

brought a fresh outbreak of psychopaths would charge with pool cues flailing



It's only rock 'n' roll... Mick Jagger stops singing as Hells Angels drag on to the stage a person they have just beaten, above left; two people attack with pool cues, above, and author Sam Cutler, left.

to get the Stones off stage, then and there, but Mick would not be moved. I whispered in his ear: "Let's get this over with." But Mick insisted that he would finish the show.

I stood as close as I could to Mick and Keith while they restarted the music, nervously eyeing the people on stage, wondering who would be next to launch an attack. In the pocket of my jacket, I had the Derringer, and wondered if I'd have the balls to shoot someone if they tried to hurt Mick. I have never, ever wanted a policeman around more than I did at that moment.

There wasn't one of the cowards in sight. I was numb from lack of sleep and exposure to the worst violence I had ever seen. I could only think: I have to get my band out of here. I have to get them on the helicopter. There was a walk of some 200 yards from the backstage area to where the chopper would take off and speed us to safety and there was no way that we would be able to make that journey unescorted. I had to talk to the Hells Angels and ask them to help us. Surprisingly, they agreed.

As the last notes of the performance died, we rushed from the stage, frightened and distraught. Behind a phalanx of Hells Angels, the Rolling Stones reached the helicopter and made their escape.

Hundreds of local, state and federal laws had been broken and not one police officer chose to act. There was no police inquiry following Alamoart, no public inquiry. Why? For the simple reason that such an inquiry would have exposed the fact that the police had done nothing in the face of serious violent crime. Nothing, that is, other than bravely towing away hundreds of cars.

I feared for his safety as I watched several very stoned people looking at him with murderous intent. The band began to play again as if their lives depended on it. The music momentarily stilled the crowd and I hovered at the side of the stage, afraid of where all this might end.

Then there was a commotion and perhaps 10 Hells Angels ran towards the stage, away from a man in a luminescent green suit, yelling: "He's got a gun!" The man lurched forward and an Angel rushed towards him, through his retreating brothers. The Angel grabbed at the man's wrist, and, holding his gun hand up in the air, began to stab at him. I saw the long-barrelled silver gun shining in the stage lights, and so did others near me.

The man with the gun collapsed under a mountain of Angels as they rushed in for the kill. The band's music ground to a halt and Keith started shouting at the Angels. "If you guys don't stop it right now, we're gonna quit!"

I ran across to Keith and spoke into his ear. "A guy's got a gun Keith. He's got a gun! Please cool it, man. Someone's been hurt real bad."

I turned back to Mick. "There's a guy with a gun. Give me a minute; I'll check on what's happening. F...in' cool it - somebody may have been killed." Mick went deathly pale as I rushed down into the thick of it.

As soon as I saw Meredith Hunter, I knew he was dying. Lying on the ground, with medics in attendance, he had blood pouring from his body. He was on his stomach and the doctors were lifting his jacket so they could get at his back. A hysterical woman was screaming: "Don't let him die, don't let him die!" I forced my way back through the crowd and regained the stage. The band stood staring into the dark mass of the audience, unsure what to do. Once again Mick appealed forlornly for calm. I wanted

people who had played central roles in the planning of the event had said a word or offered any assistance - as soon as things got out of hand, they had returned to the shadows from which they had previously so confidently emerged.

Bill Wyman arrived and 10 minutes later I got the band on stage. It was now dark, and the vibe was worse than it had been all day.

Several of the Angels made a point of telling me not to worry: "Nothing's gonna happen to your band. Get 'em to play and it'll all be cool."

With a dry mouth, I thanked them and felt truly nervous. Everyone could pick up on the threat in the air. I begged Mick not to stop once the set had started, regardless of what was happening in the crowd. Get through the numbers as fast as possible, and let's get the f...outta here. Mick seemed to agree, but was very worried. It was an act of absolute bravery for him to go on stage.

The Stones lumbered into their first song and the violence erupted immediately.

The Stones played the opening bars of *Under My Thumb* as the first fights broke out in front of the stage. The small group of men with pool cues attacked the audience, lashing out indiscriminately at anyone who got in their way.

The music stopped and Mick appealed for people to be cool. The band started playing again, but each new song brought a fresh outbreak of violence. It was almost as if the beatings had become natural components of the music itself.

Young psychopaths would charge into the crowd with their pool cues flailing, the crowd would part, the injured would be removed and the concert would continue. It was surreal.

Mick peered from the floodlit stage into the dark mass of the audience and made an absurd plea for calm. "If we are as one, then let us be as one."

You Can't Always Get What You Want: My Life With the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead and Other Wonderful Reprobates, by Sam Cutler (William Heinemann Australia, \$34.95).