

## INXS singer died in apparent suicide

BY ROHAN SULLIVAN  
Associated Press Writer

SYDNEY, Australia (AP) — Just hours before he apparently hanged himself in a Sydney hotel, INXS lead singer Michael Hutchence made plans to meet somebody later that day, police said Sunday.

Police investigating the death said they have interviewed a woman who said Hutchence called her at about 9:30 a.m. Saturday and that they had arranged to meet later.

The singer's body was found by a hotel worker in his fifth floor room at the Ritz Carlton shortly before noon. Police took into their possession a leather belt and some prescription drugs.

They said there were no suspicious circumstances in the death.

"There was a phone call with a friend. We know who it is, but are not releasing the name. It plays no purpose other than helping us pinpoint the time of death," Inspector Dennis Smith said Sunday.

Police also want to talk with others who reportedly spoke with or met the rock star in the hours before his death. These included Australian TV actress Kym Wilson and two unidentified women who witnesses reported seeing sharing a drink at the hotel bar with Hutchence at about midnight Friday.

The death has sent shock waves through Australia's entertainment industry and around the globe.

Other band members, who were waiting for Hutchence to arrive at a television studio when news of his death broke, issued a statement Sunday.

"The band members of INXS are all in extreme shock at the loss of their dear friend and lead singer Michael Hutchence," they said. They asked that the band and family's privacy be respected "in this time of extreme grief."

Hutchence's fiancée Paula Yates and their 16-month-old daughter Heavenly Hiraani Tiger Lily were flying from London to Sydney, where they were expected to arrive early Monday.

Yates' lawyer Anthony Burton said, "She is deeply upset and devastated. It is her intention to go to Australia as soon as possible with their daughter Tiger Lily." She knew of no reason for the death, he said.

Hutchence, 37, had flown from London to his hometown of Sydney last week to prepare for the band's 20th anniversary "Lose Your Head" tour, which was due to start Tuesday. Promoter Michael Gudinski said the tour has been canceled.

Tributes flowed for Hutchence, who conservative Prime Minister John Howard said was "one of the outstanding products in rock of the past generation."

Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer said he hoped fans would not be influenced by the suicide.

"What a waste. I hope there are no copycat

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GLENN BAKER  
Australian rock historian

examples," he said.

Smith said police are still trying to trace Hutchence's last movements, and were waiting for the results of toxicology and forensic tests on the belt and other items seized from the hotel room. An autopsy was to be carried out Monday.

Police interviewed Hutchence's father, Kell, who had dinner with his son at a restaurant near the hotel Friday. The newspaper Sunday Telegraph reported that the two men and Hutchence's stepmother were seen smiling and laughing during the meal.

But restaurant staff said Hutchence Sr. at one stage looked concerned.

"His father put his hand on top of his, asking Michael if everything was all right and if he was OK," the paper quoted waitress Susan Murtagh as saying.

"Michael said, 'Dad, I'm fine,'" she was quoted as saying.

Police also confirmed Sunday that Hutchence

ordered room service "several times" during the night. They declined to say whether Hutchence was alone when the service was delivered.

Australian rock historian Glenn A. Baker said Hutchence was an unlikely candidate for suicide.

"Michael was the consummate rock star. He took upon the role of a rock star so comfortably, he floated above the pressures," Baker said.

"Why he would choose this moment to throw in the towel I think will always remain a mystery."

Formed in Perth in 1977, INXS shot to international success a decade later with the album "Kick," which sold 9 million copies. In its two-decade history, the band's 10 albums sold 20 million copies.

The tour was to be the first in their homeland of Australia in three years, and was something of a comeback after dwindling sales of the last album "Elegantly Wasted."

## Modern English pop melts into '90s mode

BY BRET SCHULTE  
Senior Reporter

### Concert Preview

They may still be English, but the '80s synth-pop group is struggling to remain modern.

Modern English, famous for its two-time hit "I Melt With You," is bringing its keyboard and a passel of what lead singer Robbie Grey calls "very '90s sounding" music to Knickerbockers, 901 O St., tonight.

Grey, the last original member of Modern English, has been a constant in the band's turbulent and shaky tenure as Brit-pop royalty. The group, having gone through almost as many labels as band members, is currently fighting its image as a one-hit wonder band from a regrettable decade of glam and keyboard bands.

Grey retorts that any such perception of his band is "bollocks."

"We have nothing to do with the '80s," Grey said. "We have done some retro-type concerts but we try not to because we have new material that was written in 1997."

In 1982, Modern English topped the British and then American pop charts with what would ultimately become its definitive and only memorable track, "I Melt With You." Although a few minor hits followed, the band seemed to stagnate. When group members decided to leave the 4AD label, also home to moody pop groups like Lush, Throwing Muses and Belly, the band found that life wasn't always mesh and lace.

TVT Records picked up the band at the turn of the decade and struck a deal with Modern English to re-record "I Melt With You," releasing it on the new album, "Pillow Lips."

It was a huge success, earning Modern English a permanent place in the rock 'n' roll annals as the first rock group to have a number one hit with the same song in two different decades, Grey said.

After also running through brief stints with Sire and Imago Records, Modern English currently is seeking a new label to support the band, which has revamped its previously synthesized sound with a new "electronic-music" groove. Sure, it seems a bit redundant, or possibly a manifestation of personal denial, but Grey says, "It's the best stuff I've done with Modern English in a long time."

On tour, reactions to the group have been mixed, Grey said. While songs like "Sixteen Days," "After the Snow" and "I Melt With You" are demanded by the crowd, Grey said audiences have kept the requests to a minimum.

"There are some of them, but a lot of them now are 45 years old, and they don't have their hair down anymore," he said. "They are off having kids and have grown up, and I haven't."

"I Melt With You" is easily the best thing to happen to the frequently jobless band. It almost surely accounts for 80 percent of crowd attendance at concerts in the United States, and also carried members through some lean times when Burger King used the track to promote a new burger a few years ago. Broke at the time, Grey said he and other band members each earned \$10,000 from the commercial.

"It was quite funny because our original keyboardist was vegetarian," Grey said. "But he didn't complain when he saw the money."

Grey admits that the turn-out for Modern English concerts is "half and half," but he knows why people are at the concert — Burger King or no.

"The crowd goes nuts every time we play ('I Melt With You')," Grey said. "We put it at the end of the set so they have to stay."

Call Knickerbockers at (402) 476-6865 for more information.



RUDY (Matt Damon) and Deck (Danny DeVito) leave the courthouse having argued their first motion in "The Rainmaker."

## 'Rainmaker' yields trite treat

BY SEAN MCCARTHY  
Film Critic

### Movie Review

"The Rainmaker" is the best John Grisham film adaptation so far. But that's like saying "Hysteria" is Def Leppard's best album.

Though Grisham's last film, "The Chamber," flopped, "The Rainmaker" will likely attract audiences for the Thanksgiving weekend. Director Francis Ford Coppola has made an enjoyable, well acted and sometimes humorous movie. Unlike past Grisham films, "The Rainmaker" has no chase scenes. Rudy Baylor (Matt Damon) gets to use a gun, but never fires it.

The story follows Baylor's first case, a suit filed by Donny Ray Black (Johnny Whitworth), a leukemia victim, against a large, sinister insurance corporation. Whitworth supplies some of the most poignant moments of the film with his subtle portrayal of a withered man.

Baylor decides to forgo the settlement offered by Leo Drummond (Jon Voight), the head lawyer of the Great Benefit firm. Drummond's reptilian

smile and stare give off an intimidation that keeps Baylor off guard. With "Anaconda" and "The Rainmaker," one wonders if Voight has some snake fixation when it comes to selecting his roles.

In what could have been a great example of how the poor are constantly exploited by big business, Coppola sticks to a "Rocky"-in-the-courtroom format. Some of Drummond's lawyers are fat; all of them laugh and have the slippery smile of most movie lawyer fiends.

Baylor is not intimidated, though. Deck Shifflet (Danny DeVito) shows Baylor the ropes of the system. Never shying from chasing an ambulance or giving his number to a kid with a cast at a funeral, DeVito is the scene stealer of "The Rainmaker."

Just in case a two-hour courtroom movie may bore audiences, Coppola adds a subplot about an abused spouse that shares about the same time as the insurance case. Kelly Riker (Claire Danes) plays the victim who quickly

### The Facts

Title: John Grisham's "The Rainmaker"  
Stars: Matt Damon, Claire Danes, Jon Voigt, Danny DeVito  
Director: Francis Ford Coppola  
Rating: PG-13 (violence, lawyers, language)  
Grade: C+  
Five Words: Underdogs battle fat, mean lawyers.

becomes Baylor's love interest.

Danes undoubtedly has talent. She just needs the right director. In "The Rainmaker," she is expected to play a frightened battered wife who immediately latches on and falls in love with Baylor when he visits her at a hospital. Though the subplot seems like it doesn't fit in with the flow of the film, it is nice to see Andrew Shue get pulverized with a bat near the end of the film. Shue plays Cliff, who savagely batters Kelly, even when she is in the hospital.

Other members of the cast do their best with two-dimensional characters. Mickey Rourke, always hurting for

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