
SCAM A-LAMA HARDBALL

EXCERPT FROM "A FUNNY SCAM": BOOK 2

JINX JAMES

CHAPTER ONE

EXCERPT FROM "SCAM A-LAMA HARDBALL"

*"If a deal looks too good to be true,
it probably is."*

Michael Douglas

This is insane, Boss! I mean, who in their right mind would ever offer a record deal like this? They're giving you everything.'

Tony still slips into his old habit of calling me "Boss". In the decades since he used to be my roadie, back when I was a teenage sensation, his career trajectory has been meteoric. Now he's one of the biggest promoters and music entrepreneurs in Australia. My career, on the other hand, has, for some years, been going in the opposite direction. Now I'm hovering somewhere just above flat-lining.

'You're never going to get a better album offer than this, Marc. Nobody is. When I read it, I couldn't believe all the things these people are giving away. You're getting the lot, mate! The points, the perks, plus all that money upfront?'

'That was all Felicity's doing, Tony. She really took those

poor buggers to the cleaners. I don't know how she did it, but she somehow got them to agree to more or less everything.'

Felicity is my agent. What Tony doesn't know is that she and her husband John owe Howie and me big time for saving the bacon of Mandrakes, their Talent Agency. She promised us faithfully she'd get us the deal of doom and she delivered.'

'I'm just amazed anyone in their right mind would've ever agreed to it.'

'Well, like I said, that's what we thought, too. Which is why I sent it over to you. I just wanted to make sure we hadn't missed anything.'

'Look, Boss, don't mess around. Get 'em in right now and sign it before they change their mind, eh? "Do not pass Go". Just do it!'

We were here today to discuss all this over lunch in Tony's sensational rooftop penthouse dining room. Clutching our chilled Peronis, Tony and I sat waiting for Howie, my money guy buddy, to arrive.

'What I 'aven't told you,' he said, 'is that I was so gobs-macked after reading that bloody contract, I even went straight over to Vacluse yesterday and showed it to Clarrie.'

'Clarrie? Your lawyer... on a *Sunday*?'

'Yep,' he said, nodding.

'Look, Marc, when I read it, I was so convinced *I* must've missed something, too. I drove over there specially to check it out with him.

'Wow!' was all I could say.

'I even dragged the poor bugger away from playing cricket with his grandkids for half an hour,' he told me, smiling.

Clarrie was Tony's legendary ace show-biz lawyer.

'So what did he reckon?'

'Same as we all do,' said Tony.

'But surely there has to be *some* kind of catch?' I said.

Tony shrugged.

‘Clarrie said that if there was, he couldn’t see it... and he’s the best in the business, right? I swear to you, Marc, I sat there and watched him go through the whole bloody document twice.’

He reached down into his briefcase and handed me back the contract I’d given him.

‘Clarrie’s actual words were, “Shitloads of cash upfront, unbelievable points and a one-album no options deal? What more d’yer fucking want?” That’s exactly what he said, Boss.’

But then Tony grinned yet again.

‘Oh, he did mention that this’d be costing you a slap-up lunch for the three of us at Denzil’s with some hot-shot wine.’

Getting off with just buying somebody like Clarrie lunch, instead of having to pay his usual mega-fee, was a genuine Houdini type escape deal!

Looking around the penthouse while Tony got us another beer, I still couldn’t get over what an amazing space this was. The living and dining area took up the entire top floor of a gigantic old warehouse in Ultimo that he’d bought and refurbished. It looked out across the most stunning vista of Darling Harbour and the entire city of Sydney.

‘I still can’t help wondering why, Tony?’ I said.

‘Why me? And why now?’ I asked him.

He shrugged.

‘Search me, Boss. I dunno... maybe it’s just your time?’

‘C’mon, Tony! I’m Marc Charles, Australia’s official Rock ‘n Roll Dinosaur. And in case you hadn’t noticed, I haven’t had a sniff of a hit for twenty-five frigging years. So what the fuck is going on? And why are these people so keen? Tell me that? You’re dead right. No negotiating, arguing, haggling... nothing!’

Silently agreeing that neither of us had a clue why, we just

clinked our Peroni bottles together, took another swig, and went on waiting for Howie.

I couldn't help glancing at the reflection of myself in the smoked glass of the huge windows. I decided I didn't look too bad for an old Rock Star.

Tony was dressed totally in black, which was probably a much more sensible idea for a man of about the same age as me. But you know the way it is with us old-fart Jurassic pop stars? We always like to make a bit of a statement. It's in our DNA.

I have to admit I was quite enjoying flaunting it this morning.

I was wearing my new duck-egg blue Zain del Paso jacket with a black tee-shirt, white chinos, and a pair of Oberlin oxblood loafers.

I couldn't help noticing him studying the outfit.

'What's the point of being a Rock Star if you don't get to dress up?' I said, making a stupid face.

He just laughed, then waved me away before moving the subject straight back to the album offer.

'Oh yeah,' he remembered, 'when Clarrie read out the client's name on the contract, he asked me if anyone had ever found out who they *really* were?'

'And what did you say?'

'I told him what you and Howie told me. That you both reckoned "*Gluckmint Relocations, Nassau*" was probably the offshore Tax Haven cash-stashes of one of your dear old lady fans.'

He started to laugh yet again as he told me the rest of it.

' "You wouldn't believe it, Clarrie," I explained to him. "Marc has got so many of these old birds knocking around. They've been his fans for decades. There are hundreds of 'em!"'

‘“And do they throw their knickers on stage for him like they do for Tom Jones?” he wanted to know.

‘“Well, if they still do after all these years, you can bet your life the sizes are getting bigger by now,” I said to him.’

That was it. The pair of us folded up with laughter... and we still were when there was a gentle knock on the door.

‘Come in,’ Tony called out, as we both did our best to look normal, however you do that.

When his stunning young receptionist peeked around the door, she appeared to be nervous. She explained that there was an odd-looking Uber driver at reception. He had some boxes of food for our lunch.

‘Odd-looking?’ said Tony, still trying to keep a straight face.

She nodded and replied, ‘Well, he’s dressed in an expensive suit... and he’s a sort of *older* person.’

‘Right,’ said Tony, doing a wonderful job at looking serious and business-like by then. ‘Could you send him in, Brianna?’

We were still stifling giggles when my best buddy and financial adviser, Howard Hind, the Chairman and CEO of Hind & Partners, came staggering in. He was carrying three boxes of takeaway that he’d so kindly picked up for us from Brindisi Italian restaurant on his way.

‘That cute little receptionist said you were an *“odd-looking, older person Uber driver”*, Howie,’ I said, grabbing the food from him and beginning to unpack it.

‘Uber, eh?’ I smiled, adding, ‘Bit below your pay-grade, I would’ve thought?’

Howie just stood there, trying not to look hurt, as we both got busy serving lunch and did our best to look serious.

While our host opened the wine and poured, I quickly got the plates out of the warmer and began serving.

Rock ’n roll people like Tony and me always like to get it while it’s hot.

Tucked in under the City end of the Sydney Harbour Bridge was The Placebo Hotel. Were you to climb up the beautiful old Jarrah wood staircase next to the bar, you'd find a pair of doors marked Club Dino. That's "Club" on one and "Dino" on the other. Oh yes, and "Dino" is pronounced like "Rhino". This is the place where I sing for fun once or twice a week.

The hotel proper, downstairs, always seemed to be chock full of mostly young, cashed-up Asian tourists. It made a fortune for Josh Winter and his wife, Ginny. They were the two Americans who owned and ran it.

Club Dino, however, which usually happened on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday lunchtime, mostly just about managed to break even.

So why, you might ask, would a super-successful businessman like Josh allow this to happen? Such a humble, non-money-making enterprise like this in the upstairs back room of his swish and trendy hotel?

The answer was pure show-biz. The Rock Gods so often smile down on us has-beens. In their wisdom, those super-beings had cast our millionaire hotel proprietor as a genuine rock tragic.

Yes, folks, not only was Josh Winter a hotel owner and extremely filthy-rich person. He also moonlighted as a great Soul organist and keyboard player in the classic Billy Preston style. And that wasn't the full extent of his talents either. Fortunately for us, our benefactor was *also* your actual, real-life "ham".

I'd once even fantasised that Josh saw Club Dino as some kind of bizarre, but-oh-so-cool, out-there hobby farm! But whatever the reason, this was our weekly gig.

The Club's five-piece band of dog-eared musical legends and its stunning three-girl vocal group, all got paid union scale. That, plus a free lunch with a beer or a glass of wine bonus.

The rest of us worked for love... *free* love, that was. Well, in my case it was, anyway.

That Tuesday, as I drank and chatted to my buddies, Rhonda from “The Glass Ceiling” (that’s the name of the Club Dino female vocal group) was on fire. Right at that moment, she was knocking the crap out of “I’m Walking on Sunshine”, the old Katrina and the Waves’ classic.

Nikki and Emma, the other two girls, were wailing along behind her, and “The Brain Drain”, the Club Dino house band, pumped away behind them.

That particular song was one of those upbeat numbers you never wanted to end, especially when the whole of the joint was jumping... like it was today.

From a musical point of view, there was only ever one way out of it, of course... and that was the dead-stop.

WHAAAAMMMM!-went a big unison chord thing on the first beat of a handy bar. The guys followed up the hole it left with a big, strummed “*Tarrabb!*” to finish.

Rhonda copped the most incredible reception from the crowd. It only settled down when Bob The Blob came thumping in with the drum intro to “My Sharona”.

Out of all the audience favourites at Club Dino, “My Sharona” by The Knack has to be up there with the biggies. I’ve never quite understood why, but it’s true. It’s such a stupid song but with the riff from hell that you just somehow can’t seem to get out of your head. The worst bit has always been Johnny Deller’s exhortation to the crowd afterwards.

‘Come on everybody,’ he’d yell, ‘let’s hear it for “The Knackers”-let’s give “The Knackers” *exactly* what they need—a really big hand to support them!’

Thanks, Johnny.

Our hotel owner and wannabe muso Josh had previously begged the guys to let him play some Hammond organ on it.

A couple of them had made faces, but the boss had been dead right. Just a tiny lick and a taste of organ here and there in the background had sounded so cool.

This song has always pulled the Club Dino crowd apart and today was no exception. Amidst all the cheering and stamping afterwards, the Glass Ceiling girls were all over me. They wouldn't stop gushing and touching the ultra-cool suit with the off-white tee shirt and pyramid pendant that I was wearing. They kept pointing at my outrageous shoes and laughing. I had a brand new pair of HH-Hermanos Higuain's shiny black Zappos with white socks. The girls had got the whisper from Josh that I was all dolled up today for my big album-signing event.

I couldn't help thinking about me, "The Dinosaur", getting tarted up two days running, forty-plus years into my career! Had to be some sort of frigging record?

As always, the girls' perfume worked its woozy magic. I immediately folded and invited the three of them over to the table for a drink. And then, what the hell, I even bought us a bottle of Bolly as Josh slipped across to join us. When I explained to them all that I was going to be signing on the dotted line later this afternoon... Wow! It was champagne toasts all round. And then, when I whispered to the four of them that they were *all* going to be singing and playing on the new album too... Yikes! Our boss got so excited he even splashed out and bought us a second bottle!

At about the same time, in upmarket Whale Beach, Marc's nutty neighbour Todd Bertilson munched noisily away at his lunchtime sandwich. His house was two doors along the street from The Dinosaur's palazzo. Still chewing, the Adda Splashmatic boss gave his buddy George a peck on the cheek.

'Bloody hell, Georgie, you're freezing,' he said, concerned.

‘Maybe you’re coming down with something.’ It wasn’t very likely, though.

Georgie was George, a gigantic, reddish-tinged sandy-coloured fossil that consisted of the immense head and neck of a T-Rexy type dinosaur that was almost three metres high. It had been mounted on a specially strengthened base on the specially strengthened floor in the centre of Todd’s den.

The width of Georgie’s head was approximately that of a medium-sized SUV. Todd had even gone to the trouble of having a huge, spiked, thick leather dog collar specially made for his razor-toothed mate. It boasted a stainless-steel, plate-sized name-disc hanging from it. This had “George” engraved on it in beautiful flowing copperplate handwriting. He’d called his fossil George, because the dinosaur’s colossal chin, eyes and fixed glazed smile had always reminded Todd of George Clooney.

‘It’s a big day for me in Sydney today, Georgie.’ he told him. ‘I won’t be back until late. If we’re lucky, though, I’ll have that Rock Star bastard signed up for what he thinks is gonna be his big new comeback album!’

Todd gave Georgie a big smile, hooking a large striped Penrith Panthers Rugby League Club scarf around the fossil’s neck. Sitting back on the sofa, he admired his handiwork.

‘Then it’ll be time for you and me to have a bit of fun, eh? Fuck Marc fucking Charles!’ Todd slurped the mug of tea he’d generously laced with milk and two sugars, despite the dire warnings of Vik the Prik, his long-suffering Indian doctor. ‘Now I know it can be a bit nippy in here at this time of the year, Georgie boy, but today’s special. I’m sorry I have to go out, but that scarf’ll keep you nice and warm.’ Todd chuckled. ‘What’s that thing they always say in those creepy horror movies?’ he said, making a gnarled face towards the dinosaur head as he tried to remember. ‘Right, got it,’ he told him.

“Revenge is a dish best served cold”.

‘What that means is it’s gonna be well worth waiting for,

buddy.' Todd couldn't resist grinning at that bit, either, as he got up and gave his pal yet another pat.

For his part, George carried on smiling back, exactly the way he'd been doing it for the last hundred million or so years.

Just over an hour later, in Todd's office at the headquarters of Adda Splashmatic in North Sydney, a young man sat in front of the boss's el cheapo Ikea desk. Bertilson was grinning at him like a chimp.

Guy was the spunky, thirty-something record producer that Bertilson's mate, radio shock jock Norm Rackman, had found for Todd to produce the album in question.

Todd handed him a manila file.

'This is it, Guy. Five copies of the final Marc Charles recording contract and a smaller sealed envelope with their Bank Cheque in it.'

Todd patted the envelope.

'When, and *only* when, the contracts are all signed and witnessed, do you give them the money, got it?'

Guy nodded.

'Now, the main contract is identical to the one you gave them the other day to go through with their lawyers, but with one exception. This is the new clause right here,' he said, leaning across and pointing it out to him with his pen.

Guy read it out loud, '*Counting on Love*'

'Right. Now, that's the name of the song I was telling you about. The one I want you to put on the album. I'll even play you the demo,' said Todd, picking up a remote control, turning, then pointing it and pressing play.

As the demo began, Guy more or less seized up.

He was doing his very best to try to hide his horror.

The song Todd was playing him was utter crap. The producer kept praying for something better to happen.

The bridge? The next chorus?... *anything!* But no dice.

Todd's awful dog of a demo droned on and on, until finally and thankfully, it lumbered to a halt.

Bertilson hit stop and then grinned.

'So, what do you reckon, then, Guy? "*Counting on Love*"? Pretty good song, eh?'

'Well, it's certainly different, Mr Bertilson,' stammered the producer, desperate to sound enthusiastic. 'Sort of... fresh, if you know what I mean?'

He was at a loss to think of anything else to say.

'Well anyway,' said Todd. '*that* clause in the contract is the most important one of all.'

He stopped and stared at Guy.

'This is the deal,' he told him. 'If he doesn't agree to do "*Counting on Love*", there's no album contract and no money... nothing, got it?'

'What? You mean...'

'Yep, that's *exactly* what I mean. That song goes on the album or there won't be any album, OK?'

'Right, Mr Bertilson,' said Guy, thinking of all the money he might suddenly be unexpectedly losing and trying once again not to sound shaky.

'Now, I reckon if they'd had any problems with the rest of the contract we sent them before,' said Todd, 'we would've heard about it by now, don't you?'

The still shaken producer nodded in agreement again, doing his best to try to look enthusiastic.

'Er, just one other thing, Mr Bertilson,' he said, as throw-away as he could muster. 'What happens if they... er, happen to have some problem with the song?'

'Now I'm not saying they will,' he added hurriedly. 'But, just in case... what should I do, sir?'

Todd shrugged.

'Talk 'em into it, Guy. You're the producer, mate. That's why you're being paid all this money,' he said, 'rapidly moving his thumb and two fingers together and making his own version of a Scrooge-like face.

'Convince 'em, Guy. You know what to do! Chat 'em up,' he smiled. Anyway, it's your call, son... but the song's in, and it stays in, got it? And that's *non-negotiable*.'

Todd got up.

'Right. Time for you to get going. When's the meeting?'

'In about a half an hour, Mr Bertilson.'

'Now, I've told you before how important it is to keep my name out of this, Guy. And of course, that's all in your confidentiality agreement... along with some of the other more painful things that'll happen to you should it ever slip your memory.'

Todd smiled to himself at that.

'Oh yeah, and there's something else you should know, too. There's a really tasty good-looking sheila called Samira Delgado, who works for me. She'll be doing the PR for this album and keeping an eye on things. Now she doesn't know about the business arrangement between me and youse, OK? And I don't want her to find out about it either! Do you understand what I'm saying, Guy?'

The producer nodded yes.

'That means you *never, ever* mention knowing me to her or anyone else, right? And you *never* come here again to the Adda-Splashmatic office unless I specifically ask you to, OK? I don't ever want her seeing you with me, got it?'

Guy nodded yet again.

'Oh yes, and I don't want to find out about you ever getting too cosy with her, either, if you get my meaning?' he said.

'You're a good-looking young bloke, Guy,' he grinned. 'But there's gonna be no unhooking bras or ruffling frilly underwear either... well, not with her and you, anyway.'

Bertilson stopped dead and then hit him once again with his stony glare.

‘Do you understand exactly what I’m saying?’

‘Yes, sir.’

Guy understood alright.

And he knew Bertilson well enough by then to take him seriously.

‘If you ever have to come here,’ said Todd, ‘*always* call me first. Oh yes, and I want you always to use my private door at the back over there, just in case, right?’

Todd handed Guy a piece of paper with the address of an apartment in Ultimo and a phone number scribbled on it, plus a hundred dollar note.

‘That’s for your expenses,’ he told him. ‘I’ll be in Ultimo at that address for most of the afternoon. When the contract’s been signed and witnessed, jump in a cab and bring our two copies straight back to me at that address. Then we can get things moving, got it?’

Guy left the building through the side entrance and walked down a greasy alleyway towards the main road.

He was still in shock, trying to work out what the hell he was going to do with that goddam awful song, when he suddenly caught sight of a cab. It was pulling up right outside the front of the ADDA SPLASMATIC building.

Guy didn’t know it, but Sam Delgado was sitting inside, paying off the taxi driver.

“Go for it,” he told himself!

As he ran towards the cab, Guy raised his hand to try to attract the driver’s attention. But the moment he saw her, everything changed.

That was Guy! Always had been.

His dick led, and he followed.

The producer was instantly consumed by lust.

She'd already opened the cab door and had begun getting out from the front seat when she first saw him.

Of course, Sam knew exactly how hot she looked. Dressed in a peach-coloured silk suit with a dazzling short skirt, she was even wearing the matching high heels of doom.

'Do you mind if I grab it?' he asked, smiling and looking down at Sam, who by then was half in and half out of the taxi door.

'Depends what "it" is?' she said as she got out.

For a moment Guy didn't quite follow her.

'If "it's" the cab,' she said, 'the answer's no, I don't mind.'

Sam stood up, reached back into to cab to pick up her briefcase, then turned and looked him straight in the eye.

'If it's anything else you fancy grabbing,' she told him, giving Guy the wry look, with just a hint of a smile, 'I'll have to think about it, OK?'

At the same time as she said it, Sam picked up on Guy's orange-coloured cowboy boots.

'Hey!' she yelled. 'We're almost colour-coordinated.'

She grinned, pointing down at them, and then at the jacket she was wearing.

'Great minds,' he smiled back to her as she slipped on her pair of matching Gucci shades then swayed past him in a devastating fizz of perfume.

Floundering by then in his own private fog of Purple Haze, Guy licked his lips. His groggy eyes watched her do her killer walk up the steps and straight inside the building.

"But then again, that's life in the big city for ya, baby!" he silently smiled to himself, climbing into the cab.

As they drove across the Harbour Bridge, he couldn't stop thinking about her and his current turn of good fortune.

. . .

Wasn't it amazing to be alive, fit, and with money in his pocket? All that plus not having to worry about having his body broken by sadistic debt collector thugs, the way he had been only a week ago?

Guy felt so good... well, that was until he remembered that fucking awful song of Bertilsons.

After Club Dino, I headed straight for Mandrake's, my agent Felicity's HQ. The moment I arrived, Naomi, Felicity's stunning gofer, went gaga over my outfit just like everybody else had.

'That's sooo cool, Marc,' she cooed, mightily impressed.

As she scooted straight off to get me a coffee, I stood there glancing at myself in the reflection of the window and feeling pretty stellar myself. But at that same moment, in strode Guy, the producer!

I'd forgotten not just how good-looking he was, but how young he was too! Today our Hunk-meister, child-bride-of-a producer, was wearing a minimalist black leather jacket.

His body-hugging white tee shirt casually hinted at the abs of doom, and his skin-tight jeans and orange cowboy boots did the rest of it.

'Who do you have to fuck in here to get a coffee, Marc?' he whispered to me. 'I'm desperate!'

At that moment, Naomi came sashaying back in with mine.

'Her.' I whispered back and smiled.

'Naomi,' I said, 'this is Guy Gamage, our record producer. He's *desperate* for a coffee!'

'We met before... "Hi, Guy?'' she said, switching on her killer smile.

'Look, Naomi, why don't you give him mine?'

She looked at me, confused.

‘Give *him* your coffee?’ she said, still not quite getting it.

‘Yep. Then you can zip off and get me another one, eh?’ I said, ‘You see, “*His need is greater than mine!*”.’

‘Riiight!’ smiled Naomi.

Giving Guy an extra-sexy little grin and the cup of coffee, she turned and wiggled off.

We both watched her incredible eighteen-and-a-half-year-old body ooze away and into the little office kitchen to get me my replacement cuppa.

“So much for my sensational outfit.” I couldn’t help thinking. This dude’s leather jacket, tee-shirt, and jeans had comprehensively trumped and trashed it... and in less than a fucking microsecond!

And then, an instant later, when I led him into the boardroom, more or less the same thing happened with Felicity.

As she got up smiling from her chair at the head of the table, I swear my agent and part-time mistress of four decades began to self-lube!

By now, it seems as if I’ve been with Mandrakes forever. The wall of their plush boardroom is heaven for someone like me. In pride of place, the biggest photo is of Elton presenting me with my Gold Record years ago. But even better, if things go smoothly today, the iconic Aussie Rock Dinosaur, that’s me folks, will soon be all signed up for a new album deal. And just about everybody on the planet seems to think I’ll make a small fortune out of the deal too!

Dotted-line-time is always best... especially when there’s up-front cash like this! Like I’ve always said, you can’t beat caressing the shekels.

But, meanwhile, back on the planet earth, Sly-Fly Guy wasn’t only getting Felicity excited! I could feel my own Rock Star’s heart beginning to pound too!

You see, I'd noticed another, slightly smaller envelope peeking out from underneath the larger contracts envelope he was holding. Could that possibly be our Bank Checkie-weckie? The one with our upfront cash payment?

At exactly that moment, my best and oldest friend, Howard Hind, came half-running through the door. My financial adviser was so sorry he was late, he told us, puffing away.

We all sat down and Guy handed around copies of the final contract. By now Fel had reined in her raging hormones and clicked back into her normal urban assassin business mode.

Uh Oh! *'What's this?'* I said out loud, tapping the contract. It hadn't taken the Marco snout long to find out what the catch might possibly be, had it?

Last week, Guy had sent copies of the album contracts over for us to look at. Mrs Mandrake and their lawyers, as well as Howard and Goggles, Howie's old University mate and now an eminent QC, had all gone through it. Everyone had given it the incredulously joyous thumbs up. And Tony's lawyer, Clarrie, and Tony himself had both said the same thing too, hadn't they?

We small-talked while Howie went carefully through it all once again.

The only difference he could find in the final draft that Guy had brought us in today was the same thing that had just caught my eye. For some reason, they'd included a song called *"Counting on Love"*.

'You're right,' said Guy. 'This is the only change that's been made. We have to make sure this song is included on the album.'

That didn't initially seem a problem... until he played us the demo he'd brought with him of the song in question.

I could feel all the eyes homing in on me as this abysmal

crook of shit eventually, and mercifully, dribbled to a halt.

Fel wasn't the only one who realised how terrible it was and how angry I was. And Guy certainly knew it too. Even my best buddy, Howie, the money guy, was wincing!

'Sorry, Marc,' the producer told me, seeing the look on my face. 'But, this is the deal. There's nothing I can do about it. It's been specifically written into the contract. Why? I have no idea.'

He saw me shaking my head and started getting jumpy.

'Like I just said, Marc, I'm really sorry, buddy. I don't like it much either, but I have my orders. If you don't do that song, I'm afraid it's no deal and no album.'

Just like that!

Even worse, straight off, it was clear from his face that this Guy guy wasn't for turning.

There was a moment's pause before I hit the lot of them with a full-on Star tantrum.

'Are you all out of your fucking minds?' I said. 'Marc Charles does not record shit like that!'

Without pausing, I stormed straight out of the boardroom and then did exactly what my career has been doing for the last twenty or so years.

I headed straight for the toilet.