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psychiatry in pictures

The famous case of Alice Cooper

Mark Silvert

Alice Cooper, the infamous theatrical rock star, real name Vincent Furnier, was suffering with depression and life-threatening alcohol addiction at the height of his success, when he was drinking well over a bottle of whiskey a day. This comic depicting Alice being committed to hospital was published in 1979 by Marvel Comics to coincide with Alice's album 'From the Inside'. It was co-written with Elton John's well-known lyricist Bernie Taupin. It describes when Alice Cooper voluntarily incarcerated himself into Cornell Medical Centre in White Plains, New York.

He was there for 3 months and in the comic he depicts the patients, doctors and nurses he met during his admission. Alice has often commented in interviews that treatment in hospital and recovering from his substance misuse saved his life, when many similar artists at that time, such as Jim Morrison and Janis Joplin, were not as fortunate, succumbing to their addictions.

The lead single from the album was 'How You Gonna See Me Now', a song describing the anxiety the singer felt coming back home to his wife after his stay in hospital and facing the stigma of being treated for his mental illness. It went on to become a well-known successful ballad.

The comic can still be found in comic shops or through online auction sites.

Alice is now a supporter of substance misuse and rehabilitation charities in the USA. He has continued recording and touring since his time in Cornell and is still doing so all these years later. Image © Marvel Comics and Alice Cooper. Reproduced with permission.



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