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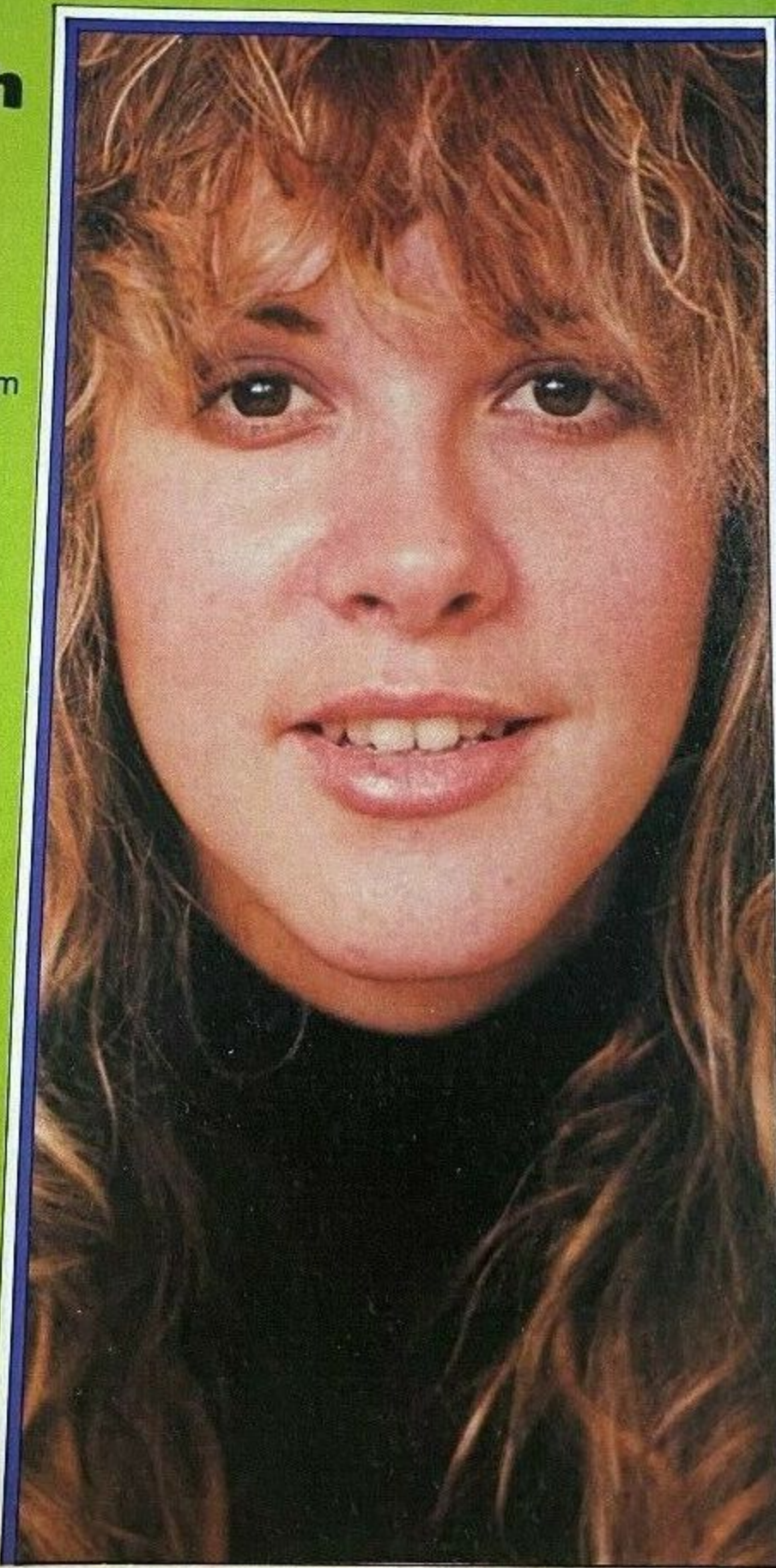
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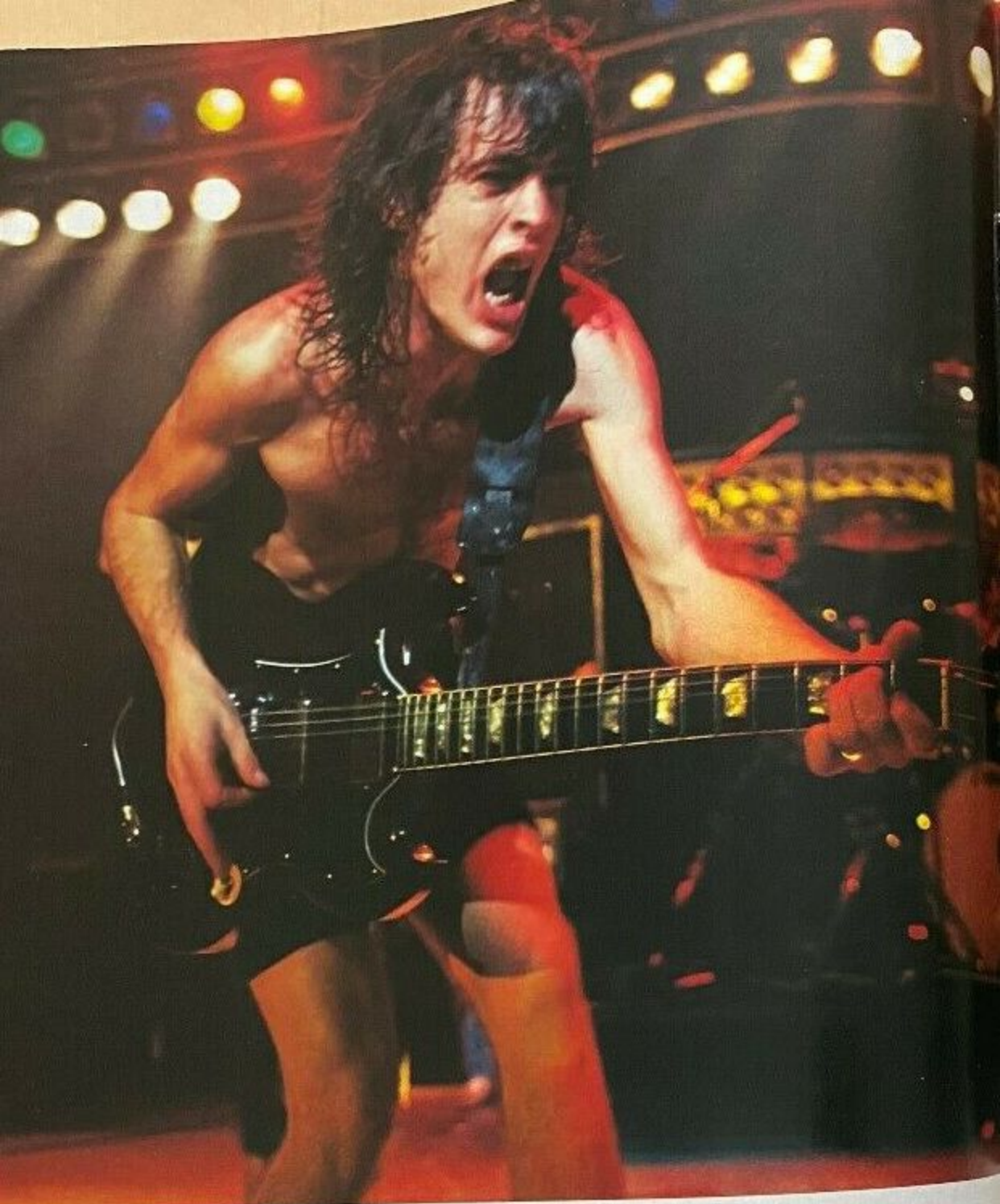
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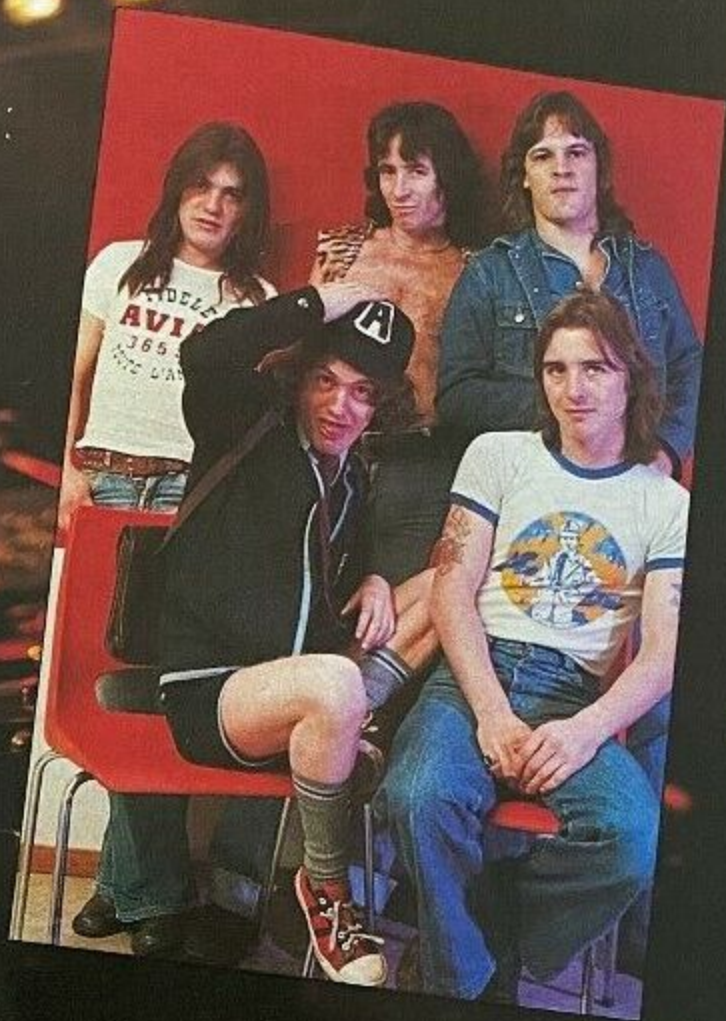




How AC/DC turned an old LP into a new hit

by Philip Bashe

MAY-JUNE '81 YEAR END REPORT



Angus on stage, and (inset), the band that recorded 'Dirty Deeds' in 1976: (l.-r.) Malcolm Young, Angus Young, Bon Scott, Mark Evans, Phil Rudd.

AC/DC were easily one of the most popular outfits of 1981, and their acclaim increased as the year wore on. Pretty good for a group that didn't do anything.

Aside from releasing a five-year-old album in late March, work on their new LP

with producer Mutt (Back in Black) Lange kept AC/DC confined to the studio until year's end—hardly the sort of visibility that makes for a flourishing year. But back to that five-year-old record.

Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap, recorded in 1976, had never been available

in North America; in Europe and their native Australia it was their second LP, falling in between *High Voltage* and *Let There Be Rock*. The disc was hardly an ancient artifact, however: Although the lineup was different—Bon Scott, who died in February 1980, was the vocalist and Mark Evans, replaced in 1978 by Cliff Williams, handled bass—the sound differed little from that on *Back in Black*, the multi-platinum album which marked the debut of Scott's replacement, Brian Johnson. The full frontal assault and staccato crossfire of guitarists Angus and Malcolm Young hasn't changed much over the years, and Scott's gin-soaked voice was probably even better back then than on his final LP, *Highway to Hell*.

The nine songs on *Dirty Deeds* reprise the trademark AC/DC themes (e.g., titles like "Big Balls" and "Love at First Feel"). Except for two tracks previously heard in the States—"Rocker," a live version of which appeared on *If You Want Blood You've Got It*, and "Problem Child" from 1977's *Let There Be Rock*—*Dirty Deeds* could have easily been construed as a brand new AC/DC record; exactly what the band was afraid of.

Of course their record company was more than eager to get out this desirable property that had been selling as an import at prices ranging between \$15 and \$18. As a spokesman for Atlantic Records explains, "We went to the group and said, 'There's a demand for this album. You're not going to have product for a period of time; let's put this out.'" AC/DC said no.

The band objected because it was fearful of fans mistaking *Dirty Deeds* as the new AC/DC album rather than the missing AC/DC album, a problem solved by slapping on a sticker that clearly stated, "All selections recorded in 1976 by..." and went on to list the members. AC/DC were satisfied—almost.

"The group also felt that since it was an old album it shouldn't list at \$8.98." So, "as a gesture toward their millions of fans," the company announced in April that *Dirty Deeds* would be discounted by 10 percent, making both band—and fans—happy.

Within 10 weeks, *Dirty Deeds* streaked past the one million mark, reaching #3 on the record charts. And if one song dominated FM radio in spring 1981, it was the title track. (As always, AM stations passed on the band because of its lyrical crudity, despite immense sales.) Click on a radio anywhere and chances were that "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap," a rollicking rocker with a nasty message, would come on soon enough.

Inset: Peter Mazzei
Ron Pownall