

## POP MUSIC

# Fake bands wax small soon

By Jonathan Takiff

KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

**T**he only consolation — for those of us who still believe in music's loftiest aspirations — is that the so-called "studio" or "production" bands rarely succeed for long.

Because the bunch didn't come up the hard way, didn't suffer for their music, there's often no sense of communal commitment, no shared backbone that keeps them standing when the going gets rough. So petty jealousies and other personality clashes can come to the fore and tear the bands apart.

Eventually, too, the kids who first supported these instant sensations grow up and move on to another flavor of the week, or start to realize that the group can't cut it in concert.

Nor do individual members of the bogus bands succeed very often or well, when they break away from the pack and try to do their "own" thing. So no, sorry, we're not predicting instant stardom for Ginger Spice.

Here are some other fabulous fakes that came on fast ... and mostly have gone away.

**VILLAGE PEOPLE:** Dance club owner and record producer Jacques Morali dreamed up this musical montage of gay club stereotypes — the "butch" construction worker, the nightstick-wielding policeman, the bare-chested Indian chief, et al.

seemed to be approaching adulthood. Only NKOTB's Donnie Wahlberg has done anything musical with his life, and it's been as a record producer working with his little brudder Mark, the sometimes rapping, sometimes underwear-hawking Marky Mark. However, six Menudo members have recently regrouped and are now hitting the comeback trail as Reencuentro.

**THE MONKEES:** Most successful of all the fake bands, Mike Nesmith, Davy Jones, Peter Tork and Mickey Dolenz met on a Hollywood sound stage, where they were cast as TV's answer to the Beatles and their frisky film personae in *A Hard Day's Night*. (*Spice World* apes this classic, too.) While the foursome could all sing (Jones and Dolenz had been child stars), only Nesmith could actually play an instrument when they started the series, and their material was all spoon-fed from experienced songwriters like Neil Diamond and Jeff Barry. After a few albums, the guys had learned enough to play their assigned instrument props and become the self-contained unit they pretended to be on TV. Later breaking from the fold, Nesmith went on to become a pioneer of urban country/rock hybridization, with several good solo albums. However, his connection to that notorious made-for-TV group continued to taint his credibility and limit his success.

**THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY:**

This made-for-TV singing family and sitcom was packaged as a cross between the Trapp Family Singers, the Lennon Sisters and the Everly Brothers. Mama Partridge, Shirley Jones, was an experienced Broadway and Hollywood movie star. And the TV show made an idol of David Cassidy, who had several hit recordings and concert tours to his credit. He's now in residence in Las Vegas, starring in the special effects-laden *EFX*.

**THE SEX PISTOLS:** While credited as the godfathers of the anti-establishment, anarchistic punk movement, the Sex Pistols would have been nuttin' without the direction of boutique owner-turned-manager Malcom McLaren. Guitarist Steve Jones and drummer Paul Cook were regulars at the trendy shop. Bassist Glen Matlock worked in the store. Then vocalist John Lydon, a.k.a. Johnny Rotten, met the rest of the guys at the shop and was asked in. Later, Matlock was replaced by Sid Vicious, a tough who looked the part but couldn't actually play his instrument. After releasing one album in 1977, the group landed in the United States for a tour that lasted all of 14 days — until Rotten bolted. Later, he scored with Public Image Limited. Vicious became infamous for his bad music and love affair with local girl Nancy Spungen and their drug-induced deaths, cinematized in *Sid and Nancy*.