



Late US musician Lou Reed's former guitar technician Stewart Hurwood performs in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Devine during the concert "Lou Reed Drone" in New York City. — AFP photos

Lou Reed's guitars take New Yorkers to church

As his acclaimed "New York" album turns 30, the guitars of late rock pioneer Lou Reed are still reverberating in his beloved hometown, giving deafening soundbaths to those seeking refuge. This week, Reed's widow Laurie Anderson brought the icon's "drones"—openly tuned guitars propped against amplifiers to produce ear-splitting, unpredictable sounds—to New York's Cathedral of St John the Divine for a free, public performance.

The show was part of the cathedral's contemporary exhibition "The Value of Sanctuary," which features works from some 30 artists exploring the notion of refuge and social identity in times of upheaval. Calling Reed one of the first "noise artists" who "got a little bored with notes," Anderson said after his death she and others in Reed's inner circle began doing drone performances in churches, theaters and at music festivals everywhere from New York to Tanzania to showcase his love for "extreme volume"—and its meditative qualities.

Reed—known for his poetic lyricism and deadpan delivery—began creating such drones during his days as the frontman of the massively influential band The Velvet Underground, rock experimentalists who worked with pop artist Andy Warhol. "It's so symphonic and so beautiful," Anderson said. "It's a kind of music that's very complex." The drones rang out in the enormous cathedral—large enough to lay the entire Statue of Liberty lengthwise within its walls—for some five hours.

They were accompanied at the start with organ music before Anderson and other collaborators began chiming in with instruments including drums and violas, as onlookers filled the cavernous space for a sonic massage. "It gets into your body somehow," Anderson told AFP just prior to the performance. "It's so loud, it's relaxing." "It fills you, and you become defenseless," said the 71-year-old multimedia artist and electronic music trailblazer. "And that's a nice feeling in this world." "We're very defensive these days." — AFP



Guitars and amps are seen in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Devine before the concert "Lou Reed Drone".

Two more K-pop stars embroiled in sex video scandal

Two more K-pop stars quit yesterday, their agencies said, as a scandal over illicit sex videos and other offences rippled further across South Korea's music industry. Yong Jun-hyung, 29, left boy band Highlight—formerly known as Beast—after he admitted watching videos of singer-songwriter Jung Joon-young having sex with women taken without their consent, his agency said. Hours later, managers for Choi Jong-hoon, 29, a member of boy band FT Island, announced his retirement saying that he would be questioned by police later this week over "suspicions" he was involved in the scandal.

Choi is believed to have been a member of an online chatroom where Jung shared the footage—as is mega K-pop star Seungri. Both Seungri and Jung announced their retirements from showbusiness earlier this week. Jung, 30, was questioned by police yesterday over the videos, while Seungri—a member of boy band BIGBANG with a range of business interests—was also interviewed for allegedly providing prostitutes to his potential investors.

Both men apologized to "all Korean citizens" when they reported to police and promised to cooperate with the inquiries. Yong received the footage directly from Jung, watched it and had an "inappropriate conversation" with him, his agency Around Us Entertainment said in a statement. South Korea has been battling a growing epidemic of so-called "molka", or spycam videos—mostly of women, secretly filmed by men.

As well as secretly filming women in schools, toilets and offices, "revenge porn"—videos taken of



Seungri (center), a member of the K-pop boy group BIGBANG, speaks to the media as he arrives for questioning over criminal allegations at the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency in Seoul. — AFP

sexual relations without the other partner's consent—is believed to be equally widespread. According to Han Sol, an activist at Flaming Feminist Action, such videos have long been watched and shared by South Korean men as a form of entertainment and a way to strengthen their "brotherly ties". Yong, who has also worked as a record producer and actor, had previously denied allegations that he had been involved in the ongoing K-pop sex scandal, which has threatened to overturn the industry's "wholesome" image. For South Korean women's activists, the scandal, including the latest revelation, is unsurprising. — AFP

US actress Lori Loughlin arrested in college bribery scandal

US actress Lori Loughlin surrendered to authorities on Wednesday and was to appear in a Los Angeles court to face charges in a massive college admissions scam involving other celebrities and top industry CEOs. The "Full House" star and her husband, designer Mossimo Giannulli, who has also been charged in the case, allegedly paid \$500,000 in bribes to ensure their two daughters were recruited to the University of Southern California rowing team even though the pair did not participate in the crew. FBI spokeswoman Laura Emiller told AFP that Loughlin, 54, surrendered to FBI agents early Wednesday after returning from Vancouver, where she was filming, and she was set to be arraigned later in the afternoon on fraud-related charges.

Giannulli appeared in court on Tuesday and was released on \$1 million bail. The couple were among 50 people indicted on Tuesday in a scam to help children of the American elite gain entry into top US colleges. "Desperate Housewives" star Felicity Huffman, who has also been implicated in the scandal, was arrested by FBI agents at her home on Tuesday and later released on bail. The 56-year-old actress and her husband William H Macy, the star of Showtime's hit series "Shameless," allegedly paid \$15,000 for their eldest daughter to perform well on a college entrance exam. Macy was mentioned in the case but has not been charged.



In this file photo taken actress Lori Loughlin attends the Women's Cancer Research Fund's 'Unforgettable Evening' in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

The ringleader behind the scam, William "Rick" Singer, has pleaded guilty and is cooperating with authorities. Some of the universities targeted in the elaborate cheating scam include Yale, Stanford, UCLA and Georgetown. None of the schools or the students has been charged in the case. According to prosecutors, the accused parents paid a firm run by Singer as much as \$6 million to cheat on college entrance exams for their children or to bribe coaches to help non-athletic students get scholarships. — AFP