

## Doors drummer sues ex-bandmates



John Densmore, formerly of The Doors.

by Elaine Dutka  
Los Angeles Times

John Densmore, co-founder and drummer of the Doors, filed suit against former band members Ray Manzarek and Robbie Krieger in Los Angeles Superior Court on Tuesday, charging

that a tour organized by the pair represents a breach of contract and trademark infringement.

On the tour, Stewart Copeland, formerly of the Police, substitutes for Densmore, and Ian Astbury, formerly of the Cult, stands in for singer Jim Morrison, who died in 1971. The filing cites misleading advertising and promotion of the new group as the Doors without the consent of Densmore and the estates of Jim Morrison and his widow, Pam Courson.

"This has been brewing for a month, ever since the first ad ... came out in the Los Angeles Times," Densmore said. "It was identical to our first album cover--and our original logo appears on Stewart Copeland's bass drum, which makes me sad and hurt. While I admire Stewart and Ian as musicians, the Doors are John, Ray, Robbie and Jim ... just like John, Paul, George and Ringo are The Beatles. When Maurice Gibb died, his two brothers said they'd continue playing--but not under the name Bee Gees, out of respect for the band's legacy. The only concession Ray and Robbie are making is changing the name to the Doors: 21st Century, which is obviously not enough. I've gotten calls for tickets from friends and fans on the assumption that I'm playing."

A representative of the Doors: 21st Century said Tuesday. "We have no knowledge of this situation and we have no comment at this time."

Densmore's attorney, Jerome Mandel of Mandel & Norwood, says Densmore's reputation has been harmed by the implication that "he was not, and is not, an integral part of the Doors," one of the classic Los Angeles rock bands from the 1960s whose hits include "Light My Fire" and "Touch Me."

According to the complaint, the group--which was elected to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame--had previously agreed to make joint business decisions and share in all revenues. Copeland and Astbury are also named in the legal action, which seeks public clarification and punitive damages to be determined.

Densmore was set to perform with the tour but backed out for health--and philosophical--reasons. Two years ago, he injured his ears on a TV special and he's been suffering from tinnitus, or ringing in the ears. Although he had largely healed by September, when the band played its first gig, the drummer didn't like the format. He was uncomfortable having one singer perform all of Morrison's songs rather than sharing them among the band members. And when he subsequently read a review of the concert that quoted Manzarek as saying that Astbury and Copeland were permanently aboard, he said, he felt he had been, in effect, publicly fired.

## Hip-hop's Roots have sounds and smarts

by Brian McCollum  
Knight Ridder Newspapers

A funny thing happened to hip-hop between new albums from the Roots.

Real instruments began creeping back onto urban radio. A raw, thoughtful brand of music, dubbed neo-soul, started getting attention from mainstream audiences. Outkast even won a pair of Grammys.

And the members of the Roots, who for a decade had quietly led the live hip-hop revolution, looked on and gathered a sense of their place in the world--and their sense of responsibility to the movement they'd helped foment.

"The expectation was so high," says drummer Ahmir (Questlove) Thompson, "there was no way we could come back with just anything."

"Things Fall Apart," released to wide acclaim in 1999, had been regarded by many as organic hip-hop's definitive document: an old-school rap ethic, blended with a socially conscious mindset, steeped and set in a mix of hot soul jamming.

But three years is a long time in the hip-hop world. Long enough to make the Philadelphia band--Questlove, DJ Scratch, MC Black Thought, bassist Hub, keyboardist Kamal and human beat box Rahzel--wonder if it was still relevant. (Vocalist Malik B is now estranged from the group.) "People's attention spans are real short," says Questlove. "You have to drop a 100-ton anvil on top of their heads."

For the Roots, "Phrenology" was that piece of heavy metal, albeit with a shot of Philly funk. Released in late November, the album debuted in the top 10 and caught the attention of critics hungry for high-quality releases as the year wound down.

It's an unconventional triumph of sound and smarts, the most eclectic collection of songs the band has put to tape--a gumbo of simmering R&B grooves, hotshot rock 'n' roll and complex psychedelic meanderings.

"Daring" is the adjective that often gets propped up next to the Roots' name. But the way Questlove sees it, his band never considered "Phrenology" a risk.

"With us, the live show presentation and the recorded presentation have always been different animals," he says. "There have been some nights in which, if the right audience was in attendance, we'd do all jazz versions of our songs, or all hard rock versions. If anything, we thought it was time we transferred some of the energy of our live show to wax."

Fans are accustomed to being startled. Questlove recalls the Roots' 1995 debut release for Geffen Records--its first big step out of the hometown scene.

"When Philadelphians got their hands on that, they reacted the same way most people feel about 'Phrenology' now: 'What's this? You're supposed to be jazzy!'" he says. "We shift gears with every record. I want people to understand--we're not going to do what they expect us to do. We're sort of a potluck dinner."

That's not to say the music on "Phrenology"--now on display on a nationwide tour--was put together on a whim. Questlove says it was, in fact, the most carefully calculated Roots album yet.

"This is pretty much the first album where we had a plan that we executed from A to Z," he says.

While the Roots garner ample respect from their musical peers--Talib Kweli, Jill Scott, Common and other hip-hop progressives--the band hasn't been immune from criticism. For all the cultural headway made by the group's brand of resourceful hip-hop, this remains an era when Nelly can sell 4 million records.

Though he won't point fingers, Questlove describes the contemporary record industry as a "state of emergency."

And he says the urge for the quick, commercial hit hasn't always been easy to resist.

"I'm not saying we've never been tempted to throw it all away and go for the brass ring," he says. "I could release a platinum record on all the songs I didn't end up recording. We've recorded 300 or 400 songs--you just happen to get the pick of the litter when the album comes out. So I don't want to say we're above it. It's just that at the end of the day, we come to our senses." Questlove figures he'll take 10 years of endurance over 10 million in sales.

"It's like when squirrels gather their nuts and what not, preparing for hibernation," he says. "That's what we're doing. Establishing a really good fan base and a good live show and a good, quality reputation. Those things are what's important."

## Bill Maher opens HBO show tonight

by Martie Zad  
The Washington Post

The guy with all those funny views of the news debuts a new hour-long series on HBO tonight at 11:30. The 20-episode series will be called "Real Time With Bill Maher" and offer the comedian's unique perspective on contemporary issues.

"This edgy show will give a regular, uncensored

forum for the first time ever on TV," says HBO Chairman and CEO Chris Albrecht. Maher's co-executive producers Brad Grey and Marc Gurvitz consider Maher's venture with HBO as an "ideal venue to showcase his unique talents and point of view."

Maher was the creator and host of "Politically Incorrect," which debuted on Comedy Central in 1993 and moved to ABC in 1997, ending its run

this past year.

He has had three one-hour solo specials and a pair of half-hour stand-up specials on HBO.

Also debuting tonight is the new six-episode HBO late-night comedy series "Da Ali G Show," starring Sacha Baron Cohen (hailed as the Peter Sellers of our generation.) in a U.S. edition of the hit British show.

Sunday on Showtime at 8 p.m. as part of its special Black History Month programming Showtime Original Pictures presents "Deacons for Defense," a true story of a group of African-American men who chose to take an aggressive and armed stand in the civil rights movement. The film stars Forest Whitaker, Jonathan Silverman and Ossie Davis.

Other weekend highlights include:

"The Chindit Raiders," the story of the British army raiding force used in the jungles of Japanese-occupied Burma to disrupt supply routes and sabotage railroads. The unit, named after stone creatures that stood guard at Burmese temples, was commanded by dynamic and unconventional Brigadier Orde Wingate. Sunday on the History Channel at 8 p.m.

The debut of the new series "The Point," a program designed to go behind the headlines. The first episode, "Intimate Deception," delves into the ways of bigamists, usually clever con-artists wielding the powerful weapon of love. Sunday on A&E at 10 p.m.

"Together: Stop Violence Against Women," a documentary by Rory Kennedy and Liz Garbus presenting four diverse stories of survivors of violence including domestic abuse and sexual assault by a stranger. Sunday on Lifetime at 11 p.m.

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