

STING

Daily Express

26 NOV. 1990

**-EXCLUSIVE: Rock star reveals the problems hampering his attempts to make our world safer-**

# Whatever happened to Sting's rainforest cash?

*Pro*



**By JAMES DAVIES**  
Environment Correspondent



**R**OCK STAR Sting will tonight face his toughest audience yet — the Indians of the Amazon forest who want to know where their money went. He does so with the words of Amazonia's Governor-elect, Gilberto Mestrinho, ringing in his ears... that despite all the high-profile campaigning of the past year the Indians have yet to receive a penny.

Last year I was with Sting at the start of his courageous fight to save the rainforests. With an area the size of England and Wales being burned each year, he had just completed a world tour with Chief Raoni, the plate-lipped head of the Kayapo people, turning him into the best known Indian on earth.

Even then there were criticisms. "The odd couple," they were called. And one Brazilian general talked of "this melancholy spectacle".

But now Mestrinho and others are raising new concerns. Like what happened to all the donations which have helped swell the coffers of the infant Rainforest Foundation to \$1.2 million in just one year.

Before he flew to Brazil last night, Sting talked of his "naivety" about the campaign and the curious characters who climbed on the bandwagon.

**H**E WAS at pains to scotch any suggestion that there had been hands in the till. "To suggest anyone made off with the money is just not on. That just did not happen," he says.

"And there is no justification for what the Governor is saying. I just cannot believe he has talked to anyone that mattered."

So was Sting himself stung — his crowd-pulling charisma used in an ineffectual attempt to solve a problem that was just too big?

"I think it was naive to expect miracles," he says.

"The idea that you can collect \$1 million, hand it over to a bunch of Indians then walk away made no sense at all once I had found out what the situation was. It was also totally wrong.

*"The Indians have no experience of money and would not know what to spend it on. They would spend it on the wrong things."*

He also readily concedes that in those heady, early days when he was Rambo in the Rainforest he was saddled with some dubious help.

"We certainly had a colourful cast of characters," he says. "The jungle is full of interesting people and it is pretty lawless on the fringes."

Which jungle were we talking about — the tropical one or the fund-raising circuit? "The Indians are pretty interesting too," he says enigmatically.

"But there is no doubt we had people who were, for want of a better word, adventurers and that does not work when you get this kind of responsibility."

**S**TING adds: "They have fallen by the wayside now and the people we have on board, particularly on the ground in Brazil, are the best you could have. If they can't make it work then no one can."

With Sting tonight in the remote jungle clearing which is Chief Raoni's village will be Larry Cox, a 15-year veteran of working with non-governmental organisations like Amnesty International.

*Cox, an American, was drafted in this year to counter rumours that the Foundation was in deep trouble and to give it a professional edge. Next week in Sao Paulo he plans to reveal all at a press conference for the first time.*

Sting himself confesses that much of the criticism hurt.

"Now I take the view that if it

nao nao any validity it would have destroyed totally what we set out to do. The fact that it hasn't says everything."

*He was embarrassed by the fact that Belgian photographer Jean-Pierre Dutilleux, the man who first introduced him to the Indians, did not hand over a penny of the advance he received for the book Jungle Stories which they jointly produced.*

"He said he was a working journalist who needed the money," says Sting. "I have to accept that. I am a rich man." But sales of the book barely covered the advance.

Speaking at his elegant home in Highgate, North London, Sting

accepts too that his sensational rock concerts and stage-managed meetings between Chief Raoni and world figures like the Pope and President Mitterrand raised expectations ridiculously high.

"There was a certain amount of inertia at the beginning when we did not know how to find the right people."

He adds: "Things like this just don't happen overnight. We walked into a vacuum and no one had any idea what to do, and it has taken us the best part of a year to find out."

Was he pleased by the fact that more than \$1 million had already been raised?

"It sounds a lot of money to the

man in the street," he says, "but not for a project of this size."

He is, however, concerned that the Foundation has publicly said it will aim for another \$1 million in the next financial year.

"I think that is going to be tough," he says.

**A**LSO acutely conscious of the need for public accountability, Sting says: "£5 may be a drop in the ocean when you are talking about saving the world's tropical forests, but it is not a drop in the ocean to the person who gave it and it is absolutely right that they should know how it has been spent.

"What we are doing now is very long term and very boring, helping to educate them, giving medical aid, giving them a stake in the future. If it's Christmas and you give an Indian a malaria pill it's not very exciting. Nobody wants to know. But it's what the Indian needs.

"It's no good showering him with gifts or making him a permanent beneficiary of endless hand-outs. That would just destroy his culture and his sense of worth.

"One old guy in Raoni's village asked me for a helicopter. I said to Raoni: 'You have got to explain'."



Unfortunately Raoni's view of the white man is that he says one thing and means another."

Have there ever been times when Sting has just felt like walking away? "Raoni asked me to help and I said yes. Now I have to stick to my guns," he says. "Despite the flak I never said: 'Sod it, I have an audience out there'. But I am a singer and that is what I do for a living, but it's not what I want for evermore."

Does he feel he has achieved anything substantial? "We have made an impact because we have concentrated a lot of people's minds on the problem."

"But I agree, it is only the first step on a very big mountain."

This is his second visit to the forests this year. This time he hopes to meet Brazil's new President Fernando Collor.

"That would push things along a bit. And I hear his wife is a fan," he grins. "This is where being a celebrity can sometimes unlock a door that is closed to others."

With Britain's Environment Secretary, Chris Patten, telling a Commons committee only last week that the rainforests of the world could be wiped out in ten years, Sting has an awful lot of doors to open.

# This is my duty, says Trudie

By LULU APPLETON

**H**E'S the milkman's son who left Newcastle and became a millionaire many times over from his music. She's the girl from a council estate near Birmingham who worked in Woolworths at weekends and always wanted to act.

Today, Trudie Styler and Sting have a spiritual commitment to one another, three small children under seven, houses in London and Los Angeles and an apartment in New York.

They enjoy membership of a spectacularly elite group of musicians like Bruce Springsteen and Paul Simon and whenever Sting simply walks down a street the reaction to him is extraordinary.

The women go wild. This is Fame with a capital F and this pair fulfil all the criteria laid down for being a beautiful cou-

ple. He is a handsome, lean, fit 39-year-old, with a voice huskier than ever, who uses his dry humour where others would wear armour plating.

Blonde, down-to-earth, 34-year-old Trudie is the exact opposite of whatever a bimbo is supposed to be, in spite of wearing a skirt so short it makes your eyes water.

## Wealth

Their London home is fabulous, with its sumptuous and comfortable large rooms, old pine-panelled walls, endless shelves of books, faded carpets, comfortable sofas and a welcoming fire in the grate.

But in spite of their wealth, Sting and Trudie have promised to help their friends, the Brazilian Indians.

Trudie says: "These are not faceless people living thousands of miles away. We like them and they like us. We made them a promise and you can't put that away lightly."

"Besides, it matters what we do to the world. I want my kids to breathe the good air, to have a healthier place to live. What would I say to them in 20 years time when they asked me what I did about it?"

Since the Rainforest Foundation was formed, Trudie has spent time each day working on it when she's in London.

"My father was a packer and despatcher in a lampshade factory, and when I was younger we used to dream about what we'd do if we won the pools."

"I can never lose sight of who I really am, but I

don't want to shove it down people's throats either," she says. "I don't believe in the class system, but I think my values are influenced by my background and I've never been able to shake off my working-class roots."

"This cause just happened to us. We didn't go looking for it and we didn't map out a strategy."

"After Sting and Raoni completed their world tour, we realised that we had started something too big just to leave and walk away."

"Of course there are lots of worthy causes, and no mother can watch children suffering without feeling her heartstrings tugged."

"Sting is very generous and gives to all kinds of things, but if I had £3 billion, I would still feel compelled to contribute to society in some way. I see it as a duty."

## On the money trail

OF THE \$1.2 million raised in the first year, \$640,000 has already been handed to Brazil to found an Indian centre, offer legal and medical help, and help move villagers from malaria-stricken areas.

There were administration costs of \$192,000 and the remainder has been used to set up structures in countries like the United Kingdom and Japan. The first year's accounts are being prepared by London accountants Stoy Hayward, who handled the Live Aid fund.

The Foundation now employs eight full-time staff — five in Brazil, two in New York and one in London, whose HQ is at 2 Ingate Place, Battersea. Foundation chief Larry Cox admits that success will depend upon whether the Foundation can save the forests and the people who live in them. "That is going to be a long and hard struggle," he says.