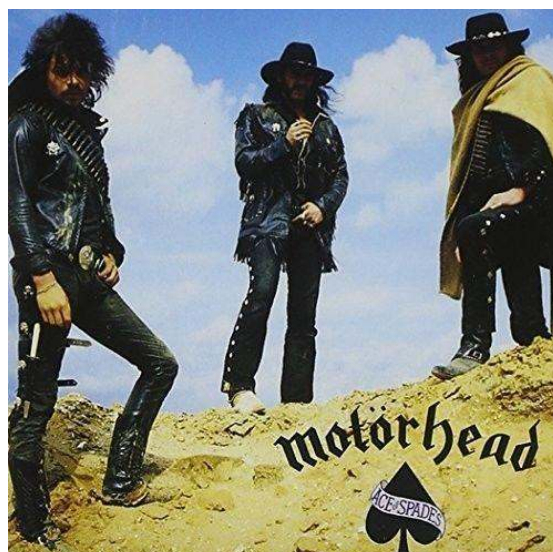




Issue 1 - August 2026

Autographs, Backstage & Soundcheck





Backstage in St. Louis during the Ozzy Osbourne tour, 1981. I had the settings wrong on my Canon AE1. I asked Motorhead's tour manager to take the photo.

TOLD BY WADE BROOKS • WITH TRACE RAYFIELD

Adapted from episode 23 of The Motörcast: Official Motörhead Podcast, hosted by Howard H. Smith

18.06.2021 - Oct 5, 2021

HEAR BOTH SIDES ON THE MOTÖRCAST

For more detail in our own voices, listen to both my interview and Helen Taylor's interview with host Howard H. Smith on The Motörcast, the official Motörhead podcast. On Spotify, open The Motörcast and search its episodes for Wade Brooks and for "Philthy's Sister — Helen Taylor."

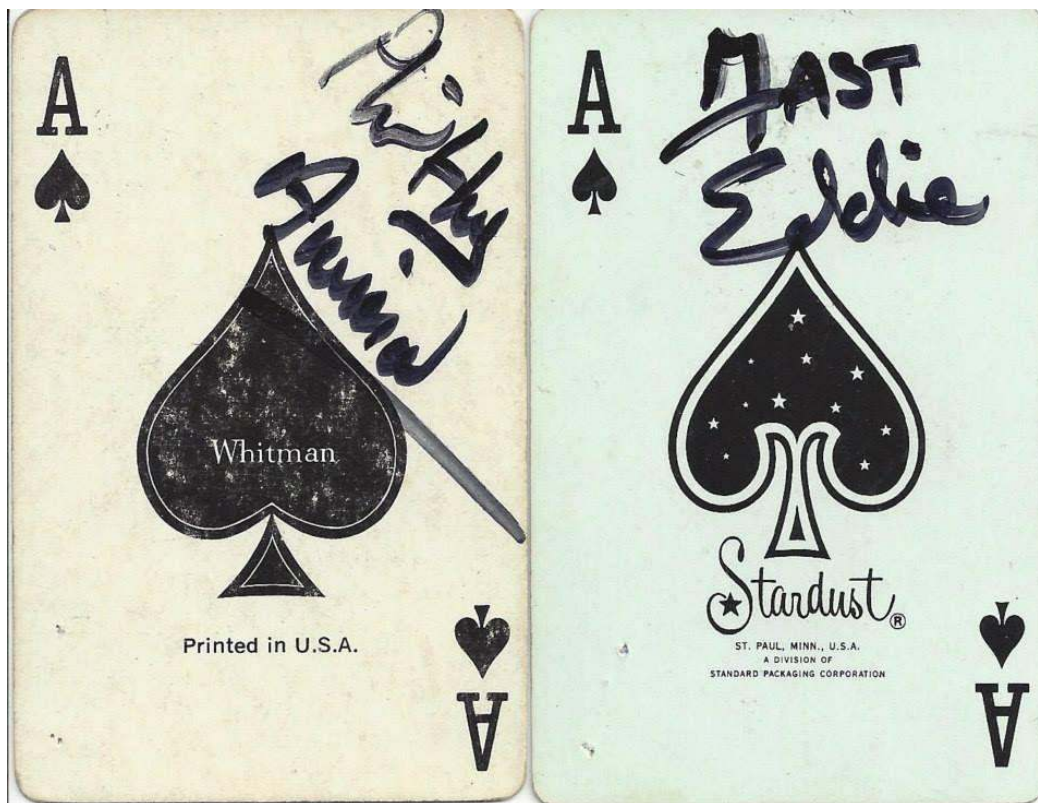
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THE RECORDS FOUND US FIRST

For Trace Rayfield and me, Motörhead arrived before Motörhead ever did. We were American fans looking toward Britain at a time when the New Wave of British Heavy Metal still felt like information carried across an ocean: a photograph in *Sounds*, a name in a record-shop import bin, a sleeve that looked dangerous enough to demand attention.

The first one that grabbed us was *Overkill*. The cover leapt out of the rack. Then you turned it over and saw Lemmy, “Fast” Eddie Clarke and Phil “Philthy Animal” Taylor staring back. It felt less like discovering another album than finding evidence of a different world. *Bomber* followed, and by the time *Ace of Spades* reached us, Motörhead were no longer simply a band we liked. They were our band—even if they had not yet played anywhere near us.

American audiences could see AC/DC, Judas Priest and UFO, but bands such as Motörhead, Iron Maiden and Saxon had not yet established touring lives in the United States. Trace and I had already learned how to be concert fans the hard way: study the music papers, search every import rack, buy the singles and twelve-inches, and be ready when the tour finally came.



Two Ace of Spades playing cards from Wade Brooks's collection, autographed by Phil “Philthy Animal” Taylor and “Fast” Eddie Clarke.

Among the pieces that survived are two literal aces of spades, one signed by Phil and the other by Fast Eddie. They reduce the whole story to something a fan can hold in one hand:

the symbol most closely associated with Motörhead, marked by two members of the classic lineup.

FIRST ROW, DEAD CENTER

The opening came in 1981 when Motörhead joined Ozzy Osbourne's first Blizzard of Ozz tour. In St. Louis, concert seats were reserved, so getting close meant getting in line before everybody else for advance tickets. Trace drew the overnight duty, he had secured exactly what we wanted: first row, center, in an arena holding thousands.

Tickets were only the beginning. We had developed a method for meeting touring bands: find the hotel by looking for the tour bus, arrive with the records, and show the musicians that you were not there by accident. Our stacks of imports were our credentials. Bands visiting America often discovered that the people waiting for them knew releases that had never appeared in an American shop outside the import bins.

We drove through downtown St. Louis checking the likely hotels until we located the bus at a riverfront property. It was the sort of polished lobby where two young heavy-metal obsessives with armfuls of records were impossible to miss. We laid out the albums, singles and EPs and waited.

THREE FIGURES FROM THE GATEWAY ARCH

Walking up to the Hotel entrance: Lemmy, Phil and Eddie, returning from a tourist visit to the Gateway Arch. If you have ever been to the top you take a small module tram. Can you imagine the three of them in one of those?



They had not changed into anonymous traveling clothes. They looked exactly like Motörhead, walking through a lobby full of ordinary travelers.

They came over, sat down and began examining the records. Lemmy says "You have a lovely town". The collection broke the ice immediately. There was only one Motörhead LP commonly available in America, but we had the imports, the EPs and the twelve-inch singles. We knew the band's history and had spent the money to prove it. Instead of signing quickly and disappearing, they stayed. Then they told us to follow their bus to the arena for the concert.

SMUGGLED THROUGH THE BACK DOOR

At the arena we had no passes, so the band simply absorbed us into their group. We squeezed between Lemmy, Phil, Eddie and the crew and walked through the backstage entrance as if we belonged there. Who was going to stop Motörhead? Eddie took responsibility for us and told us to remain in the dressing room until passes could be arranged. Motörhead did not want unexplained guests causing trouble with Ozzy's organization.

The dressing room was no luxury suite. It was a worn hockey dressing room where everybody waited for soundcheck, drank beer and talked. We had brought Colombian Gold weed for the concert, because that was part of going to a show in 1981. Eddie was the first to join us. After a couple of joints he looked at us and said that if he played badly that night, he was never speaking to us again Trace recalls. We laughed—then noticed he looked serious.

The band finally headed toward the stage and asked if we wanted to watch soundcheck. We assumed we would be placed in the wings. Instead, they waved us onto the stage. The entire sports arena was empty, and Motörhead were playing just for the work that needed doing—and for us. I stood about five feet from Lemmy on stage, headbanging while the band did their soundcheck. Between songs, Trace pointed toward our seats: right there, first row, center. Eddie found us there during the show.



*Motörhead onstage at the St. Louis Ozzy Osbourne show, 1981.
Ozzy gave them hardly any stage lights. I used a wide angle lens.*

***“I was five feet from Lemmy, headbanging during
soundcheck. How many fans ever received that kind of
honor?”***

WADE BROOKS

THE TRIP TO ENGLAND—AND HELEN TAYLOR

There was another connection waiting behind the St. Louis meeting. I was already a member of Motörheadbangers, the fan club run in Leeds England by Phil Taylor's sister, Helen. I had placed a letter in Sounds listing the bands I loved and looking for British “pen bangers.” The replies gave me friends, places to stay and a route through the British metal scene. When I told Helen I was coming over, she offered to have me stay at her flat.

Helen and her roommate picked me up in Blackpool and drove me to her parents' house. That evening I sat in the Taylor family room with Helen, her mother and father, watching Motörhead home movies filmed by her dad. These were not promotional clips or television appearances. They were family-held images of the band during the years when the whole story was still unfolding.

Helen's own Motorcast interview explains what lay behind that welcome. Her father, a Leeds photographer, conceived the fan club after watching young fans headbanging and named it Motörheadbangers. Helen and her boyfriend Paul launched it by distributing flyers at Hammersmith Odeon near the end of the 1979 Bomber tour. The operation ran from her father's premises on Upper Accommodation Road. Membership grew from roughly one thousand with the first newsletter to about three thousand by the second, then spread across Europe, Japan and North America.



Helen Taylor with her boyfriend Paul, who helped her operate Motörheadbangers and traveled with her during the fan-club years.

THE NORTH AMERICAN MOTÖRHEADBANGERS DESK

The next morning Helen took me to the family business, where the fan-club work was done. Her father asked whether I would help with North American Motörheadbangers. There was no contract, salary or grand title. The qualification was commitment, and my answer was immediate: of course.

From then on, American orders came through me. I accepted payments in dollars, sorted the T-shirt and fan-club orders, went to the bank and sent Helen a monthly cheque in pounds. Helen handled the membership correspondence and the work in Britain. I placed advertisements in Creem, Hit Parader and Circus out of my own pocket. I was never reimbursed and never earned a dime. In fact, I lost money. A single long-distance call to Helen and Mr. Taylor could cost around thirty-five dollars, accompanied by an echo that made the Atlantic seem even wider.

That did not make the work feel less valuable. It made us part of the organization at a time before “fan engagement” became a music-business phrase. Helen’s office kept names and addresses by hand on index cards. Newsletters meant writing envelopes, sticking stamps and carrying mail in sacks. She and Paul traveled to interview Lemmy, Phil and Eddie for each fanzine, then printed the conversation with the swearing, drug references and rough edges intact.

Lemmy read the letters we brought and sometimes wrote personal replies. That direct connection was why Motörheadbangers mattered. It did not place a polished corporate layer between the band and the audience. It allowed the fans to feel that they were participating in the life of Motörhead—and sometimes they truly were.

Do not use that po box, from advert in Circus Magazine in 1981

MOTORHEADBANGERS. The Official Motorhead Fan Club. Send Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope for Details to: PO Box 28088, St. Louis, MO 63119

OUR OWN KIND OF ACCESS

Modern meet-and-greets are scheduled, priced and timed. Ours were built from patience, nerve and preparation. The musicians saw two American fans holding records that had traveled farther than they had, and they understood what that meant. Motörhead were headliners in Britain, but on that first American run they were the support band. At the hotel there was no crowd waiting and no barricade separating us. For a few hours we had the band almost to ourselves.

That generosity was not unique to one afternoon. Helen remembered Lemmy as somebody who looked out for her on the road, checked that she was safe and lent her his hotel-room key when touring in a freezing van left her desperate for a shower. Trace and I encountered

the same instinct in a different setting. We arrived as fans, but Motörhead treated us as guests.

FAN CLUB From my Dad's townhouse 1981



Wade with Helen, correspondence between St. Louis and Leeds, British trip photographs or original magazine advertisements.

DETROIT: HISTORY CHANGES OVERNIGHT

A year later, Trace and I planned a road trip through Cincinnati, Detroit and Chicago around the Iron Fist tour. Then Eddie left Motörhead. We had believed we had made a friend for life in St. Louis and were devastated that he would not be there. For a moment the entire trip

seemed uncertain. When the tour continued with Brian Robertson, we decided to carry on too.

By pure chance, the Detroit concert at Harpo's became Robertson's first show with Motörhead. We were present for the soundcheck and rehearsal as he watched Lemmy carefully, learning how to navigate the songs and the stage. The atmosphere backstage was more serious than it had been in St. Louis. Everyone knew the importance of the night. Lemmy, however, still found time to talk with us and play video games in the lobby.

We discussed the proposed collaboration with Wendy O. Williams, unaware of how deeply that recording had figured in Eddie's departure. I asked Lemmy directly whether he and Wendy had slept together. His answer was pure Lemmy: he had awakened wrapped in cellophane. It was outrageous, funny and delivered without hesitation—the kind of reply that survives when all the orderly details blur.

I gave my chrome bullet belt to Lemmy, someone stole his and he was wearing a brass belt. *(Not sure who's photo this is, I cropped one online. Sue me, I am broke.)*



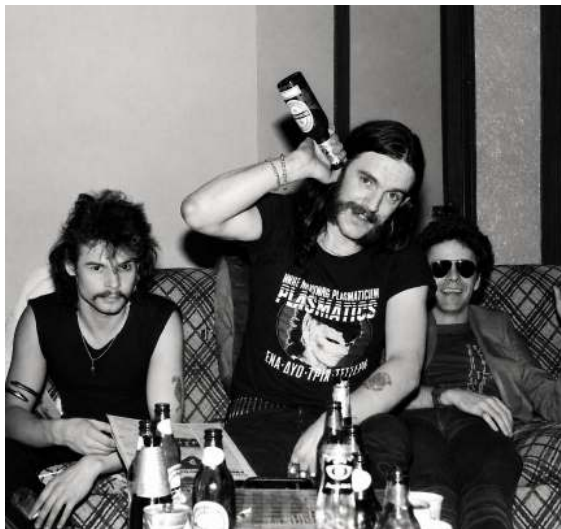
CHICAGO, THE BULLET BELT AND THE BECK'S BOTTLES

The next night brought us to Chicago. Somebody had reportedly stolen Lemmy's chrome bullet belt, leaving him with the familiar brass one, and I offered him mine as a replacement. Backstage, Beck's beer had been piled into gray tubs of ice and there were no full bottles left.. My then-girlfriend (later first wife) Polly saw Lemmy lifting half-empty bottles, shaking them and drinking from them. She warned him that there were other people's cigarette butts in them. Lemmy said he had already looked before drinking them. (remember Caddyshack?)

These were not grand historical events. That is precisely why they matter. They show the human scale of the band's world: a borrowed belt, a half-finished beer, a video game in a lobby, a joke during soundcheck. The legend was already being built, but up close it was made of small, funny and sometimes filthy moments.

THE NASTY SOFA

The Chicago backstage room revolved around a truly nasty plaid sofa. Brian Robertson, newly installed in Motörhead after Eddie's departure, sat there with Lemmy and the rest of us while Beck's bottles accumulated. The photographs catch the lineup in transition without making it look solemn: newspapers, cigarettes, beer, laughter and the kind of furniture no paid VIP package would dare reproduce.

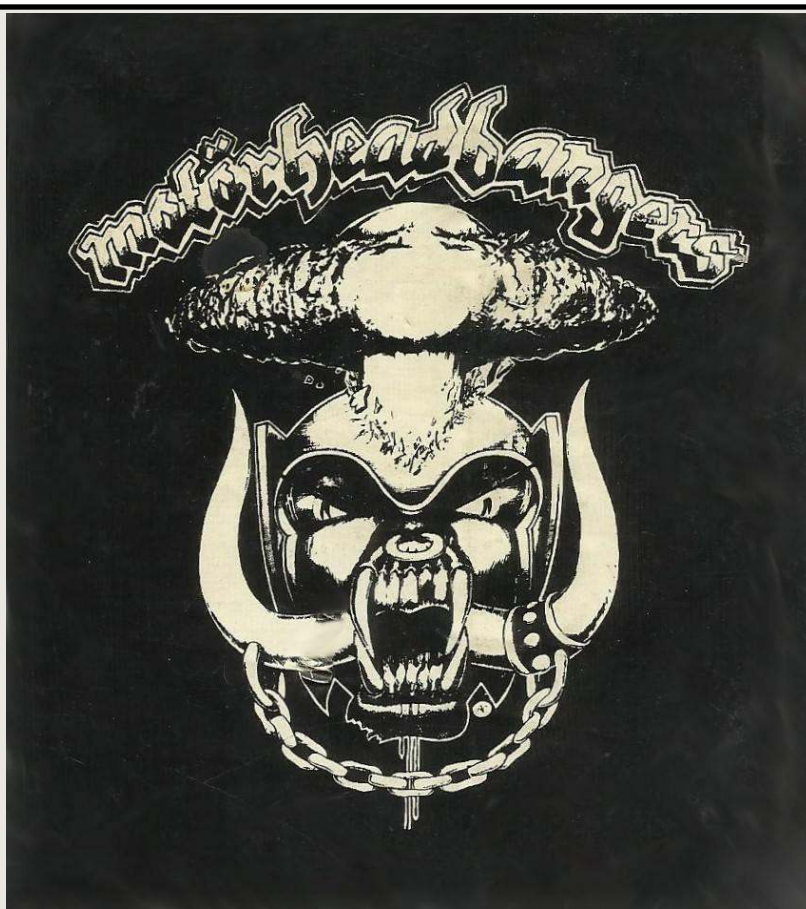


More from the Chicago dressing room: Brian Robertson, Lemmy and the group during the Iron Fist-era transition. My photos are the first with the new lineup, I shot in black & white to send to Sounds.



By then, the three men we had met walking back from the Gateway Arch had become permanent figures in rock history. Phil had died only weeks before Lemmy. Eddie followed in 2018. Yet my clearest memories are not distant or ceremonial. I remember the records spread across the hotel table. I remember being squeezed through the backstage entrance. I remember Colombian Gold, beer, Eddie's warning and an empty arena shaking while I stood five feet from Lemmy.

Helen's memories complete the picture. She knew Motörhead as family, work and lived experience. Motörheadbangers was her full-time life from late 1979 until 1982, and she saw the fan club become an international network held together by letters, stamps, road miles and trust. My small North American desk belonged to that network. Trace and I were not watching the story from outside. For a time, through a mixture of nerve and luck, we were allowed inside it.



***“We arrived as fans,
but Motörhead treated us like guests of honor.”***

WADE BROOKS

WHAT REMAINS

The signed imports remain. The photographs remain. The fanzines, cards, advertisements and letters remain wherever fans protect them. Even the stories that used to feel too small to record now carry history: Helen's father filming early concerts with a huge shoulder-mounted video camera; fan-club mail stacked in sacks; Eddie laughing until he realized how high he was; Lemmy reading letters at Colville Houses; Trace handing thirty-year-old photographs to Mikkey Dee.

A band's history is never only the official releases and major tours. It is also the routes fans traveled toward the music and the generosity that sometimes met them halfway. We did not buy access. We found the bus, brought the records and showed up ready. Motörhead did the rest.

ST. LOUIS 1981 PHOTO GALLERY

Color photographs from the Ozzy Osbourne show preserve the night when two determined American fans became Motörhead's backstage guests.



More backstage scenes from the St. Louis Ozzy Osbourne show, 1981.

A NOTE TO READERS

This is a fanzine. I do not charge for it. It is available at www.metalchild.com to read online or download. If you have a pdf, I encourage you to forward copies by email to old heavy metal friends. Get your own memories going with old mates. Some photographs used in this issue originally appeared in Sounds. The memories, facts, photographs and corrections are mine; I supplied the story in segments, and ChatGPT helped organize them and recommend how to weave them into a readable narrative. I had a reality check in April with a heart attack. 99% blockage on one artery needed 3 stints 4 in all. I am retired, our daughter and grandkids live with us. Retirement has given me the time. Memories pour back. It is pretty easy to upload photos to ChatGPT and start telling the stories around them. Many hours of editing but it's a blast. Sincerely, Wade 'Metal Child' Brooks, my grandkids call me Opa and my wife Oma (I married a German)

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If you need to mail me, contact me and I will give you my current address.



Metal Child Old School Heavy Metal Fan

@MetalChildOfficial

Past: Motorheadbangers North America with Helen Taylor, Iron Maiden Fan Club - replied to ...more

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Customize channel

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YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@MetalChildOfficial>



Metal Child Old School Heavy Metal Fan

5.8K followers • 30 following

Past: Motorheadbangers North America with Helen Taylor, Iron Maiden Fan Club - replied to fan letters for Rod Smallwood, Promotion for Trouble & Exciter.

Media/news company

Professional dashboard

Edit

Advertise

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MetalChildMidwestHeavyMetalPromotions>

All photos of Motorhead are mine, my camera, film & developing. I don't care if you use them, you don't have to get permission, don't put your name on them with a copyright and date like some have unapologetically have..

MERCHANDISE

Coming Soon

T-Shirts, Hats, Buttons, Stickers & Patches at low affordable prices



Future Issue Bon Scott AC/DC, NWOBHM, Iron Maiden, Saxon, Trouble, Exciter, Jaguar Mike Varney (Shrapnel Records), Raven, Bernard Doe (Metal Forces) & more

If you like to gamble, I tell you I'm your man
You win some, lose some, it's all the same to me
The pleasure is to play, it makes no difference what you say
I don't share your greed, the only card I need is

The Ace of Spades
The Ace of Spades

Going for the high one, dancing with the devil
Going with the flow, it's all a game to me
Seven or eleven, snake eyes watching you
Double up or quit, double stake or split

The Ace of Spades
The Ace of Spades

You know I'm born to lose, and gambling's for fools
But that's the way I like it, baby, I don't wanna live forever
And don't forget the joker

Pushing up the ante, I know you got to see me
Read 'em and weep, the dead man's hand again
I see it in your eyes, take one look and die
The only thing you see, you know it's gonna be

The Ace of Spades
The Ace of Spades, ah