



#13 / 365 Nico, on stage at the Blackpool Bier Keller, 1983

The world's shortest career as a rock'n'roll photographer

For such a crappy little place as Blackpool, Nico and her musicians making an appearance there at The Bier Keller in 1983 was quite a thing. Me and a mate, also a student, decided to try and blag our way into the gig as aspiring rock doc photographers.

We managed to talk our way into finding the band's tour manager, who simply took two 'access all areas' lanyard passes, pulled a dry-wipe marker pen from his pocket, scrawled 'PHOTO' on both, and handed them over to us, saying: *"OK lads, DO NOT use flash, don't fuck with anything that has wires plugged into it and don't get in the way and piss anyone off..."*

We had about an hour to kill and managed to blag ourselves even further into the 'dressing room bar' area by simply wiping 'PHOTO' off the laminated shiny plastic passes. We availed ourselves of lots of free booze and chatted with roadies, groupies and performed all the usual schmezzella. We had already smoked a couple of spliffs apiece before turning up, and I was swaggering around a bit drunk, with a couple of Nikon bodies and telephoto lenses, trying to be cool, but probably looking like a total knob.

The stage lighting was very poor, making it difficult to get any decent pics, mainly there were just single spotlights on the band members. My light meter was showing about 1/2 second at f4 on 400 ASA so I was forced to rate the film at 6400+ and push the bejeezus out of it, hence the horrendous grain in this picture, although I think it adds kudos.

Anyway, my (now ex) mate was particularly thrashed from the herbs and the booze. He's also 6'10" and looks very similar to Rowan Atkinson, so he doesn't go unnoticed. Frustrated at being unable to get any decent pics from the audience perspective, every so often during the songs, the lights all came on and lit the crowd from behind the band; he suddenly decided to stand ON the stage, right next to Niko, and shoot the band in silhouette from the stage itself.

Within about 10 seconds, three security gorillas appeared from nowhere, grabbed us, brusquely ejecting us down the fire escape stairs. I rolled down the final four concrete steps onto the Bier Keller's service yard entrance, uninjured, camera bag strap broken but equipment undamaged. If we'd been shooting on plastic-bodied modern digital SLRs, they would have been written off.

Dusting himself down, undeterred, my pal turned back to the chief security guy at the top of the steps and shouted up:

"We'll be in touch - we'll send some contact prints..." The reply, in broad Glaswegian came:

"Ye fuckin' snappers are ten-a-penny, the pair of ye can get away tae fuck!!"

That was the end of my rock photography career.