

ROCK FORMATIONS

**CATEGORICAL ANSWERS TO HOW
BAND NAMES WERE FORMED**

DAVE WILSON



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Lights, Camera, Action!

Bands and artists whose names were inspired by movies or movie titles

? & The Mysterians

Group leader “?” used the name Rudy Martinez to collect royalties, although there is some doubt that it is his real name. “Mysterians” came from the low-budget Japanese sci-fi movie *The Mysterians* (1957), directed by Ishiro Honda (sometimes referenced as *Inoshiro* Honda), who achieved fame as director of the original *Godzilla* movies.

10,000 Maniacs

Originally formed as Still Life, the new name was inspired by the title of a B-movie directed by Herschell Gordon Lewis, and starring Jeffrey Allen, Connie Mason and Thomas Wood. The movie was actually titled *2,000 Maniacs* (1965), a cult film based on the play *Brigadoon* (about the Scottish village that only appears once each century) and was originally to have been titled “5,000 Maniacs”. The band name was suggested by John Lombardo (guitars) on joining the band. Everyone accepted that “10,000 Maniacs” was the actual title of the movie when in fact no one in the band had seen it.

All About Eve

After first rejecting the names Electric Funeral and Red Red Wound, the group’s final name was taken from the title of the Joseph L Mankiewicz 1950 movie classic *All About Eve*, starring Bette Davis and Anne Baxter, itself based on the play *The Wisdom of Eve* by Mary Orr. Julianne Regan (vocals, b. Julie Ann Regan).

Alphaville

Alphaville was the title of a 1965 French science-fiction film directed by Jean-Luc Godard and starring Eddie

Constantine and Anna Karina. The band liked the movie, particularly leading man Constantine. Interestingly, a different band was already using the name “Alphaville” in Spain, necessitating a label change in that country alone by the more famous Alphaville.

Army Of Lovers

The group’s name was chosen by the bisexual leader of the group, Alexander Bard, and was inspired by the title of a German cult film *Armee der Liebenden, oder Revolte der Perversen* (1978) (“Army of Lovers, or Revolution of the Perverts”), directed by Gay Rights activist and filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim. Vocalist La Camilla (b. Camilla Henemark).

Bad Company

Bad Company was the title of a 1972 Robert Benton-directed Civil War western starring Jeff Bridges, and was suggested by vocalist Paul Rodgers. It was initially the title of a song he had written with Simon Kirke, prior to the band choosing a name. [Led Zeppelin’s](#) label Swan Song tried to get them to change the name on signing them, considering it to be too dangerous-sounding, but the band refused.

Afrika Bambaata

Afrika Bambaata was born Kevin Donovan, and his stage name is shortened from Afrika Bambaata Aasim, the name of a 19th-century Zulu chief featured in the movie *Zulu* (1964), directed by Cy Endfield and starring Stanley Baker. The name translates as “Chief Affection”.

Blues Traveler

The name Blues Traveler has two sources of inspiration, both involving movies starring Dan Aykroyd, of whom the group are big fans (Aykroyd has appeared on stage with the band several times). One source is *The Blues Brothers* (1980), directed by John Landis, and the other is Gozer the Traveler, a character mentioned in *Ghostbusters* (1984), directed by Ivan Reitman.

Boomtown Rats

Originally known as the Nightlife Thugs, the Boomtown Rats took their name from a gang of Oklahoma kids who were offspring of oil-well laborers, featured in the 1976 movie *Bound for Glory*, directed by Hal Ashby and starring David Carradine. The movie is based on Woody Guthrie's autobiography of the same name. Johnny Fingers (keyboards–b. John Moylett); Pete Briquette (bass–b. Patrick Cusack).

Commander Cody & The Lost Planet Airmen

This band was named by band member George Frayne (AKA Commander Cody), who says the inspiration came from a '50s movie called "Commander Cody and The Lost Planet Airmen", starring Kristen Coffen as Kommando Kody. In fact, the band did a promo with Coffen some years after their formation. However, its likely that the inspiration was a mixture of *Commando Cody* (featured in a 12-chapter series of movies in the early '50s, none of which included "Lost Planet Airmen" in the title), and a late 1940's movie named *Lost Planet Airmen*, directed by Fred Brannon and starring Tristram (not Kristen) Coffin.

Counting Crows

Counting Crows took their name from an old English divination rhyme, comparing the pointlessness of life with the act of counting crows. The poem was quoted in one of vocalist Adam Duritz's girlfriend Mary-Louise Parker's films *Signs Of Life* (1989), directed by John David Coles. Actually, the original poem (which is an old English folk poem) refers to counting magpies rather than crows (it was also adapted in the title song of '70s UK children's TV series *Magpie*), and is supposed to tell the future of someone who sees a flock of magpies, depending on how many birds make up the flock:

One for sorrow, two for mirth,
Three for a wedding, four for a birth,
Five for silver, six for gold,
Seven for a secret not to be told
Eight for heaven, nine for hell
And ten for the devil's own sel'. (*Trad.*)

Divine

Born Harris Glenn Milstead, the "Divine" character was created by him and movie director John Waters for the 1966 movie *Roman Candles*. Milstead adopted the name full-time after opening a nostalgia store called "Divine Trash" in Providencetown, Mass.

Duran Duran

After first rejecting the name RAF (the abbreviation for the UK Royal Air Force), the group's final name was suggested by bass player John Taylor during a brainstorming session with keyboard player Nick Rhodes, and was taken from the character played by Milo O'Shea (actually the character's name is "Durand Durand") in the sci-fi movie *Barbarella* (1968), starring Jane Fonda

and directed by Dino de Laurentiis. Coincidentally, some early gigs were played at a venue named Barbarella's in Birmingham, UK where they were formed. Nick Rhodes (keyboards—b. Nicholas Bates), changed his name for “aesthetic” purposes, and his new surname “Rhodes” was also suggested by John Taylor.

Fine Young Cannibals

Fine Young Cannibals were named at random from a movie book, after the 1960 film *All The Fine Young Cannibals*, directed by Michael Anderson and starring Natalie Wood and Robert Wagner.

Bobby Gentry

Born Roberta “Bobby Lee” Streeter, Bobby Gentry took her stage name from the film *Ruby Gentry* (1952), directed by King Vidor and starring Jennifer Jones and Charlton Heston.

Kid Creole

Born Thomas August Darnell Browder (later shortened to August Darnell), he adopted the stage name alias “Kid Creole” after *King Creole*, the 1958 film directed by Michael Curtiz and starring Elvis Presley. By 1985, he had appointed himself King Creole and began using that name instead of Kid Creole.

Klaatu

This name came from a phrase (“Klaatu Barada Nikto”) spoken in the 1951 sci-fi movie *The Day The Earth Stood Still* (directed by Robert Wise). Michael Rennie's character Klaatu instructed Helen Benson (played by Patricia Neal) to say this in order to prevent the robot Gort from

destroying the Earth. The band had seen the movie, liked it and identified with Klaatu, the central character played by Rennie. Incidentally, the band was originally rumored to have been the reformed Beatles, which at first they made no effort to deny.

Mindbenders

This was suggested by front man [Wayne Fontana](#), and is the title of a 1963 horror film directed by Basil Dearden and starring Dirk Bogarde, which was playing at the local cinema at the time the group was formed.

Orb

This name was taken from the phrase “The orb, the orb, give me the orb”, referring to a pleasure device in Woody Allen’s movie, *Sleeper* (1973). Dr Alex Paterson, founder member, was born Duncan Robert Alex Paterson (hence the use of DR as a prefix).

Quireboys

The Quireboys were initially formed as *The Choirboys*, after a 1978 movie they had seen, starring Charles Durning and James Woods and directed by Robert Aldrich. Construction-worker colleagues of band members Spike Gray and Guy Bailey suggested they change the name to The Queerboys, as a disparaging comment on their image. The final version, Quireboys, was adopted after the name “Queerboys” caused crowd problems at early gigs, and also to help in getting them accepted onto the bill of the 1986 Reading Festival in the UK.

Searchers

The Searchers were named after the 1956 western of the same name and directed by John Ford, starring John

Wayne. Mike Pender (vocals, guitars–b. Michael Prendergast); Chris Curtis (drums–b. Christopher Crummy).

Siouxsie & The Banshees

Siouxsie Sioux (*b.* Susan Dallion) took inspiration for her name from Native-American Indians (she hated cowboys), and the group name “Banshees” was taken from the 1970 horror film *Cry of the Banshee*, starring Vincent Price and directed by Gordon Hessler. Budgie (drums–b. Peter Clarke).

Terrorvision

Originally known as Spoilt Bratz, Terrorvision took their final name from a 1986 sci-fi movie called *Terror Vision*, directed by Ted Nicolaou and starring Diane Franklin.

Texas

Texas took their name from Wim Wenders’ 1984 film *Paris, Texas* starring Sam Shephard, because band members Ally McErlaine (guitars) and Sharleen Spiteri (vocals) were particularly fond of Ry Cooder’s slide guitar-based soundtrack.

They Might Be Giants

They Might Be Giants is the name of a 1971 film directed by Anthony Harvey and starring George C. Scott and Joanne Woodward. It had initially been used as a stage name by a ventriloquist friend of the band, who offered the use of the name to the group after deciding to quit the business. In the movie, the main character thinks he is Sherlock Holmes, and at one point he makes reference to the novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, by Miguel de Cervantes, in that considering all windmills to be giants

is insanity, but to think that they *might* be giants, i.e. to question what is generally accepted, is the root of all genius. Band member John Linnell has said that the group is “Quixotic”, describing it as either an exercise in futility or a noble quest.

Utah Saints

This name was inspired by the last line of the film *Raising Arizona* (1987) directed by Joel Coen and starring Nicholas Cage. The line mentions Utah, and is spoken in voiceover. The band members added “Saints” to give the name more of a group feel.

Johnny “Guitar” Watson

Born John Watson, the nickname “Guitar” was inspired by the western movie *Johnny Guitar* (1954), directed by Nicholas Ray and starring Joan Crawford and Sterling Hayden. Watson had seen the movie with his record label owner, Joe Bihari.

White Zombie

White Zombie comes from the Bela Lugosi horror movie of the same name, made in 1932 and directed by Victor Halperin. Band leader Rob Zombie was born Robert Cummings, first adopting the stage name Robert Straker because he didn’t think the name Cummings sounded evil enough.

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