

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2019



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Cosplayers arrive for the third day of the 2019 New York Comic Con at the Jacob Javits Center. — AFP
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Ginger Baker, drummer with rock band Cream, dies aged 80

Legendary British musician Ginger Baker, a founding member of psychedelic band Cream and considered one of the most innovative and influential drummers of his generation, died on Sunday aged 80. Baker co-founded Cream—widely seen as the world's first supergroup—in 1966 alongside guitarist Eric Clapton and bassist Jack Bruce, before embarking on a host of other musical exploits during a colorful and eclectic career.

He had a volatile personal life, with four marriages, three children, struggles with drug and alcohol and stormy relationships with bandmates over the decades. Some of the world's most famous drummers, including Ringo Starr on Sunday joined in the tributes. "God bless Ginger Baker incredible musician wild and inventive drummer," wrote The Beatles' drummer on his Twitter account. "Peace and love to his family." His death was announced on his Twitter account and confirmed by one of his daughters.

"We are very sad to say that Ginger has passed away peacefully in hospital this morning," the message stated. "Thank you to everyone for your kind words over the past weeks." Baker had previously suffered from heart problems and was admitted to hospital several weeks ago after becoming "critically ill", according to his social

media page. The famously erratic rocker emerged in the 1960s at the same time as other legendary drummers Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones and Mitch Mitchell of the Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Described by the BBC as "a temperamental and argumentative figure, whose behavior frequently led to on-stage punch-ups", he was also once acknowledged as the best drummer in the world. "There aren't many drummers who can get anywhere near me," he boasted in an old interview still posted on his personal website. Music critic Neil McCormick lauded Baker as changing "the perception of rock drummers in the Sixties from timekeepers to musical personalities in their own right".

"In this age of drum machines, loops and click tracks, we may never see his like again," he wrote in a tribute piece Sunday on the Daily Telegraph's website.

Wild and lovely guy

Born Peter Edward Baker in southeast London in 1939, he adopted the nickname Ginger due to the flaming red hair of his youth. He embraced a career in music after initially trying to become a professional cyclist, hoping to compete in the Tour de France, but abandoned the plan after an accident. He first emerged in the burgeoning



In this file photo British musician Ginger Baker of Cream performs at the Rock 'N' Roll Fantasy Camp at AMP Rehearsal Studios in North Hollywood, California. — AFP

blues scene of early 1960s London, before helping to create blues-rock fusion band Cream, which went on to sell millions of records worldwide.

Baker stood out for pioneering the drum solo and his uniquely energetic style, merging the mellifluousness of jazz

with the harder edge of rock. The band broke up in 1968, amid battles between Baker and bassist Bruce, and he then joined another mythical, ephemeral group, Blind Faith, alongside Clapton and Steve Winwood, before founding the 10-piece Ginger Baker's Air Force. The drummer later lived in Nigeria, recording with Fela Kuti and setting up a recording studio. He went on to help Paul McCartney record the Wings' album "Band on the Run".

"Great drummer, wild and lovely guy," McCartney wrote on Twitter on Sunday. "Sad to hear that he died but the memories never will." Cream briefly reunited in 2005, while Baker was living in South Africa, before he officially retired from playing in 2016 following a diagnosis of heart issues. He continued to give occasional performances. A 2013 documentary, "Beware of Mr Baker", which critics say showed the best of the worst of Baker—capturing one of his violent outbursts—featured an array of music legends lauding his legacy. "He personally is what drums are all about," said Stewart Copeland, the drummer with The Police.—AFP

Israeli spy's widow hurt by Netflix biopic, but welcomes publicity

A Netflix drama about Israeli spy Eli Cohen, who infiltrated the Syrian government in the 1960s and was later executed, has received a mixed review from his widow. Nadia Cohen, 84, said she was hurt by parts of the mini-series "The Spy" because they bore no relation to the truth, although she hopes the dramatization might help in recovering her late husband's remains from Syria.

"The Spy" depicts Egyptian-born Cohen - played by Sacha Baron Cohen - as an ambitious, Arabic-speaking immigrant to Israel who is recruited by Mossad and, overcoming his fears and the strains on his family, infiltrates the Damascus high command by posing as a rich scion of the Syrian diaspora. Cohen was exposed and executed by Syrian authorities in 1965. Israel credits information he relayed with helping it defeat Syria in a 1967 war.

Nadia Cohen said liberties taken in some parts of the script "raise my blood pressure". She cited one sub-plot showing her struggling to work as a seamstress for an Israeli socialite while raising the Cohens' children alone, and another where a Mossad handler takes a romantic interest in her while her husband is away under cover. Neither happened in reality, Nadia Cohen said.

"Someone wanted to bring things into the mix that really hurt us," she told Reuters in the sitting room of her home in the Israeli coastal city of Herzliya, where framed black-and-white pictures of Eli adorn the man-

telpiece. "This could have been a great, Zionist, educational series (about) love of country, sacrifice and about his life and my life, my children." Still, Nadia, who wept during the interview, said the renewed interest in her husband more than a half-century after his death was a good thing.

"It is possible, that (the family will have) this anger for two or three more weeks and then we will see it as something that revived Eli, gave him a soul so he lives again among this nation," she said. Israel has long sought to repatriate Cohen for burial from Syria, with which it remains technically at war. In April, with Russian intervention, Syria returned the remains of an Israeli soldier killed fighting there in 1982. Last year, Mossad said it had recovered Eli Cohen's watch as part of its quest for his body.

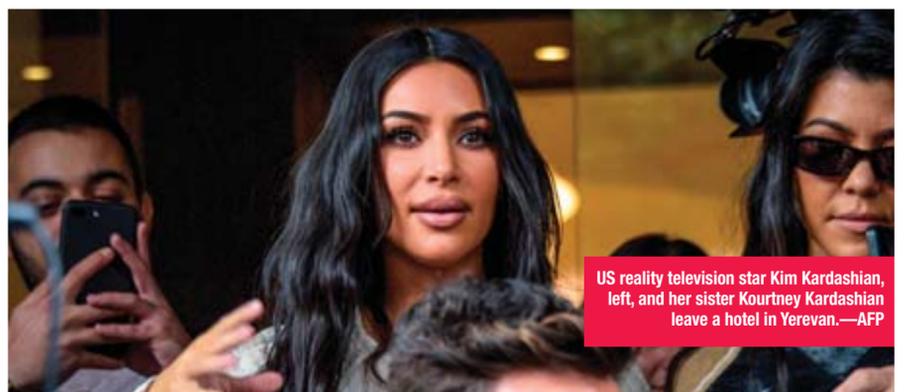
"I would kiss and hug all of this (Netflix) production if that's what would bring Eli to me. I would be grateful. It would be the biggest gift and compensation of our lives," Nadia said. The six-part biopic depicts Eli as lavishing money and attention on potential Syrian sources - including at an orgy that he orchestrates at his swanky Damascus apartment to entrap a top military general. He is also shown reluctantly courting the daughter of a key Syrian contact. — Reuters

Kim Kardashian christens her children in Armenia

US reality television star Kim Kardashian baptized her children yesterday during a visit to her ancestral homeland Armenia. Kardashian wore a tight-fitting beige dress and stopped to take pouting selfies with local fans as she left Holy Echmiadzin, the Caucasus nation's main cathedral. She was accompanied by her four children and sister Kourtney Kardashian, according

to an AFP photographer. Her husband, rapper Kanye West, was not present.

The visit was the star's first to the Caucasus nation since a 2015 trip marking the centenary of the Armenian genocide that saw her husband give a chaotic, impromptu concert in capital Yerevan. Kardashian is due to give a speech on Tuesday at the World Congress on Information Technology which is being held in Armenia. Kardashian's Armenian ancestors on her father's side emigrated to the United States from an area that now lies in Turkey. Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as an official religion, in the fourth century.—AFP



US reality television star Kim Kardashian, left, and her sister Kourtney Kardashian leave a hotel in Yerevan.—AFP