



Laura Levine's images of Madonna, in 1982; Chrissie Hynde and Iggy Pop, in 1987; and Michael Hutchence, in 1986. 'I wanted to get away from all the artifice,' she says. Courtesy of Steven Kasher Gallery, New York

Unseen archive of the biggest 80s stars

New York gallery shows rare vintage prints of Chrissie Hynde, Michael Stipe and Madonna

by Vanessa Thorpe
Arts and Media Correspondent

A revealing archive of unseen photographs of music stars taken more than 20 years ago is to go on display in a New York gallery on Thursday. The images, all taken by Laura Levine while working in Manhattan, show performers such as Chrissie Hynde and Michael Stipe in an unpretentious setting or a pose that often challenges their public image.

"It was definitely my intention to get away from the studio look," Levine told the *Observer* this weekend. "I started out as more of a photojournalist anyway and I wanted to get past all the artifice. I wanted to show a side to the public that was really something that they weren't aware of. To show them something you don't normally see."

The photographic show, titled *Musicians*, is being mounted by the Steven Kasher Gallery and came about almost by accident after Kasher worked with Levine on another show chronicling the same era. Levine's show is being billed as an insider's look at the artists at the forefront of rock, punk, indie rock, post-punk hip-hop, new wave and no wave – and it is already causing a stir in the Big Apple.

"We were setting up a punk and post-punk poster show and talking to Laura then," said Christina Owen of the gallery. "Steven has known Laura for many years and enjoyed her photography and so we invited her to do a second show with us. We didn't realise how many vintage prints she had for show that hadn't been seen in public before."

The show will be the first solo gallery exhibition for Levine and will feature more than 35 vintage and modern prints,



Laura Levine took her last picture in 1994.

including the photographer's vintage gelatin silver prints, many of which are one of a kind.

"There's been a strong interest in seeing the photos so we think the show is going to be very popular," said Owen.

Levine has not taken photographs since 1994 and has worked instead in painting, video and animation, but in the 1980s she showed frequently in

downtown galleries after working as chief photographer and photo editor of underground newspaper *New York Rocker*. She also published in the *Village Voice*, *Sounds* and *Rolling Stone*.

"My photo sessions would be very relaxed," said Levine. "Most of the subjects I didn't know beforehand, although some became friends. The REM photo I took in Athens, Georgia, at a point where they were very good friends. It was one of many times I photographed them. By the time I did that picture in the diner I knew them really well. I flew down to see them and we spent two whole days just going around Athens and we stopped there for lunch. Then I thought this would be a great picture, so I got behind the counter and told them all to look up."

Among the other images in the show is a striking early photograph of Madonna. "I took it before she was famous in 1982, I think she had her first single coming out, and she was really game," said Levine. "I knew nothing about her at the time. She came over to my apartment in Chinatown and climbed up all the steps to the top. I think some of the other pic-

tures from that shoot are well known, but not the one in show. She was a pleasure to work with and had a real sense of self even then. I set that picture up by asking her to scream."

The show also includes an evocative picture of Tina Weymouth of Talking Heads and hip-hop artist and DJ Grandmaster Flash. Marking the birth of hip-hop as a popular genre, it was taken in New York in 1981 in front of a wall of graffiti. "I love that shot. It was for the cover of Andy Warhol's magazine *Interview*. They look great with those boomboxes," said Levine.

"I think the most important thing with anyone you photograph is to establish a real sense of trust."

ONLINE GALLERY



See our selection of photographs from Laura Levine's Manhattan exhibition guardian.co.uk/inpictures

ON OTHER PAGES

Inside Hollywood's dream factory
[The New Review, page 27](#)

WORLD IN BRIEF

AFGHANISTAN

Nato soldier's killer wore uniform of Kabul's army

A man wearing an Afghan army uniform shot and killed a member of the Nato forces yesterday in southern Afghanistan, the US-led coalition said. The shooting was part of a spate of weekend attacks that killed at least nine people, including two other foreign troops.

It is not known if the uniformed gunman was a member of the Afghan army or a militant in disguise. A manhunt, led by members of the Afghan national security forces, was under way, Nato said. **AP**

TURKEY

'Al-Qaida gang' accused of plot to attack US embassy

Fourteen suspected al-Qaida militants have been charged with planning an attack on the US embassy in Ankara.

The suspects were charged late on Friday, just before Hillary Clinton arrived in Istanbul for a meeting on religious tolerance. A 15th suspect was released.

According to the Turkish state news agency, Anatolia, police had tracked one of the suspects for six months and had seized 700kg of chemicals, along with bomb-making instructions, assault rifles and ammunition. **AP**

US

Final Harry Potter movie sets a box-office record

The eighth and final Harry Potter film has set a new box-office record after making \$92m (£57m) at the box office in the United States and Canada on its opening day in cinemas.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2 has shattered the single-day record to overtake *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*, which previously held the accolade after earning \$73m (£45m) on its first day of release in 2009. The film has drawn good reviews from critics as well as box-office success. **Cherry Wilson**

CHINA

US 'won't support independent Tibet'

China accused the US of "grossly" interfering in its internal affairs and damaging relations after President Barack Obama met exiled Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama at the White House.

"Such an act has grossly interfered in China's internal affairs, hurt the feelings of Chinese people and damaged the Sino-American relations."

Obama met the Nobel prize laureate for some 45 minutes, but reiterated that the US did not support independence for Tibet. **Reuters**

MEXICO

Ambushers shoot dead a dozen police and a civilian

Gunmen have killed at least 12 state police officers and one bystander at a fake roadside checkpoint in the western state of Sinaloa.

The police were in a convoy travelling from the city of Los Mochis – where they had helped to launch a "safe commerce" programme – when they were attacked near the town of Guasave at about 6pm on Friday. The bystander was said to be driving home from a job at a nearby tortilla stand. Two officers were injured in an attack in Los Mochis earlier that day. **AP**