



I know Queen's Freddie Mercury was a huge cat lover. How many did he own during his life? What's the most he had at one time?

Elaine Shardot, Houston

According to a 2003 article in *Cat Fancy* magazine, Mercury adopted lots of cats throughout his life, at one point owning as many as 10. He dedicated his first solo album, *Mr. Bad Guy*, to four of them, as well as to "all the cat lovers across the universe—screw everybody else." In one of Queen's videos he wore a vest adorned with portraits of several of his cats, painted by Mercury himself. Sometimes while on tour, he'd even call home to chat with his cats, often at exorbitant international rates.

We know a few of the cats' names: Oscar, Tiffany, Goliath, Miko, Romeo, Lily, Tom, Jerry. But his favorite by far was Delilah, a chubby, tri-colored tabby. Mercury dedicated a song on Queen's *Innuendo* to the plump puss ("I love you, Delilah/Oh, you make me so very happy/You give me kisses and I go out of my mind/Meow, meow, meow, meow"), and she stayed with him literally until the end, curled up beside Mercury when he died of complications from AIDS in 1991.

I heard something about a fistfight between Chrissie Hynde and Carly Simon. For real?

Kevin McFadden, Gloucester, MA

Not only is it for real ... it happened at a Joni Mitchell show!

It was the night of November 7, 1995—Mitchell's 52nd birthday. The genteel folk rocker was playing a celebratory show at a tiny New York club. Among the audience members were Hynde, Simon and fellow astro-rockers Natalie Merchant. Things were going fine until about halfway through the 90-minute set, when, mid-song, Hynde started clapping and shouting, "I love you, I love you!"

Simon, seated one booth over, asked the Pretenders frontwoman if she maybe, possibly, wouldn't mind keeping it down. Accounts differ as to what

Ask Blender

askblender@blender.com

1040 Sixth Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10018

Please include your first and last name, your hometown and your state or province.

happened next. Some eyewitnesses said Hynde—who may or may not have been drunk—grabbed Simon around the neck and started punching her; a publicist, meanwhile, said, "[Hynde] was just hugging her." Simon, for her part, described it as "choking me in a loving way" and "choking me in 'fun intoxication.'" Sounds like a catfight even Freddie Mercury would love.

On the back of Pink Floyd's Ummagumma is a picture of two guys with all the band's equipment. At the time, rumor had it they stole Pink Floyd's van, took a photo of themselves with the gear and demanded the band put it on their next cover. True?

T. Huckaby, Tennessee Colony, TX

It's a great story, but alas, the truth is far less felonious. The supposed gear-nappers are actually just two of Pink Floyd's roadies, Alan Stiles and Pete Watts. They posed for the photo at England's Biggin Hill airport during the band's 1969 tour.

There are, however, a couple of interesting footnotes here. Both men went on to make cameos on Pink Floyd albums: Stiles's voice appears on a 1970 song called "Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast," and Watts lent his maniacal laugh to two songs on *Dark Side of the Moon*. But Watts's most famous contribution to pop culture came in the form of his daughter, the actress Naomi Watts.

With all this talk about the record industry's slump, I was wondering: How many CDs are sold every year? How many are released?

Caitlin Raigosa, Portland, OR

According to Nielsen SoundScan, last year music retailers sold approximately 553 million CDs—almost two for every person in the U.S. That may seem like a lot, but it's almost 50 million less than 2005, a drop of around 8 percent. And it pales in comparison to the boom year of 2000, when blockbuster albums by Britney Spears, 'N Sync, Eminem, Linkin Park and the

Backstreet Boys propelled total sales to an all-time high of nearly 710 million—a whopping 30 percent more than last year.

But surprisingly, while CD sales are in a nose-dive, the number of bands and artists releasing CDs is soaring higher than ever. Nielsen SoundScan reports that in 2006 over 50,000 CDs hit the marketplace. That's about a 50 percent jump from seven years ago—or almost a thousand CDs every week. Coupled with the dip at the checkout lines, this increased competition means it's tougher and tougher for musicians to make a living from record sales. Bad news for rockers hoping to strike it rich ... but very good news for the ramen industry.



Gear, gear: The back cover of *Ummagumma*.



Hynde (right), unmoved by Simon's pre-hout mind games.