

Inside the Jim Morrison Pardon Quest: Going Back To Miami

By Dave Diamond

There is an effort underway by the Doors Collectors Magazine, a popular online Doors fan site, to request the Governor of Florida Charlie Crist to consider an unprecedented full and absolute posthumous pardon for the late famed Doors lead singer Jim Morrison, a citizen of Melbourne Florida. The effort was initiated in 1996, when several infractions about the September 1970 conviction of Jim Morrison stemming from the now infamous March 1969 Doors concert put on at the Dinner Key Auditorium were discovered upon re-review of this case.

Over the years, efforts to make the general music media and many elements of Florida government aware of these infractions and trying to shed new light on evidence never before heard or having not been allowed to be presented at the initial trial, have been met with basic apathy, misinformation, rumors, speculations and public "arm chair" jurying. The end result of the unchallenged convictions have come to be accepted by most Doors fans and the mainstream press as nothing more than the typical myth and mystique that surround most of the legendary bands from the Sixties, often retold as facts to generation after generation. Many in the music press over the years have cemented Jim Morrison's "iconic" outlaw image largely due to the notoriety of this particular case, thus diminishing his true contribution to popular American music and literature.

In a true twist of irony, Morrison's actions on that abysmal evening in Miami served to end what has now become accepted as his "Lizard King" stature, thus attempting to change his image into a more simple poet weary of the public excess. Ensuing years saw many fans and historians come to accept him as a martyr for the 1st Amendment, an outlaw who fought the law, a pure symbol of freedom against the oppressive and turbulent times of the Sixties. Many longtime Doors fans, including the band members themselves, saw this particular concert as the end of all that was legit with this band and their live performances, an innocence gone. On the other hand, some fans latched onto the notoriety, largely due to the music press & politicians who were hell bent on making Morrison the cherry on the cake of the Sixties' excess.

When the image, the music, the Sixties, Vietnam, the press, individual historical interpretation, the general apathy and all of those other elements are stripped away, what's left is the law and the Miami case itself. The effort of the Doors Collectors Magazine has been examining the 1970 Miami trial for 11 years, without thought to anything outside of the case itself. Upon in-depth review of the case, several well documented Constitutional violations were found, violations that very simply denied true justice in this case. Morrison's defense was barred from presenting key evidence and witnesses who could have clearly exonerated him. Morrison had the right to confront his accusers, but the then-Mayor of Dade County and the officials who brought the charges on did not appear for testimony. Many of the witnesses that were present had no real consistent recollections of the Miami concert. Witness accounts varied and memory lapses were frequent.

Forget for a moment that he IS Jim Morrison. We looked at this from the standpoint that he was a citizen of Florida who was denied true justice for several reasons. It was a politically motivated case to begin with. There are musicians, bands and performers over the years who have done far worse that pop off some profanity onstage and they were never arrested and charged. The officials involved in the Morrison case were under pressure to act. If Jim Morrison had INDEED committed the offenses at hand, he would have been arrested that night during or directly after the Miami performance just as he was during the now infamous 1968 New Haven concert, where he was maced in the eyes by a police officer before the show. During the Miami performance, the police had no probable cause to arrest Jim Morrison and they didn't. In fact, it was proven that many of the police officers in attendance that night were seen laughing, joking and hanging out with The Doors before, during and after the show. If there was no cause for arrest during that timeframe, then the ensuing charges only underscore the political pressure that followed.

With regard to the now legendary question of the alleged exposure, there are no credible witnesses, photographs or any film/video that can prove with 100% certainty that this incident occurred. Under oath in the Dade County Court, during his 1970 trial, Jim Morrison testified that he did not expose himself. The jury found him GUILTY of this charge even though the State of Florida could not & did not LEGALLY prove this incident happened beyond a reasonable doubt!

Further, the charge of public intoxication is mind boggling in how the jury handled this. There are several audio CDs out there that clearly demonstrate that Morrison was intoxicated. Morrison was found NOT GUILTY on the charge of public intoxication by the jury! What exactly was WRONG with this jury? How exactly did they base their findings? Why didn't the Florida press pick up on this right then and there?

It is common knowledge that Jim Morrison remained free on bail, pending appeal. He died July 3rd, 1971, but that's NOT where the story ends! His appeal was never heard! THAT point right there is what led to the formation of this current pardon effort, in light of two legal precedents that have come to light in the last few years, that when compared and applied to Morrison's conviction, paint a much different picture.

1. December 23, 2003- New York Governor George Pataki issued an official Pardon to famed Sixties comedian Lenny Bruce. Pataki called his decision, the first posthumous pardon in New York state history, "a declaration of New York's commitment to upholding the First Amendment."
2. On October 17, 2006, Enron founder Ken Lay died prior to exhausting his appeals, his conviction was abated. Precedent in the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, the federal appellate court governing the district where Lay was indicted, indicates that abatement had to be automatically granted. When abatement occurs, the law views it as though he had never been indicted, tried and convicted. The government opposed Lay's attorneys' motion for abatement, and the Department of Justice issued a statement that it "remains committed to pursuing all available legal remedies and to reclaim for victims the proceeds of crimes committed by Ken Lay."

Jim Morrison himself had this to say in 1971, months before his passing to LA reporter Bob Chorush about the Miami verdicts: "I got acquitted on everything else. We were trying to get this erased because it's not good to have something like that on your record. It's just if something really serious happens then you have a record and it looks a lot worse. The trouble with all these busts is that people I know, friends of mine, think it's funny and they like to believe it's true and they accept it; people that don't like me like to believe it because I'm the reincarnation of everything they consider evil. I get hung both ways."

It doesn't matter if one is a fan of Jim Morrison or not. What matters here is a citizen of Florida was convicted in the Dade County Criminal Court in a case where due process of law was not properly applied. These facts, in light of the newer precedents, can no longer be ignored by the State of Florida. It is the intention of Doors Collectors Magazine to provide Governor Crist with all resources available to seriously consider a pardon and finally after almost forty years, bring this case to a close once and for all. If it could happen to Jim Morrison, it could happen to any one of us! In the interest of true justice and closure for the Morrison family, it is being asked of Governor Crist to issue the pardon and abate Case# 69-2355 State of Florida vs. James Douglas Morrison off the current and future Florida law books.

For more information: <http://www.doors.com>

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