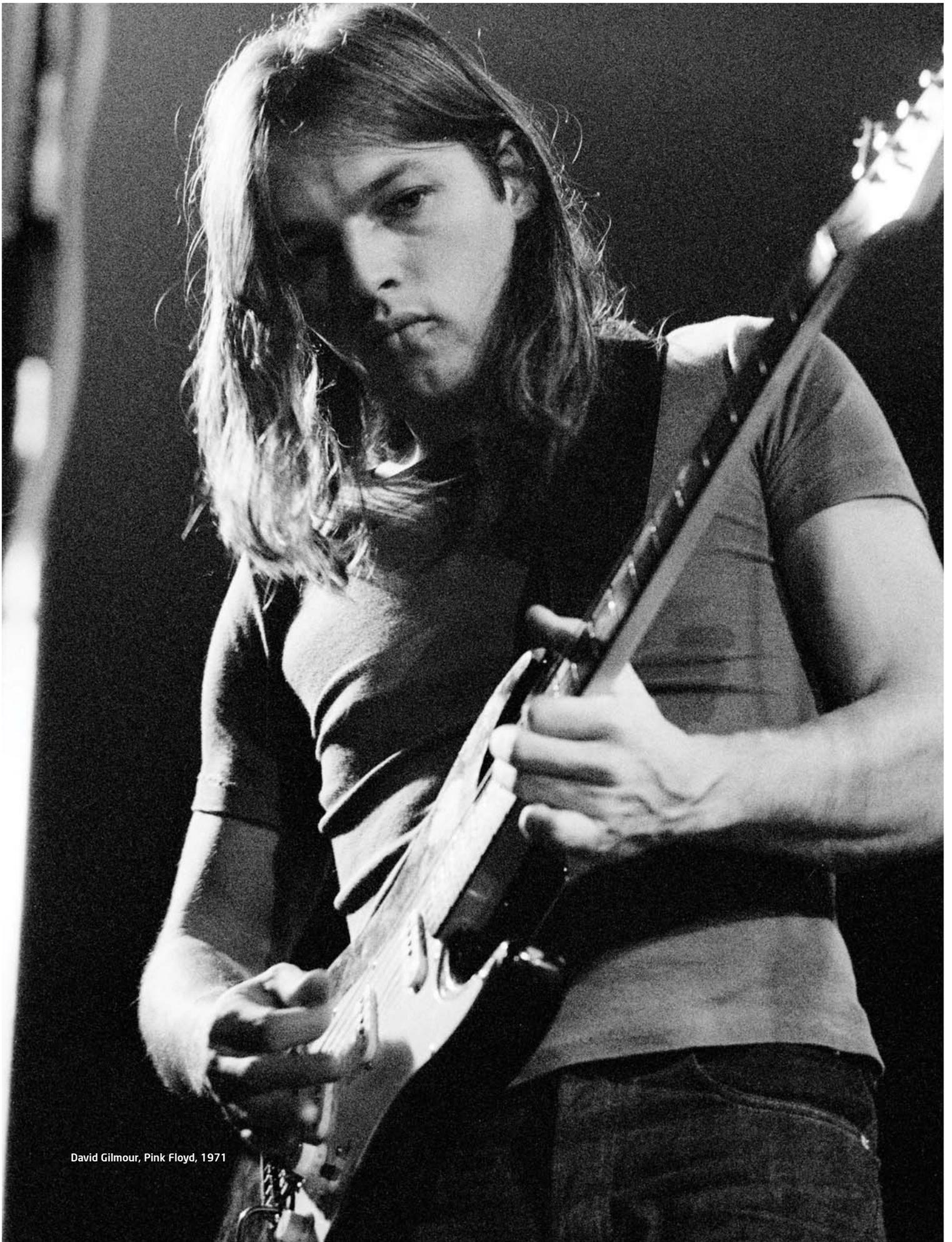
Black Sabbath, 1983



THE FIRST PERFORMANCE    COPENHAGEN, SEPTEMBER 7, 1968    PHOTOGRAPHED BY JØRGEN ANGEL

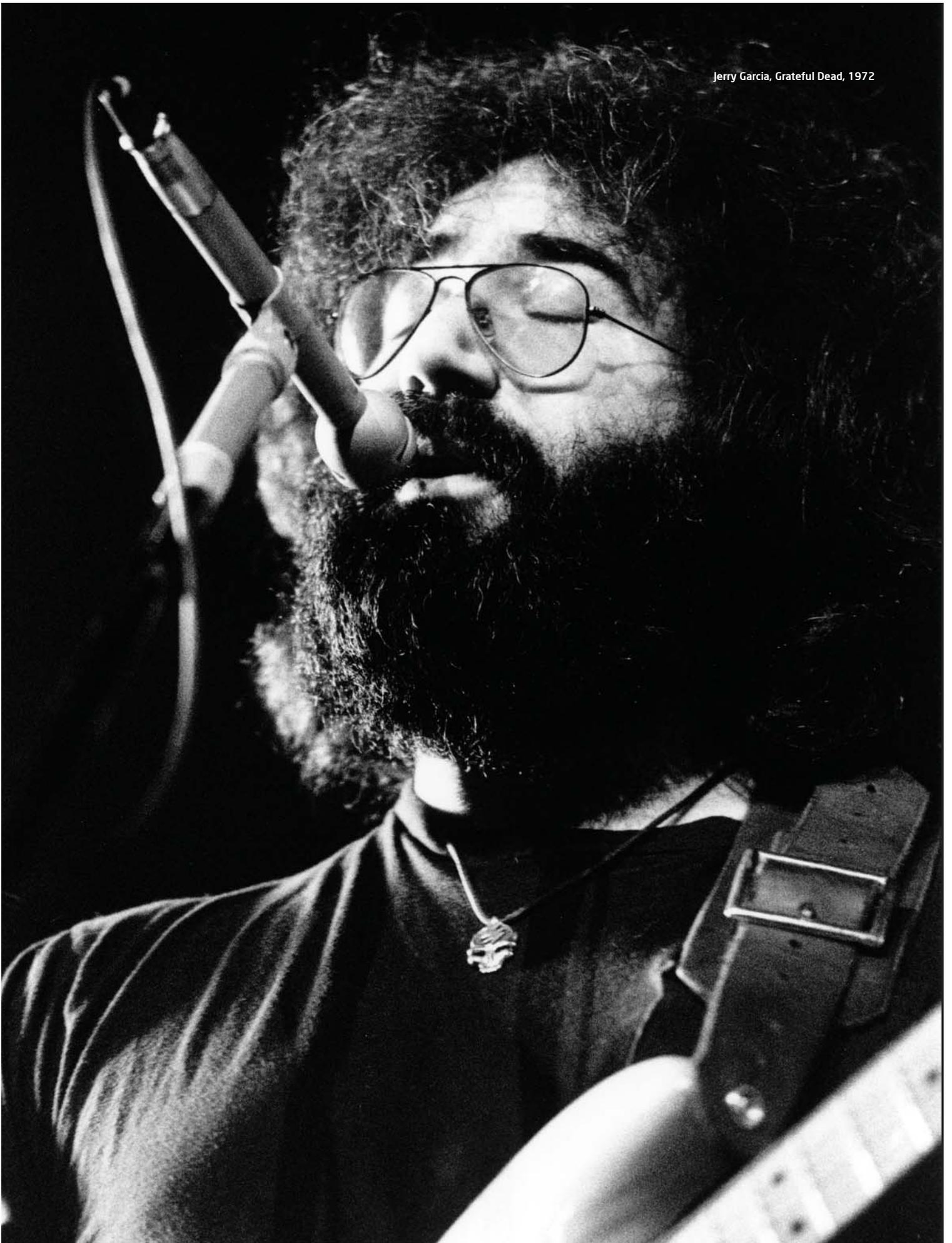


Led Zeppelin's first gig, 1968

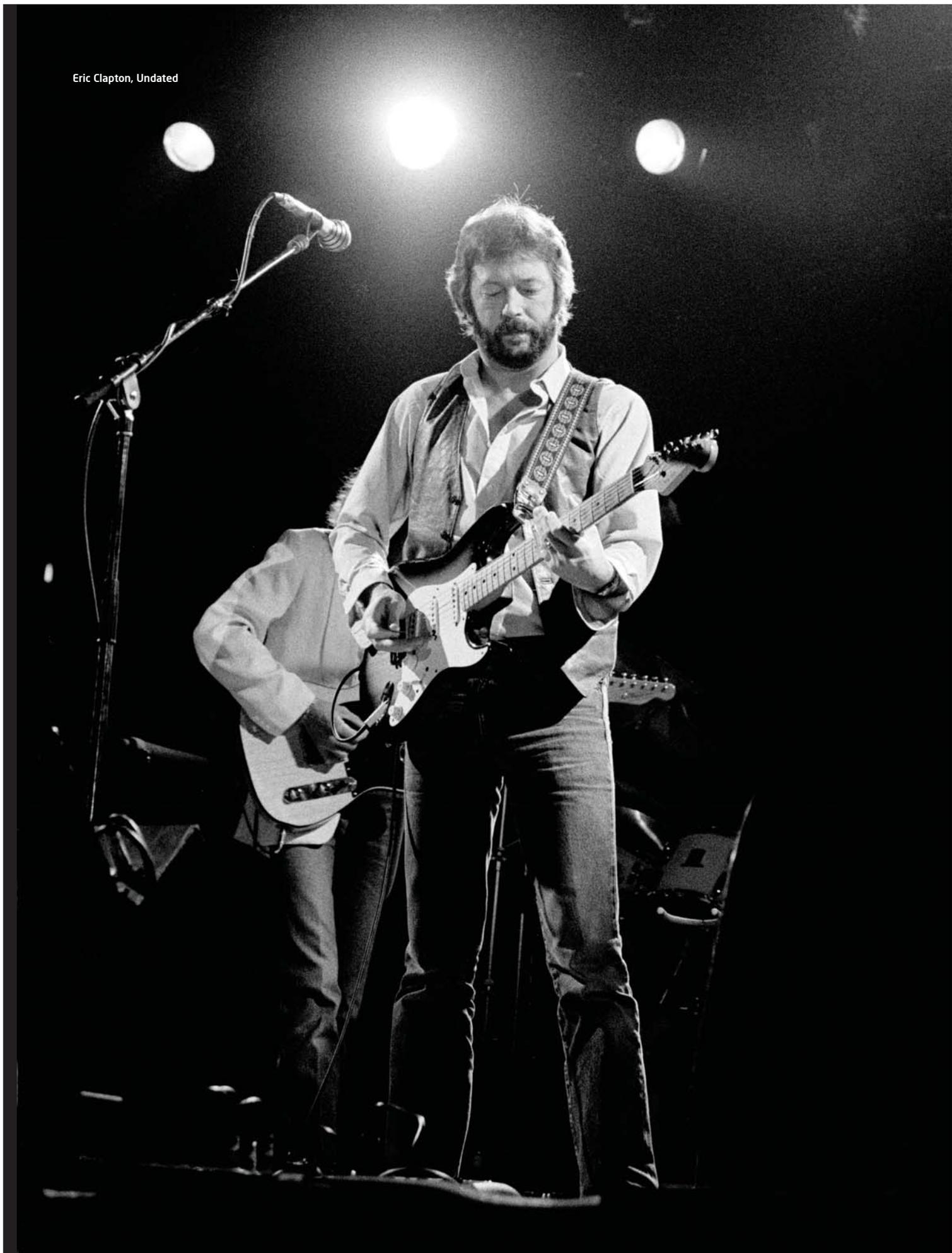


David Gilmour, Pink Floyd, 1971

Jerry Garcia, Grateful Dead, 1972



Eric Clapton, Undated



Pete Townshed, The Who, 1970



**J.V.G.: You hung out with Angus Young and Ozzy, are they as insane off stage as they are on it?**

J.A.: It's interesting you ask me that, because both of them are wild stage performers but they are very natural, kind and uncomplicated off-stage. I only met Angus Young once and Ozzy about three or four times, and he was always a nice person. I know people think he's crazy and what not, but back then he was the kindest one of Black Sabbath. They were all over the place when they were on stage, but off stage they were very different. If you ask me if they had anything in common, it would be that they were both nice people.

**J.V.G.: But there must have been weird moments with them...**

J.A.: If you look at my pictures of Angus Young, you'll see that in one frame he drops his pants. He was a funny man. There was this press reception at this dark bar when AC/DC were opening for Black Sabbath and there was just this one journalist and I who showed up and it was a boring dark bar and I asked him if we could go outside and we had great fun. There is also a whole series of shots taken at a seedy bar with Alice Cooper. They are great fun, but I don't know if you can print them in India (he's right, we can't, but you can check out the Alice Cooper photos at <http://www.angel.dk/alicecooper/liveshow/liveshowovers.html>).

**J.V.G.: I heard that most of the photographs were locked away and you didn't know where they were, is this true?**

J.A.: Well, I knew where they were, but they were packed away. When I started shooting music photographs, I had a small darkroom in my parent's house and the negatives were in there. When my parents died, I cleared the negatives and took them to my place and put them in the attic. They were there for many years. Frankly, I had no idea that anyone was interested in them. I had no idea that magazines like *Classic Rock* and *Mojo* and *Uncut* would want them. I thought I was the only person in the world who was still interested in classic rock.

**J.V.G.: You couldn't be more wrong...**

J.A.: That's what I found out and I'm so happy that's the case. I found out about this interest for rock music when I was the arts coordinator for the Copenhagen Cultural Capital of Europe in 1996. That year I was asked to be the coordinator of interactive and electronic art. I was told that I had to have e-mail communication with artistes and professors we were bringing down from London, Canada and the US. I got hooked on to the Net and one day I heard my favorite Uriah Heep song and wanted to know what album it was on and I thought I'd look on the Net and I found a site in Brazil only about Uriah Heep and I was amazed. I talked to them and sent them pictures of Heep. That interest led to a German group, which wanted to do a book on Uriah Heep and I thought maybe I should put them up online. There are about 2,000 of them now and I keep putting more images up.

**J.V.G.: You have more images?**

J.A.: I have about 50,000 negatives.

**J.V.G.: You said you've stopped taking pictures of musicians, why is that?**

J.A.: In your first e-mail, you'd told me about (Woodstock's official photographer Elliott) Landy's views (on how the music scene has changed). I started at a time when you could meet the bands and have a drink at the bar or maybe get a meal or something. You had asked me if you'll ever hear music like that again, I think the music then was more innocent... I don't know if I'm being clear...

**J.V.G.: Was there a greater purity of purpose back then... with music being marketed less and played more?**

J.A.: That's right. People back then - musicians, people at record companies, photographers - did things for the love of music. The music scene was more of a community service. For many it wasn't even a business and then it became a music industry and I'm not even sure that the people in the industry are happy about it. A big name in the music industry, one who has been around for many years told a colleague of mine that the people he meets in the record company when he begins recording are not even there when the record is completed. But back then the bands would recognize familiar faces, hang out and it was like meeting an old friend. Things were possible back then that are impossible now. You could go on tour with the band and even hang out at their homes. That's not possible for an ordinary photographer now.

**J.V.G.: Is there any band around now that even comes close to the bands that you photographed?**

J.A.: I don't think I can answer that because I don't follow the new music closely. But I can't, off the top of my head, mention a band.

**J.V.G.: Given that you could hang out with the bands back then and how things have changed now, would you recommend the job of a music photographer to a kid?**

J.A.: It's sad, isn't it? The amount of control that's come in. I mean if you had control like that back then, there wouldn't be a documentation of Zeppelin's first performance. When Jimmy Page got a copy of the lithograph, he wrote to me saying 'Jörgen, thanks for being there'. Well, it's not for me to give advice on career, but if that's what he or she wants, then go for it. You can always leave the business like I did.

**J.V.G.: I forgot to ask how old you are...**

J.A.: I'm 53... but before you finish, there's something I want to say...

**J.V.G.: Go ahead...**

J.A.: I want to answer a question you had e-mailed me about how I view musicians and music photography of today. There is good music coming out today and there are good musicians around. So I'm not saying all music that comes out today is crap and all music that came out 30 to 40 years ago was great. There was a lot of lousy music back then and maybe I'm not even qualified to talk about music today because I don't listen to it and I'm biased towards classic rock, because that's my music. I know I sound like this grumpy old man, but that's OK. I think with the controls that exist today, many of the music photographers are doing a great job. I personally can't get used to the idea of working with digital cameras, but that's just the grumpy old man talking. 



Jörgen Angel signing high-quality limited edition Giclée prints for Rockarchive Gallery in London

Jimi Hendrix, 1970

