

Their hits still earn record company a fortune every year but

band have been paid nothing for decades

# Rollers will battle for £120m of lost royalties through American courts

ON A ROLL: The band in their heyday – but the money was to dry up almost as soon as the hits did



SHORT-CHANGED: Les McKeown appeared in court last year

**FORMER** Bay City Rollers are to sue the world's second-largest music label as the hunt for the band's missing millions intensifies, the Scottish Sunday Express can reveal.

The Seventies idols have instructed lawyers in the United States to take action against Sony BMG amid claims they are owed around £120million in unpaid royalties.

They are compiling affidavits and will shortly initiate action against the label, in an attempt to reclaim £20million for each of the ex-band members.

In their heyday, the Rollers took the world by storm, becoming the biggest boy band of all time and selling 120million records in the UK, the United States, Australia and Japan.

Their hits, including *Bye Bye Baby*, *Remember*, *Summer-love Sensation*, *Saturday Night* and *Shang-A-Lang*, still earn hundreds of thousands of pounds a year for the label.

However, former band members Les McKeown, Stuart 'Woody' Wood, Derek and Alan Longmuir, Eric Faulkner and Ian Mitchell, have struggled financially, having been paid no royalties for 27 years.

They now aim to recoup the missing millions with legal action through the American courts.

Former lead singer McKeown, who recently told a court he only had £6,000 in savings left, said yesterday: "The money row is still rumbling on, but we've now got a litigator in America assembling affidavits to go after Sony BMG/Arista."

"It's difficult because we've had to get through life having

## EXCLUSIVE

By Derek Lambie

no money, and now we're taking on a big company with no money.

"I have enough to keep me going and to keep my head above water, but the fact remains we were not rewarded with the kind of money we should have been in the Seventies. There was a lot of greed back then."

Mr McKeown, 50, added: "People expect us just to forget about it, to put it in the past, but we can't."

Sony BMG is the world's second-biggest music label and boasts Beyoncé and Dido among its best-sellers. Profits last year rose to around £120million, with sales of around £1.5billion.

The Bay City Rollers back catalogue, including smash-hit albums *Rollin'* and *Once Upon A Star*, is still available to buy through Sony, BMG and Arista.

The Rollers' story is a tale of extremes: a rags-to-riches-to-rags saga of individuals who rose from the obscurity of some of Edinburgh's most

deprived areas to rule pop. Primed for success in their tartan loon pants and blow-dried hair, they had it all, the first Scottish boy band and the first to be idolised the world over.

They chalked up several number ones and four top five albums in Britain, 18 hits in the American charts and wherever they went, the Rollers created the sort of hysteria previously reserved for those such as The Beatles.

By 1975, at the height of their popularity, they even had their own magazine and TV series.

However, despite their phenomenal success, none of the Rollers has received royalties for more than two decades. The group was originally signed to Arista Records, but payments were suspended in 1979.

According to Arista, which is part of Sony BMG, the money stopped because of disagreements within the group and uncertainty as to who should receive the payments.

McKeown said he signed a contract with band manager

Tam Paton in the back of a car, but no record of it exists. McKeown, who ended up homeless and penniless just four years after *Bye Bye Baby* topped the charts, told a TV documentary in 2004 he believed the manager took most of the money.

"I asked where my millions were, and the management said 'What millions?'," he said in the Channel 4 programme.

However, Paton – now a millionaire living in a £1million mansion in Edinburgh – denied the claims, insisting the Rollers did not invest the money they were given wisely, and claiming the band members ran up massive bills during their time in the charts.

He said: "The Rollers had as much as me, if not more. The difference was I made the most of what I had, I invested it in property and was sensible."

"We all suffered from bad accountants. We lost millions. The band know damn well what they spent their money on."

"Against my advice, the boys bought a limousine company then insisted on being driven everywhere, even to the south of England."

He added: "To be honest, I don't think there's money there. I don't think they're owed a penny."

Thames Magistrates Court heard last month that McKeown had just £6,000 savings left after he was fined £1,000 for a drink-driving offence.

Described in court as "an unemployed musician who is entitled to legal aid" the fallen pop idol joked with reporters outside: "Lend me a couple of grand, will you?"

● *Shang-a-lang, the Curse of the Bay City Rollers* will be published in paperback by Mainstream Publishing on February 2, priced £7.99.



STILL ROLLING: McKeown and guitarist Woody in 2000



Picture: GORDON JACK

LESS ROLY-POLY: Ex-Bay City manager Tam Paton has lost 10 stone after doctors warned his excess weight would kill him

## Heavyweight of pop world cuts new trim figure

TAM Paton is half the man he used to be – after losing 10 stone as part of a life-saving diet.

The former Bay City Rollers manager was told to shed the pounds after suffering a stroke when he ballooned to 27 stone.

Paton, 68, collapsed in April 2004, then was diagnosed with diabetes before being paralysed down his left-hand side following the stroke seven months later.

He blamed the illness on stress brought on by drugs charges and unfounded allegations of sexual abuse made by former Rollers star Pat McGlynn.

However, doctors said being so overweight was putting Paton's life at risk.

Swapping fast food for fish and boiled chicken with a daily exercise regime enabled the former music mogul to shed 10 inches from his waist.

Paton said yesterday: "If I hadn't done this, I'd be dead. It was diet or die."

"It's meant I've had to buy a whole new set of clothes."

Paton, now 17 stone with a 58-inch waist, added: "Ideally I want to get down to 14 or 15 stone. I dream of doing a marathon, but we'll see what happens."

In November, Paton appeared at Edinburgh Sheriff Court to deny supplying cannabis and being in possession of cocaine and diazepam.



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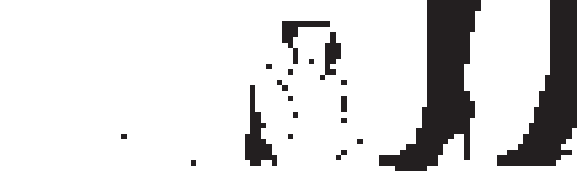


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