

The Return of the Police: Sting, Summers and Copeland are Back!

Author: Bill Knell The Police reunited for an appearance on the 2007 Grammy Awards

Show last night. Anyone familiar with Sting, Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland knows that a Grammy Awards Show would never be reason enough for them to come together and perform. It was obvious that this was some kind of reintroduction to the band. That suspicion was confirmed a day later when a Police Fan Club box suddenly appeared on Sting's Website. A click on the box revealed another page that announced tickets would soon be available for an upcoming tour.

The original band was formed by Stewart Copeland in 1977 as a foursome, went through some personnel shifts and ended up as Strontium 90 by the early summer of that year. The members were Sting, Stewart Copeland, Andy Summers and Henry Padovani. Strontium 90 recorded a few demo tracks, played gigs in London and Paris and worked on perfecting their sound.

Some time in late June or early July of 1977, the foursome started calling themselves The Police and began to play gigs as under their new name. With the help of music producer John Cale, a Welsh musician and one of the founding members of The Velvet Underground, they tried recording some professional level studio tracks beginning in late July. The recording sessions went nowhere and revealed that Henry Padovani lacked the guitar skills needed to keep up with the others. As a result, Padovani left the band in early August of 1977. By the fall of 1977, The Police became the threesome of Sting, Summers and Copeland that we all know so well.

The trio began to catch on and stand out with fans in England. In early 1978, The Police released Roxanne as a single. Can't Stand Losing You, So Lonely and their first album, Outlandos d'Amour, followed later that year. Through a deal brokered by Stewart Copeland's brother, Miles, A&M records signed The Police to a recording contract and released Outlandos d'Amour in the USA.

In 1979, the band toured the USA to support their newly released singles and the first album. The trio drove around from gig to gig in a Ford Cargo Van filled with rented instruments and equipment. Actually, according to statements made by the band members during that tour, they rented the instruments in New York City for a CBGB club date and forgot to return them.

The press loved to pump up their punkish image by describing the band as three guys from England with bleached blond hair driving around the USA in a rented van filled with stolen instruments. The blond hair was actually the result of a commercial they did to earn some quick money. Afterward, they decided to stay with the look for awhile.

Like The Beatles, The Police paid their dues and perfected their

music the hard way. They played small venues and one night stands, stayed in cheap motels, wrote and practiced during the day; played sets late into the night and used whatever time remained to get to their next destination. Unlike the Beatles who took six long and hard years to get noticed, The Police were suddenly thrust into worldwide stardom in less than a year and a half.

It almost seemed like the band members woke up one morning in 1979 to find they were famous. If Sting, Summers and Copeland thought that fame would cut them a break, they were wrong. The accommodations got better and the venues got bigger, but the pace never slowed for a second. Their second album, *Regatta De Blanc*, was released in the fall of 1979. *Walking on the Moon* and *Message in a Bottle* received a huge amount of airplay and helped fill most of their shows to overflowing.

Although few in America understood their sound of Ska mixed with Reggae and Rock, a lot of people liked the songs and musical style of The Police. While still relegated to the category of New Music, the band burst out into the mainstream. Unlike other performers that were wasting huge sums of money on elaborate stage shows and gimmicks, Sting, Summers and Copeland depended on their music and dynamic live performances to impress the crowds. Well educated and penny wise, they watched where the money was going and avoided being ripped off by managers, accountants and handlers. The same could not be said of many other bands and performers of that day whose financial bones were being picked clean by shady characters.

In 1980, The Police began a unique world tour which included stops in places like Mexico, India and the Middle East. Most bands and performers would have skipped or avoided those places. The decisions they made were good ones. The tour made them famous throughout the world and created even more media buzz. However, it also created a whole new level of pressure on the band members.

Because their first two albums received so much attention and airplay, Sting, Summers and Copeland were under the gun to release another album and go back on tour. *Zenyatta Mondatta*, their third album, was released in October of 1980. The record hit number one in the UK and number five in the USA against tough competition which included AC/DC, Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones, John Lennon, Queen and Bruce Springsteen to name a few.

The early 1980s were good and bad for The Police. Sting has said they were earning 'buckets of money' at the time, but threesome began to argue and fuss over anything and everything regarding the direction in which the band and music was going. His individual stardom as a musician and actor began to eclipse the fame the band was enjoying. Even worse, the normal rift between himself and Stewart Copeland widened.

Sting's newly acquired Star Power must have given him a constant edge over his most vocal musical nemesis, Steward Copeland. That edge probably extended well past arguments about music into big decisions about money, gigs and publicity. There was no doubt that he would have been backed up by managers, concert promoters, publicity agents and record companies. They knew there would be no Police without Sting. Knowing that must have driven Copeland nuts.

In 1981, just one year after their third album was released, *Ghost in the Machine* hit the stores. Their fourth album flew to a ranking of number one in the UK and number two in the USA. Talk of disagreements between Sting and Copeland fueled all kinds of rumors. Some music critics and fans sensed that the threesome had reached their zenith with that record and that it might be their last. However, everyone was in for a big surprise.

In 1983, the band released *Synchronicity*, their fifth and final album to date. It reached number one in the UK and number one in the USA. The album won the group several Grammy Awards and lots of critical acclaim. Songs like *Every Breath You Take*, *King of Pain* and *Wrapped Around Your Finger* became instant favorites that crossed over musical formats and received a huge amount of airplay. *Synchronicity II* became a favorite of rock and new music disc jockeys. Today, that album is considered a classic and much beloved by most fans and music critics.

During the 1983-1984 *Synchronicity* Tour, members of The Police were obviously feeling the toll that that touring, arguing over everything and constantly being together took on them individually and collectively. This might have been evidenced by the occasional presence of back up and guest musicians on stage. On top of that, Sting, Summers and Copeland all seemed to be making future plans at that time that didn't include the others.

Without an official announcement and with little fanfare, The Police went their separate ways when the tour finally ended in the spring of 1984. Because of all the concerts they performed, airplay they received and their non-stop presence in the media right up to that point, most fans probably felt the band members would continue on together for years to come. That didn't mean they couldn't take a well deserved break. I remember hoping that their sudden disappearance off the media radar screen was just the result of a long vacation.

In 1984 the Rolling Stones were still going strong as a band after over twenty years. Despite drugs, controversies, divorces, rehabs, rumors and who knows what else, that band had managed to stick it out. They seemed almost indestructible. However, members of The Police had never been all about partying, controversy or drugs. Whether it was true or not, they made a big thing about not doing drugs in almost every article that I read or interview I watched on television. For them it seemed to

be all about the music. A performer that is very serious about their music is unlikely to be in any mood for compromise.

It seems to me that most Police fans didn't realize that the band had no future plans to record or tour together until Sting released *The Dream of the Brave Turtles* as a solo project. He formed a touring band without including Summers or Copeland and began working on his own career in a serious way. *Brave Turtles* was a definite move away from the music of The Police. It was the kind of album that you either loved or hated. I'm sure that Sting sensed this and that's why he probably sprinkled some Police songs into his touring repertoire to keep fans that stayed with him happy.

The members of The Police had a habit of surprising each other and their fans. Just when everyone thought the band would never play together again, they threw us a curve. In 1986, The Police reunited for three concerts that benefited Amnesty International. Unlike the Beatles, there must have been enough esprit de corps there to occasionally get back together for the right reasons. In 1992 the band members performed two songs at Sting's wedding reception. In March of 2003, the trio played several songs together during a ceremony for their induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame which was later broadcast on television. Although none of these brief reunions lead to any long term plans, new collaborations, concerts or tours, the 2003 event gave fans reason to hope for more.

Given the good-natured atmosphere evident among the band members during the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony and concert, Police fans wondered if this was a chance for the band to pick up where they had left off. Even Sting seemed surprised at how easy it was for the threesome to perform a set during the event. It almost seemed as though the band members had never gone their separate ways. But anyone that had ever watched the Police perform in the early days and understood how deeply the band members felt about their music knew better. In the end, it would be up to Sting. He was the wildcard and everyone knew it.

Sting gave everyone the impression that he would have to be absolutely insane to agree to a Police Reunion Tour. One would assume that he felt it would just be too much of a hassle. All the old feelings would be stirred up and the musical disagreements would resume. The lightening pace and pressures to add more dates, record a new album, meet publicity requirements and keep fans happy would return. Despite all these negatives, the day after The Police opened the 2007 Grammy Awards Show, they announced a new tour.

A press conference held at the famous Whiskey A-Go-Go in Los Angeles the morning after the Grammy Awards featured Sting, Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland playing a set for reporters, invited guests and some lucky fans. The event was recorded and

is available to premium members of The Police Fan Club online.

Reporters seemed as surprised and shocked as fans. Most members of the press had a million questions, but couldn't seem to remember them when the press conference started. What information did come out was fascinating to say the least. Sting said that he woke up one morning and thought that it was time for The Police to reunite. As a result, he promptly called Copeland and Summers. He obviously did so with glee surprising the daylighters out of the other two band members.

A Reporter from Fox News managed to get it together enough to ask the one question all the others had avoided and that every fan wondered about. Would there be a new album? The band members seemed to laugh it off, but if you asked me about the possibility of a Police reunion tour a month ago, I probably would have laughed that off as well. Just as it's always been with this band, we'll just have to wait and see what they'll do next.

Now that we know The Police will be touring, one question remains. If arguments over the music and artistic differences broke them apart so many years ago, what brought them back together? What made Sting suddenly decide the time was right. What made him willing to face the same old arguments and pressures all over again? I'm guessing it was Synchronicity. Welcome back guys!

For more news and tour information, please visit <http://www.ArizonaRocksLive.com>

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