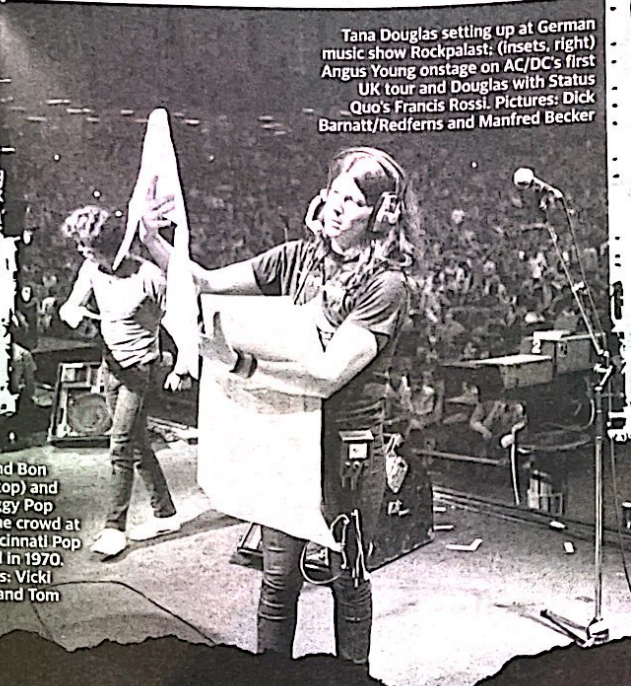


Tana and Bon Scott (top) and (left) Iggy Pop rides the crowd at the Cincinnati Pop Festival in 1970. Pictures: Vicki Marks and Tom Copi



Tana Douglas setting up at German music show Rockpalast; (insets, right) Angus Young onstage on AC/DC's first UK tour and Douglas with Status Quo's Francis Rossi. Pictures: Dick Barnatt/Redferns and Manfred Becker



ROCK 'N' ROLL WAS MY SAVIOUR

Tana Douglas went from teen runaway to AC/DC confidante as she forged an incredible career as Australia's first female roadie, writes **Kathy McCabe**

Tana Douglas was a teen runaway from Queensland dodging drug-addled pimps in Kings Cross when she joined the rock'n'roll circus.

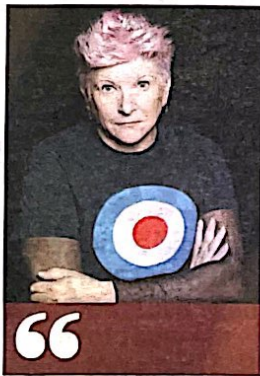
After sneaking into the 1970s club Whisky a Go Go to indulge her love of music one Saturday night, the underage Douglas was taken under the wing of legendary roadie Wane "Swampy" Jarvis and put behind the sound desk to watch the show.

The troubled teen desperately searching for purpose — and a job — found both as she keenly observed the men behind the scenes, those working on the sound and lighting desks as other crew members switched over guitars and checked cables.

After volunteering to help a crew load out the gear after a gig a couple of weeks later, Douglas became Australia's first female roadie.

She documents the amazing life in rock 'n' roll that followed in her rollicking memoir *LOUD*.

"I'd always had a love of music. It had been like a saviour and a talisman for me. I'd been travelling all over the country non-stop ever since I ran away from home and I needed to get a job ... so when I found out that not only did you get to travel with this job, but you got paid as well, this is what I'm doing now," she said.



AC/DC has such a strong place in my heart because I was so young and they were so good to me

TANA DOUGLAS

"I was looking for some sort of family unit as awkward and unlikely as a road crew is for a young 15-year-old girl, to be a caring family unit, they really were in their own way."

Douglas was 17 when she moved in with AC/DC, living in the Lansdowne Rd house in St Kilda where the fledgling band was based when they weren't recording their debut album *High Voltage* in Sydney.

The band paid her an initial wage of \$60 to look after their stage equipment and instruments; by the time she left them for her next gig, she had also added sound engineer to her resume.

Douglas honed her skills as a lighting roadie for Australian tours by Suzi Quatro and Status Quo, with whom she would form one of the closest relationships of her five-decade career.

LOUD is bursting with tales of legendary parties and ridiculous, over-the-top antics by rock stars and their crew families in hotel rooms and grand mansions.

George Harrison flirted with her at a Whitesnake tour party at the Henley-on-Thames estate of revered British musician Jon Lord — "I'd marry you tomorrow if you stopped smoking" — and French superstar Johnny Hallyday propositioned her after she built him the biggest lighting rig in the '80s for his Paris residency of mega-concerts.

She did cocaine with Iggy Pop and David Bowie backstage at a London gig she was running and watched as fans at a gig in Helsinki hurled live fish onstage as the Godfather of Punk cajoled them.

She also found herself sleeping on the bus most nights when she toured with the Go-Gos during their hellish years of hotel rooms and self-destruction because reception desks refused to book another female member of the party in their

establishments. Elton John, The Who, The Runaways, Santana, Neil Diamond, Ozzy Osbourne, The Police — Douglas made history with them all in her role as not only lighting guru but all-round fix-it crew member.

LOUD makes it clear who were her favourites and which were not.

EXTRACT
Cops and crushes on the road with AC/DC
Read more at dailytelegraph.com.au

"AC/DC has such a strong place in my heart because I was so young and they were so good to me and when we cross paths, we always pick up where you left off," Douglas said.

"And the Quo are such sweet guys — Rick (Parfitt) is no longer with us, which is very sad — I'm still in touch with them."

"There's different characters on the road. Elton had the bizarre parties and there was always something going on but he was a different sort of person and The Police, I never really interacted with them much."

"I was more at home with Iggy and his bandmates Scotty Thurston and Fred "Sonic" Smith and we all hung out and had a bunch of laughs and that to me is what is important."

Douglas would love Pop to read the book for the purpose of prompting him to gift her a biker leather jacket to replace the prized one he nicked into the crowd during the gig to be lost forever.

But for all of the excitement of being at the front row for the rapid explosion of concert light and sound technology, and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with some of the most famed rock stars of our times, Douglas had to conquer

sexism and endure personal tragedy as a "roadie".

Not only did she have to combat the prejudices of men who didn't think she could do the job, she copped punches and abuse from female fans jealous of her position with bands.

And there was the double standard which she fears remains today about having personal relationships within a touring family.

"If a male crew member scores with a female artist, he's a hero, he's a legend. If a female crew member does it, it's like 'oh, what's she after?'," she said.

Douglas expresses some regret about the sacrifices and mistakes she made in her personal relationships and as a mother who travelled the world trying to make a living for her child which resulted in a heartbreaking custody battle with her own mother.

But as the pioneer who blazed the trail for women who wanted to pursue a career path in the technical realm of the live music industry, Douglas is buoyed by the examples of a new generation somehow managing to balance their aspirations with family life.

"I think it is wonderful there's more women now doing it, and having the chance of relationships and families and that sort of thing which was just so impossible when I was doing it."

LOUD IS PUBLISHED BY ABC BOOKS ON FEBRUARY 11

