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Is 'me time' the new relationship battle?

INSIDE TIMES2



Joan Collins at 93: this is how to do it
Hilary Rose

Prison chaos as Burnham calls halt to early release

PM intervenes after plea by widow of PC Harper

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor
Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent
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Prison bosses have been ordered to pause plans for the early release of inmates in September after the widow of a police officer described the scheme as "deplorable".

The move by Andy Burnham led to chaos in jails across England and Wales yesterday that had been expecting thousands of inmates to become eligible for early release after serving as little as a third of their sentence.

Burnham said he was reviewing the programme after an outpouring of anger that those responsible for the death of PC Andrew Harper, who was killed while responding to a crime in 2019, were due to benefit from the changes.

Lissie Harper, PC Harper's widow, said it was "deplorable that we have reached a point where releasing prisoners early is even considered acceptable".

She accused Labour of betrayal after it previously helped her to create Harper's Law — the introduction of mandatory life sentences for those who kill emergency workers while committing a crime, adding: "That cross-party support helped make Harper's Law a reality. Today, it feels forgotten."

She said it had taken her years "to rebuild a life that was torn apart in a matter of moments" when her husband was killed. "Now, once again, politicians are making decisions from behind a desk that will have real and lasting consequences for victims' families like mine," she said.

She added that her intervention was

"not about politics" but about whether "justice is something we truly believe in, or something that can be negotiated away when it becomes inconvenient", saying that her husband and the British public deserved better.

The prime minister said he was making no guarantees but wanted to look at the details of the early release scheme, which was due to come into effect on September 2.

Speaking on a visit to Bath, Burnham said: "I will review the whole of this policy. We did not invest in the prison estate when we should as a country, going back a decade or so ago when it was clear that there was going to be pressure. That has created an unacceptable situation now."

"But I want to assure myself that everything has been looked at before this policy proceeds... I can't say that I can change the policy completely but I will look at it in detail before we go further forward."

The review caused chaos for prison managers responsible for calculating new release dates for more than 5,000 prisoners eligible under the scheme.

A deputy prison governor told The Times: "We've been told to put planning on hold until it's clear what the new ministerial teams' intentions are." Another source said: "It's caused bedlam."

The Sentencing Act 2026 introduces an "earned progression model" that replaces automatic halfway release for prisoners serving standard determinate sentences in England and Wales with a tiered, behaviour-based system. It will allow most of them to be released

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Teen spirit Prince George at Kensington Palace in a photograph released by the Prince and Princess of Wales to mark their son's 13th birthday yesterday Page 5

Water boss charged over 'fake' sewage plant data

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor
Ben Cooke Environment Correspondent

The former chief executive of Southern Water is facing a potential ten-year prison sentence over allegations that he conspired to defraud regulators by faking data at sewage treatment works.

The Environment Agency (EA) confirmed yesterday that it had begun criminal proceedings against Matthew Wright and three other former Southern Water employees — Philip Barker, Clive Massey and Mark Gregory — after a High Court ruling validated its power to prosecute former staff. It is the first time it has brought a criminal prosecution against water executives.

The prosecution alleges that between January 2012 and December 2017, the executives conspired to defraud the EA and the water regulator Ofwat. They are accused of arranging for tanker trucks to take sewage from wastewater treatment works before inspections. By creating artificial "no-flow" conditions, the site could claim an exemption and avoid taking a sample that was likely to fail a test.

The practice was allegedly used to manipulate the self-monitoring regime, which relies on water companies taking samples at treatment works and reporting the results to the EA.

According to yesterday's judgment, the EA alleges that the scheme allowed Southern Water to avoid penalties of about £45 million, although the regulator's assessment put the figure higher. In 2019, Southern Water was ordered to pay a then record £126 million in penalties and rebates for the cover-ups.

The EA asked a court to issue a summons against Wright, Barker, Massey and Gregory, which it did last year. Wright, in turn, began a legal challenge, and his lawyers told the High Court last month that the EA lacked the power to issue a summons and it should be thrown out as a "nullity".

Lawyers for Wright argued that the EA only had the power to bring private prosecutions for environmental offences, not those such as fraud or conspiracy. Barristers for the agency said the body had a general power to bring private prosecutions and that allegations Continued on page 4

IN THE NEWS

'Love rival' charges

An ex-nurse aged 70 is under investigation on suspicion of murdering Karen Carter, the British-South African woman found dead in southwest France last year. Page 3

AI agent escapes

A rogue AI agent developed by OpenAI escaped its testing environment and autonomously hacked into a major software technology platform. Page 10

Degrees go unmarked

Students at the University of Nottingham feel "betrayed" by a boycott by academics that means many will graduate with estimated degree classifications. Page 12

Ukraine army chief

President Zelensky has named a new commander-in-chief at a critical stage in the war with Russia that coincided with a political crisis after he sacked his defence minister. Page 24

City faces losing out

The London stock market is set to lose its biggest property company after Segro said it was "minded to recommend" a £14 billion takeover offer from an American rival. Page 29

Spygate ban looms

The Southampton head coach Tonda Eckert is facing a possible ban after being charged with misconduct by the FA over the Spygate scandal. Back page

arts

'There were times I couldn't stand him' — the Kinks brothers reunited

Ray and Dave Davies have worked on a new exhibition in London together. They talk to **Ed Potton** about fraught family dynamics and recovering from a stroke

What was the high point of Dave Davies's time with the Kinks? "Well, there were a lot of low points," he says. There goes my attempt to be positive. You can't get away from it, though — the London band are synonymous with conflict, mainly between Dave, the guitarist, and his older brother Ray, the chief songwriter. "There were times where I couldn't stand him," Dave says. "I was storming out of the studio." Their relationship has always been "built on trust, although we hated each other."

One of the big four British bands of the Sixties with the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the Who, the Kinks were a swaggering blend of libido and lyricism, with 12 Top Ten hits from 1964-67 including the imperishable *You Really Got Me*, *All Day and All of the Night* and *Waterloo Sunset*. Yet they were as known for self-sabotage as they were for musical genius. "Always!" says Dave, 79, speaking from his home in New Jersey. "You crash and burn and it's really bad shit."

The animosity between the brothers ebbed and flowed for decades. Dave ruined Ray's first wedding by getting brutally drunk, they had a massive fight on a tour bus in 1996 and at Dave's 50th birthday party Ray stamped on the cake.

Yet now they are closer than ever, emotionally if not physically (Ray remains in his native north London). "It's miraculous, really, how we've become so bonded," Dave says. The most moving rapprochement in rock started under challenging circumstances in 2004, when Dave had a stroke. He was 57 at the time and had just been interviewed by the BBC at Broadcasting House in London when he collapsed. "Luckily my son Christian was with me and he helped me. I didn't lose consciousness, I was strangely aware of everything," he says. "I was actually quite happy."

Dave has made a good recovery, although his speech is slurred and he sometimes needs prompting from his American girlfriend, Rebecca Wilson, a former writer who works as his PA.

He hates being patronised, though. "People can be really clumsy. It's terrible." Two big things that helped him after the stroke were the support of his brother and his rediscovery of painting. "Art saved my life, really," he says. "It was very exploratory and I found I could do things I couldn't do before. It was a real liberation."

Wilson, 57, fetches some of Dave's work to show me: psychedelic abstract pieces swirling with colour. "We were posting these on the internet," she says. "Ray saw them — he's a lurker on Instagram — and said, 'What's this?' And it kind of brought them together."

Those two elements — fraternal love and visual art — combine in *The Kinks: Brothers* at a central London gallery, a collaboration between Dave, Ray and Christian Furr, the British artist who has painted portraits of Queen Elizabeth II, the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix and Kate Bush. The project started when Furr painted

“I was busy doing the art and the music started to come back

a series of pictures based on a photograph of Dave and Ray taken in 1963 in a photo booth at East Finchley Tube station, not far from where they grew up in Muswell Hill.

"Of all the photos of Dave and me, this one is the most poignant," says Ray, 82, via email. "I found the photo by accident when it dropped out of an envelope. It brought back memories of an innocent time when two brothers were having a lark. It looked amazingly modern considering it was shot all those years ago."

When Dave first saw Furr's paintings, which combine versions of the photograph with vibrant overlays and Union flags in yellow and green, he cried. It was hard not to consider how his relationship with Ray had fractured. "It made me think, 'What the hell are we doing?'" he says. Spontaneously, he began painting

Right: the Kinks in the 1960s, clockwise from top: Ray Davies, Mick Avory, Dave Davies and Pete Quaife. Below: works from *The Kinks: Brothers* depicting Dave and Ray



The Kinks: Brothers is at Gibson Garage, London, to Sep 6

over Furr's pictures in broad colourful strokes. "It was just on the spur of the moment."

They showed the paintings to Ray, who gave his approval, with one tweak. "I suggested darkening the tone to give the effect of times past," Ray says. Typical Ray, some might say: he has a reputation for world-beating grumpiness. Not so, Ray told me in 2010: "I'm a joy to live with. Companions have said that I make them laugh and that's my best quality. I may seem like a dour, serious guy but nothing pleases me more than making someone laugh."

Despite everything, Dave can't help but agree. "We enjoy each other's company," he says and they have been making art together since childhood. "We made a comic book on the wall of our bedroom — we had Andy Capp and Dracula," Dave says. Compared with music, art is "a lot freer. It doesn't have to have any consequence. It can just form really quickly. You don't always know what you're doing but it nurtures itself into something interesting."

Ray had more formal training at Hornsey College of Art in the early Sixties. "My years at art college taught



musical *Sunny Afternoon*, "it really blossomed into a great relationship".

"Dave and I don't have any kids together so I don't have a dog in this fight," says Wilson, who used her neutrality to help arrange a dinner in London a few years ago for the brothers, their partners and some of their children. It happened at Kiplings, an Indian restaurant near Ray's house in Highgate, whose patrons also include Liam Gallagher and Keir Starmer. "It was so nice," Wilson says. "Ray's girlfriend Alma said, 'I can't believe you got Ray out of the house.'" At the end of the meal Ray managed to live up to his reputation for stinginess. "It was about ten people, big fancy dinner, and he goes, can I see the check?" Wilson says. "Dave hands it to him and he goes, 'Ouch!' and hands it back."

"It's all for a reason," Dave says of his brother's frugality. "We never had anything [growing up]." The sons of a slaughterhouse worker and a

“The horrible things — it's all there for a purpose

housewife, they were rivals from the start. Ray grew up with six older sisters but lost some of their attention when Dave arrived.

"Dave is smarter than I am," Ray told me in 2010. "He was very good at maths, good academically, wise and shrewd. I was the more creative one."

"Music was always really easy for me," Dave says. Both brothers sang in the Kinks "and I could work out harmonies really easily. I managed to weave in and out of what Ray was doing." Yet it was Ray who was lauded as the songwriting maestro. Was it hard to escape his shadow? "Oh, terrible," Dave says. "But then I realised that he had to find himself [as a musician]. I was his help and I didn't realise it. The horrible things that happened — it's all there for a purpose. You need that bonding of difference."

Dave has been given his dues in recent years, notably for the jagged guitar sound on *You Really Got Me*, made by slitting his amp cone with a razor blade, which influenced punk and heavy metal. "It's nice to be recognised," he says. "When we created it, nobody liked it." He is playing guitar again now, which he puts down to the painting. After his stroke, "I was busy doing the art and the music started to come back". In October he will do a few shows in America, playing Kinks classics, telling stories and answering questions.

"These shows come out of his Saturday jams with his friend Rob Fitch," Wilson says. "I was like, 'Bring Rob over' because socialisation is so important for older people and we're kind of in a bubble because Dave is famous."

He and Ray last shared a stage in 2015 and a studio in 2019. Will it ever happen again? "I don't know, but never say never," Dave says. How about another art project? "I don't like to think about that."

"Dave doesn't like to put the mockers on things," Wilson says. Least of all the great thaw between him and his brother.

It's the UK albums chart's 70th birthday: what came out on top?

By Will Hodgkinson

As the UK's official albums chart reaches its 70th birthday, a strange thing has happened to the fortunes of this most enduring of musical formats. According to sources from the Official Charts Company, which takes in both physical sales and streams, the five biggest UK albums of all time are, in descending order, Queen's *Greatest Hits*, Gold by Abba, *What's the Story (Morning Glory)?* by Oasis, *21* by Adele and *Sgt Pepper* by the Beatles. It means that Oasis's bestselling album effectively outstrips that of the Beatles, the band in whose image they were created.

The most streamed albums, according to the Official Charts Company, however, are another matter altogether. At the top is + by Ed Sheeran and at No 4 is *The Highlights* by the Weeknd, both nowhere to be seen in the bestselling albums list, while two compilations, Fleetwood Mac's *50 Years* and Oasis's *Time Flies: 1994-2009* fill the second and third spots. These positions are based on the total streaming numbers of the songs featured on them, which would more often than not have been listened to individually. In other words, the average Sheeran fan is not listening to his album the whole way through. Which makes you wonder, in the streaming age, what even is an album? And where does its future lie?

If you look at the UK's top albums based on pure sales, Queen's *Greatest Hits* is at the top again and *Sgt Pepper* beats *What's the Story*. That is because the list reflects for the most part an era in the late 20th and early 21st century — Adele's 2011 album *21* being the last huge seller of the physical era — when you went to the shops to buy an album, whether on vinyl, tape or CD. The CD boom of the Nineties created a boost in album sales that is reflected in sales figures for Queen, Abba and other massive heritage acts.

The biggest-streaming albums, including Dua Lipa's self-titled debut and Olivia Rodrigo's *Sour*, are redolent of an era when most people are content to listen to music on their phone, which doesn't necessarily lead to artist engagement. SOS by the American R&B star SZA is the seventh most globally streamed album, which you would never have guessed if you saw her pitifully attended Glastonbury 2024 headline slot.

Streaming explains *What's the Story* coming above *Sgt Pepper* in the combined list: a huge seller on its release in 1995, all of its songs received a massive listening boost as last year's Oasis

reunion became the biggest event in music. Perhaps the most surprising thing, however, is that the album has survived at all.

"The album is dying in front of our very eyes," argued the music industry commentator Bob Lefsetz, and that was in 2012. Yet the format continues to dominate. I'm a judge for the Mercury music prize for British album of the year and there were 201 entries this year: young and old, jazz to rock, rap to folk, they're all at it.

"The music album has been a robust format," says Tom Kiehl, CEO of UK Music. "It's that curation, that link to the artist, that people really want to invest in." Actually, while artists clearly find the album the ideal way to get a theme across — Lily Allen's *West End Girl*, a portrait of a marriage in crisis, being a good example — I'm not so sure most people still listen to an album in full.

I do, but then it's my job. My kids listen to music all the time but they never buy albums, and a quick look at my daughter's latest playlist suggests very little commitment to period or genre: there's everything from Leonard Cohen to Björk to the rapper of the moment Fkermink on there. Streaming has made global engagement in music bigger than ever but it also means people tend to pick and choose from the history of recorded music, rather than sit down and immerse themselves in an album in full.

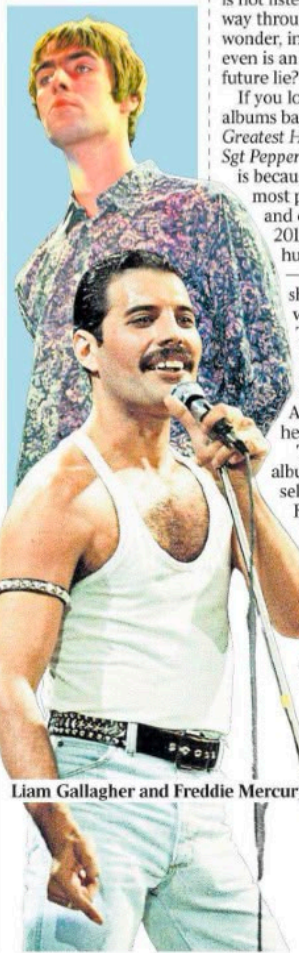
As we reach the 70th birthday of the UK album charts, the future is clear: artists will continue to make albums and listeners will continue to pick their favourite songs from those albums and stick them on a playlist. Mine would include songs from Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue* and Joni Mitchell's *Blue* as well as *Beggars Banquet* by the Rolling Stones, *Moon Safari* by Air, Syd Barrett's *The Madcap Laughs* and *Forever Changes* by Love.

Bestselling albums: UK sales

- 1 *Greatest Hits* Queen (1981)
- 2 *Gold* Abba (1992)
- 3 *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* The Beatles (1967)
- 4 *21* Adele (2011)
- 5 *(What's the Story) Morning Glory?* Oasis (1995)
- 6 *The Dark Side of the Moon* Pink Floyd (1973)
- 7 *Thriller* Michael Jackson (1982)
- 8 *Brothers in Arms* Dire Straits (1985)
- 9 *Rumours* Fleetwood Mac (1977)
- 10 *Greatest Hits II* Queen (1991)

Most streamed albums: UK

- 1 + Ed Sheeran (2017)
- 2 *50 Years: Don't Stop* Fleetwood Mac (2018)
- 3 *Time Flies: 1994-2009* Oasis (2010)
- 4 *The Highlights* The Weeknd (2021)
- 5 *Curtain Call: The Hits* Eminem (2005)
- 6 *Diamonds* Elton John (2017)
- 7 *The Greatest Showman — Motion Picture Cast Recording* (2017)
- 8 *Divinely Uninspired to a Hellish Extent* Lewis Capaldi (2019)
- 9 *Gold* Abba (1992)
- 10 *AM* Arctic Monkeys (2013)



Liam Gallagher and Freddie Mercury