

"I felt like Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde," said Malcolm Young (in 1995) of his alcoholism, which forced him to take a break from AC/DC in the late 1980s.

AC/DC's Malcolm Young

'WE MISS HIM'

One of the world's favourite rock acts loses a founding brother to a crippling illness

AC/DC in 1975 (from left, Malcolm Young, Bon Scott and Angus Young). "Malcolm and Angus had a lovely way about them," Scott's former wife Irene Thornton tells WHO.



HORROR DISEASE

Malcolm Young is reportedly being treated at Sydney's Lulworth House nursing home, where former prime minister Gough Whitlam, 98, is in care. "Malcolm's only 61," says author Jesse Fink, who wrote *The Youngs*. "It's incredibly sad. But that's the horror of dementia."

The last time she caught up with AC/DC's Malcolm Young, Irene Thornton saw the same old "nice bloke" she remembered from the band's formative years. It was 2001 and AC/DC were on their Stiff Upper Lip world tour, and Thornton, who is the former wife of AC/DC's late frontman Bon Scott, went to see the iconic rock act with her son at Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena. Afterwards she was invited backstage and Young "greeted me with a hug," Thornton, who has just published her memoir, *My Bon Scott*, tells WHO. "He was always friendly, a lovely guy. He was as bright as a button."

But that sharp mind, which helped forge one of the world's most popular and enduring rock acts, has fallen on dark times. On Sept. 30, Young's family revealed in a statement that the 61-year-old rhythm guitarist, who with brother Angus founded AC/DC in the 1970s, was "suffering from dementia" and had retired from the group. It is believed Young, a father of two who has a home in Sydney with wife Linda, is now in care in a private Sydney nursing home. "It's very, very sad," says Thornton, 63, who divorced Scott in 1978, two years before his death from acute alcohol poisoning. "I feel very sorry for him and his family."

Young has not played with the group since April, when AC/DC announced their bandmate was taking a break "due to ill health." For AC/DC's upcoming 17th studio album, *Rock or Bust*, Young was replaced by Stevie Young, the nephew of the brothers. It was the first recording without Young's involvement in the band's 41-year history. "It's an incredible tragedy," former Divinyls guitarist and songwriter Mark McEntee, who knows Young, tells WHO. "He invented the real solid sound

of AC/DC." Indeed, it wasn't easy for the band to continue without him. "We missed Malcolm, obviously," frontman Brian Johnson, 66, told *Classic Rock*. "When you're recording with this thing hanging over you, and your workmate isn't well, it's difficult."

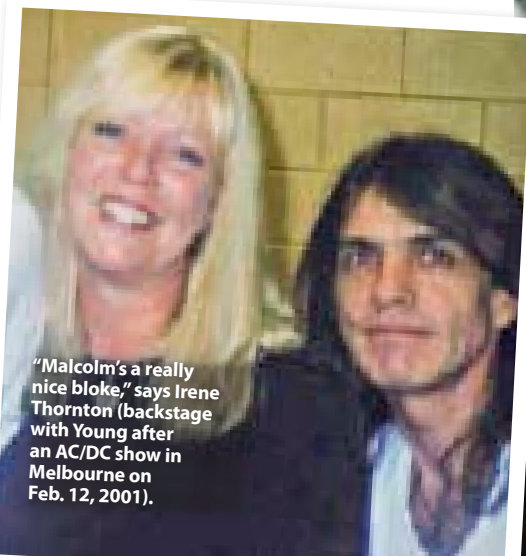
The signs of his illness had been there for "some time," says Sydney author Jesse Fink, who wrote the biography *The Youngs: The Brothers Who Built AC/DC*. "People who

"It's an incredible tragedy"

—Mike McEntee

had worked with Malcolm would tell me he was not in a good way. There were people who had seen him in an airport or a restaurant and had noticed him wandering off and didn't look like he was in charge of all his faculties."

It's not the first time Young, who emigrated with his family from Glasgow to Australia in 1963, has struggled with his health. In the late 1980s he was forced to take a break from the band due to alcoholism. "My drinking overtook my whole thing," Malcolm told VH1's *Behind the Music* in 2000. "I was physically and mentally screwed by alcohol." After therapy,



"Malcolm's a really nice bloke," says Irene Thornton (backstage with Young after an AC/DC show in Melbourne on Feb. 12, 2001).

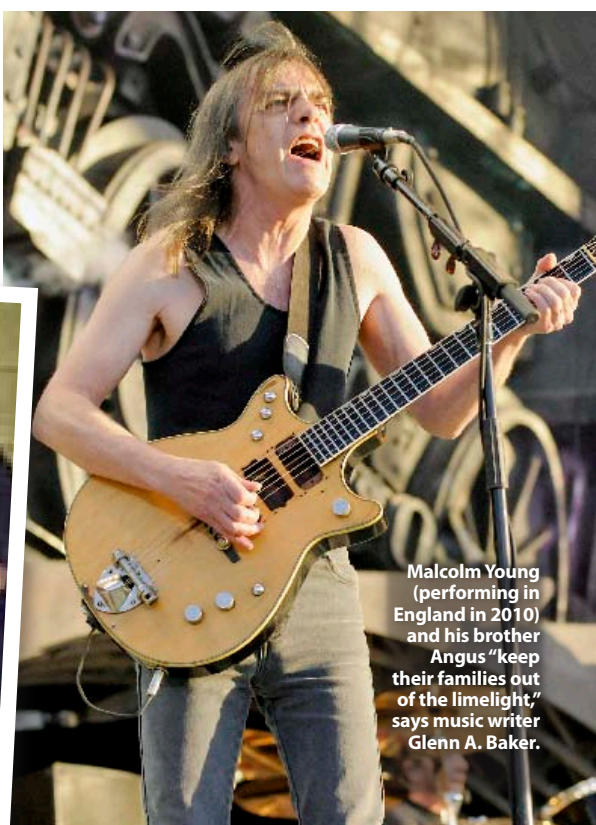


From left, Malcolm Young, bassist Cliff Williams, Angus Young and singer Brian Johnson in 2011. Malcolm and Angus are the brothers of George Young, who was in the Easybeats and co-wrote the classic "Friday on My Mind".

Young returned: "It was a bad detour I had to take. And I hope I never go that way again."

Young's departure brings to an end a high-voltage rock partnership that climbed from \$80 Sydney pub gigs to world stadium tours. "Both brothers were fantastic to watch," recalls Thornton, who was at Adelaide's Pooraka Hotel in 1974 when Bon Scott first sang with the group in an impromptu session. "They were very lively and tight and full of energy." So will the group endure? "Malcolm is the foundation stone of the band's sound," says Fink. "A lot of people have been questioning if AC/DC can go on."

■ By Michael Crooks. Reported by Melenie Ambrose and Louise Talbot



Malcolm Young (performing in England in 2010) and his brother Angus "keep their families out of the limelight," says music writer Glenn A. Baker.