

The Silencers - Pittsburgh Music History

Dressed in trench coats, shark skin suits, skinny ties, and shades the Silencers had the cool sinister look of cold war era G-Men spies. Playing their hard-edged new wave funk tinged power pop they quickly took over the Pittsburgh club scene in 1980 playing to sweaty packed houses at Fat City and the Decade. WDVE featured their music in heavy rotation. Their popularity spread across America when their CBS/Precision record releases hit the national charts. In 1980 their single "Shiver and Shake" reached number 81 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. They took their act across the country appearing with Hall & Oates, Foreigner, Heart, ACDC, and others. Early pioneers in music videos they were featured on the very first broadcast of MTV in 1981. Comprised of vocalist [Frank Czuri](#), legendary guitarist [Warren King](#), drummer [Ron Foster](#), bassist Mike Pella, and keyboardist Dennis Takos the Silencers were a great live band.

Formation in 1979

After seeing new wave artist Joe Jackson in 1979 guitarist Warren King was swept away by new wave. Warren, C. Capiola, and keyboard player Dennis Takos began writing material. Warren called his former Diamond Reo band mate, vocalist Frank Czuri, saying he had written some songs and wanted to start a new wave band. Czuri who had been working on demo songs of his own for [Tom Cossie's](#) Precision Records joined forces with Warren, and Dennis Takos to found the Silencers. They hired drummer Ron "Byrd" Foster away from Roy Buchanan's band and recruited former B.E. Taylor Band bass guitarist Mike Pella. Foster and Czuri had played together in the Igniters who had recorded on Atlantic Records.

The Silencers began rehearsals in the summer of 1979 and signed with manager/record promoter Tom Cossie. Cossie, who had been national promotions director for RCA, independently launched the multi-million selling records of the band Chic. Cossie brought the engineer of the Chic recordings, Bob Clearmountain, to Jeree's Studio in Rochester, Pa. to record a demo tape. Clearmountain later worked with Bruce Springsteen, Hall & Oats, David Bowie, The Pretenders, and David Werner. Shopping the demo tape Cossie landed the Silencers a two album record distribution deal with CBS Records before they played their first gig. In December of 1979 the Silencers began recording their first album with producer Bob Clearmountain at the Power Station, Media Sound and Hendrix's studio "Electric Lady" in New York City. Guitarist Warren King wrote the song "Head On Collision" and co-wrote "Modern Love" and "Shiver and Shake" with C. Capiola.

Before the album was released the Silencers began performing at Fat City in Swissvale. They quickly became a local sensation with their tight new wave sound and cool shade wearing trench coat detective demeanor. They packed Fat City, Morry's Speakeasy, the Decade, and other Pittsburgh clubs. Their fans danced to "Remote Control" groove and hit the thrift stores to buy skinny ties and shark skin suits. The new wave craze swept the Pittsburgh club scene. With their energetic live act the Silencers took their show on the road playing showcase clubs across the country.

Rock N Roll Enforcers

CBS/Precision records released their debut album "Rock 'n' Roll Enforcers" in July of 1980. WDVE gave the record its launch adding several songs to their rotation playlist creating the local hits: "The Peter Gunn Theme," "Modern Love," "Head On Collision" and "Shiver and Shake". Gaining national airplay "Shiver and Shake" reached number 81 on the Billboard charts.

Billboard Magazine gave the album a great review: *"The Silencers are armed with a hard hitting debut. Fronted by the aggressive vocals of Frank Cruze...the Silencers show an amazing command of rock history as they perform vicious rock versions of James Brown's "Cold Sweat", the reggae classic "Johnny Too Bad" and the "Peter Gunn Theme". "Shiver and Shake" the single, is the perfect breezy summertime fodder but the Silencers are no wimpy power pop outfit. This is slashing rock which goes for the jugular."*

MTV Pioneers

The Silencers drew national attention on August 1, 1981 when their video for the medley "Peter Gunn, Remote Control and Illegal" aired on MTV on the day that MTV made its first broadcast. The Silencers were the first Pittsburgh based group to be aired on MTV. The video, produced by TPC, was shot over several days in the Strip District, Station Square, and the Mexican War streets. It ended with a concert in front of 2,000 WDVE fans at the Banana Factory loading dock. It was directed by Joe Wittofski and produced by Guido D'Elia and John Sutton. The video titled "The Silencers: Rock'n' Roll Enforcers", received first prize for independent video at the Houston Film Festival in December of 1980. The initial concept was to sell it to CBS Records as a video story album. CBS thought the album idea too ambitious. But the video was edited into a shorter version for MTV. It was the 40th video shown on MTV. The video was played in regular rotation on MTV and was voted the #3 most popular video in 1981. MTV has played the Silencers video on several of its anniversary shows including the 25th anniversary show in 2006 when they replayed the complete first day.

The complete first day of MTV can be seen on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw6xesXLIAA> The Silencers Video is listed on the MTV initial broadcast page at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_music_videos_aired_on_MTV

Going Romantic

CBS/Precision Records released the Silencer's last album "Romantic" in 1981 spawning the local radio hit "Side Walk Romeo". Warren King wrote/co-wrote 7 of the cuts on "Romantic". Warren left the Silencers in 1982. The band continued on playing in Pittsburgh until 1984 when Frank Cruze left to join the vocal group Solid Gold.



Music from the Silencers Album

MTV Premiere Day Video

The Silencers in Concert