



OCTOBER 1980

## THE POLICE

**T**he facts are clear . . . as far as music lovers are concerned the world is controlled by The Police. It's tough on all the other bands and singers who hoped to beat the blonde trio to the top of the music biz polls, but the evidence speaks for itself.

Belgium's *Radio Havalind* named The Police "Group of the Eighties", and we have a decade to go! Japan's *Music Life* readers called them "Brightest Hope of the Year", the German *Phono Akademie Award* for Discovery of the Year went to The Police and in the U.S. *Rolling Stone's Critics' Poll* named them Best New Artist.

In all, 1980 saw The Police receive reader or critics' poll recognition 45 times around the world, 21 of them number one and/or two position. We could go on but it's obvious, if Ford has the World Car, The Police is the World Band.

Can they top it? Listen to *Zenyatta Mondatta* then note "Don't Stand So Close To Me" that entered the English charts at #1. That's just the start.

The band had to form when it did as both the time and the state of the music business were right for it. During the seventies, the whole rock touring and recording scene had gotten completely out of hand. In the studio, vitality and spontaneity had been replaced by layers of note-perfect, over-arranged and over-produced music.

On the road, touring had become a mammoth affair involving six huge articulated trucks containing mountains of sound and lighting equipment plus a whole retinue of roadies and electronic experts to maintain and operate the gear. In the words of Miles Copeland, Stewart's brother and manager of The Police: "The groups had gotten too detached from the people. Rock had become big business and no fun at all."

The punk movement was started as a reaction against the old rock values and Stewart could see that, in many ways, the New Wave musicians were absolutely right. The kind of people he admired when he was starting out were groups like the Jimi Hendrix Experience and Cream, both three-piece units who played great rock music and yet who stuck, originally, to basic equipment, inspiring young musicians with a style that was financially within reach and not \$40,000 worth of equipment away.

Stewart decided that he would form a band which would turn the clock back to keeping things simple and inexpensive, and at the same time produce fresh, vital, and interesting music.

They would write their own material, record it on their own label, and coordinate the business themselves in order to retain total control of their destiny. As Miles puts it, "The philosophy of The Police has been three-piece, condensed, recording cheaply, keeping everything basically as simple as possible, and capturing that element of what made rock music great in the first place."

"They started recording themselves, we formed our own label, we did everything in-house and we still follow through with that philosophy. We have a very small road crew and when we first started touring America we took no more equipment than would fit into one Transit van including the group and the road crew."

The Police got to the top by breaking all the rules. You simply can't make a hit album (*Outlandos d'Amour*) for a mere \$6,000. You can't just stroll into a recording studio without any songs or even one rehearsal and produce a second platinum album (*Regatta de Blanc*). But The Police did it.

Another convention that The Police have defied is with the content of their songs. The unusual lyrical content—in story form—is a prime reason for the chart-topping of such songs as "Roxanne", "Message in a Bottle", "Walking on the Moon" and now "Don't Stand So Close To Me".

The voice on all these hits and most of The Police cuts belongs to one Gordon Mathew Sumner, alias Sting.

(over please)



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Towering skeletons of half-built ships rising above the tree-tops at the end of the street are among Sting's earliest memories. He was brought up by the docks in Wallsend, a suburb of Newcastle in the Northeast of England, the eldest of four children—two sisters, Angela and Anita, and a brother, Philip.

The most significant event of his early life was when one of his uncles emigrated to Canada and left behind a guitar. Sting soon discovered an affinity for the instrument and music soon became a consuming passion.

He learned to play by strumming along to Beatles and Stones records but at fourteen he discovered jazz. The unusual chords, intricate rhythms and improvisation opened up new musical horizons for him and it wasn't long before he became interested in jazz bass and bought himself a bass guitar.

Like many a young player he hung around the pubs and clubs occasionally getting to play on string bass when the regular stopped for a break. One night the regular failed to appear for the gig so Sting astonished the jazz fraternity of Newcastle by switching on his electric bass.

The jazz circle in Newcastle was limited so Sting took off to teacher training college for three years before becoming an art teacher at a village school in Cramlington. At that time he formed a band called Last Exit (referring to the motorway turn-off for Newcastle) which rapidly became the leading band in the Northeast of England. But when the time came to uproot and head for London the other members dropped out leaving Sting to follow up a phone call he had had from one Stewart Copeland. Sting, Stewart, and Henri Padovani formed the first version of The Police.

Aside from contributing all the hit singles to The Police, Sting has been carving out a separate career for himself as an actor. His actress wife Frances Tomelty—a star in her own right—persuaded him to audition for the film "Quadrophenia" and he landed the part of Ace Face. Prior to that his only acting appearances had been with The Police in television commercials for Wrigley's Chewing Gum and Levi Jeans. Sting later appeared in a movie called "Radio On" and is currently considering further film offers.

It was Stewart Copeland, founder and driving force behind The Police, who thought up the band's name and recognized the charisma of guitarist-singer Sting. It was Stewart who formed Illegal Records to release the first single from The Police called "Fall Out".

With his father's cosmopolitan background in the C.I.A. which took him to several different countries, Stewart could have been anything from a businessman in the Middle East to a movie-maker in California. But he decided at the age of thirteen that he wanted to be a rock drummer. At first, his father wouldn't take his ambition seriously and told him that he couldn't be a musician unless he was prepared to practice for four hours a day.

Stewart's father knew what he was talking about because he himself had been a trumpeter in the Glenn Miller Band. Stewart showed his determination by finding some strong cardboard boxes and using them to practice his drum rolls on—for the required four hours a day, of course! Realizing he was serious about wanting to be a drummer, his father relented and soon Stewart had his first real drum kit.

By now, the Copelands were living in Beirut. Stewart was born in Virginia, but his father's job took the family to Lebanon where all the young Copelands (Miles, Ian, Stewart, and their sister Lenny) were brought up speaking fluent Arabic as well as English, which they've never forgotten. Stewart and Miles sometimes now burst into a secret conversation in Arabic much to the frustration of everyone around them.

One thing Stewart is always being asked is the origin of the band's name. His answer is that the idea came from the family's police connection—and he realized, too, that as the boys in blue were constantly being mentioned in the papers every day, each mention would serve as a reminder of the rock band The Police. He named his record label Illegal Records because it was another fun connection with the law.

Stewart's interests outside music are photography and movie-making. You'll rarely see him without a camera around his neck.

It's Andy Summer's nimble fingers that produce those deceptively simple but effective guitar phrases which have done so much to put The Police's records in the charts all over the world. Playing the guitar has been his whole life and there was never any doubt in his mind about what he wanted to become—a better guitarist with a pile of gold discs and awards to prove it!

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He was born Andrew James Somers but changed his name to Summers to save him from having to spell it all the time. Actually, that surname of Andy's is just one of several strange coincidences which surround the three Police-men. It is very similar to Sting's surname, Sumner. The second fact is that each of them comes from a family of four children. Andy has two brothers and a sister. As if that weren't enough, the way they all met was coincidence too—The Police (with their first guitarist Henri Padovani) and Andy and his band were all booked as a package of rock bands touring France.

Andy had been impressed with The Police during that spell on tour with them in France and the next time he was in London, he went to see them at the Marquee Club. They invited him to play a few gigs with them in a four-piece with himself and Padovani on guitars. Then, in August 1977, Henri left and Andy was installed as a full-time member.

The Police played their first gig with the now familiar line-up of Stewart, Sting, and Andy at Rebecca's Club in Birmingham on August 18th, 1977.

The seaside resort of Blackpool, Lancashire, was where Andy was born. His family soon moved to the South Coast and another seaside resort, Bournemouth, which was a great place for an aspiring musician to live because, being a tourist resort, the town was full of groups and venues. By the time he was fifteen he was playing regularly in the evenings with a hotel band.

It wasn't long before he caught the eye—and ear—of another Bournemouth resident who has since become a well-known rock figure, Zoot Money. He joined Zoot's band and that was the start of a brilliant career which has taken Andy all over the world and has seen him play with all sorts of musicians including the Animals, Kevin Ayres, Kevin Coyne, plus a stint in Eberhard Schoener's Laser Theatre in Germany which led to The Police appearing there after Andy had joined them.

Personality-wise, fair-haired, blue-eyed Andy is a mercurial character: moody and dynamic. At one moment the studious musician is bent over his guitar; the next, he is a zany comic with a wild sense of humor. It's his talent as a comedian which made Stewart decide to use Andy as the star in the film he's making in which Andy plays a detective called Nat Hunt who gets into all kinds of strange and amusing situations.

When The Police chartered a plane to fly to Cape Kennedy to make the promotion film for "Walking On The Moon", Stewart filmed a great sequence of Andy sneaking up to the plane, clambering into the cockpit and trying to figure out how to make the machine fly.

So, The Police are now three years old . . . and the world is theirs.