

I Don't Like Mondays - The true story behind the song

ECP coach John investigates the US school shooting tragedy which inspired the 1979 worldwide hit by Irish pop-punk band The Boomtown Rats

[Watch and listen to the original music video before you start](#)



Before you read the complete article, look at this vocabulary and find it in the text:

freckle-faced: to have little marks on the face and body

sniper: a person who shoots a rifle from a hiding place

caretaker: a person employed to look after a public building

to barricade: to erect an improvised barrier across a street

sight-lines: a line a sniper uses to aim at their target

hunch: a lucky, intuitive guess. Typically used by detectives and reporters

to liven up: to make more interesting

solid aim: a good shot

Monday mornings are tough for everyone, but on January 29th, 1979, a **freckle-faced** red-headed teen found a unique way to sing the beginning-of-the-week blues.

The first note of her displeasure – a rifle crack – came at around 8:30 a.m., just as a bell rang to signal the start of classes at Grover Cleveland Elementary in San Carlos, California, a suburb of San Diego.

Children waiting in front of the school started to fall to the ground, bleeding. The sounds of gunfire continued. It took a few shots before the pupils, parents, and teachers realised what was happening. A **sniper**, somewhere in the row of houses across the street from the school, was using kids for target practice.

With children screaming and bullets flying, Cleveland elementary's principal, Burton Wragg, 53, ran outside to help the victims and move the other children, who were paralysed with fear, out of harm's way.

There was another pop and Wragg fell, shot in the chest. Mike Suchar, 56, the school **caretaker**, rushed out to help the dying principal and was also shot. Teachers and students **barricaded** themselves in the school, while nurses treated the wounded.

Four victims, however, were still outside. San Diego police officer Robert Robb, first to arrive at the scene, got a bullet in his neck.

The shooting continued until another officer, aided by a security guard from a neighbouring high school, commandeered a garbage truck and drove it in front of Cleveland Elementary, blocking the sniper's **sight-lines**.

When it was over, eight children and the police officer were wounded. The caretaker and the principal were dead.

On a **hunch**, a reporter from a local paper dialled the phone number at the address police had pinpointed as the sniper's nest. A young girl answered. The reporter asked if she knew where the shots were coming from and when the reporter pointed out that it was her own address, she said, "Yeah, who do you think's doing the shooting?"

The next question, the obvious one, was why?

"I don't like Mondays. This **livens up** the day," she told him.

The girl with the soft voice, **solid aim**, and reluctance to return to school after the weekend, was not-so-sweet 16-year-old Brenda Ann Spencer. She was the youngest child of Wallace Spencer, an audio-visual specialist at a nearby college, and his wife, Dot. Until her parents divorced in 1972, she seemed a normal happy child, a bit of a tomboy. She was active in several sports, an animal lover, and a talented photographer.

From a *New York Times* article adapted by ECP coach *John Hird*

[Tap or click here to watch the video](#)

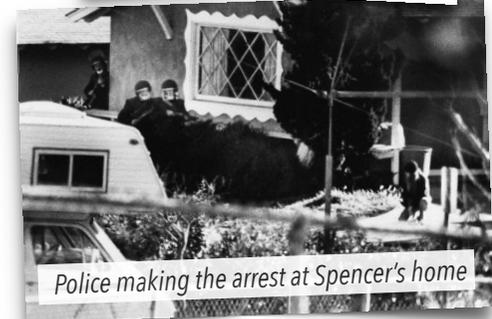
Let's chat about that!

Write your opinions in an email and send them to your ECP coach!

- Did you know the song was about a school shooting?
- Was it appropriate to write a song about the shooting? Why? Why not?
- Why do you think school shootings are so common in the United States of America?
- How can school shootings be prevented?
- Do YOU like Mondays? Why? Why not?



Brenda Ann Spencer



Police making the arrest at Spencer's home

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Director: Stanley Kubrick

Writers: Stanley Kubrick & Arthur C. Clarke

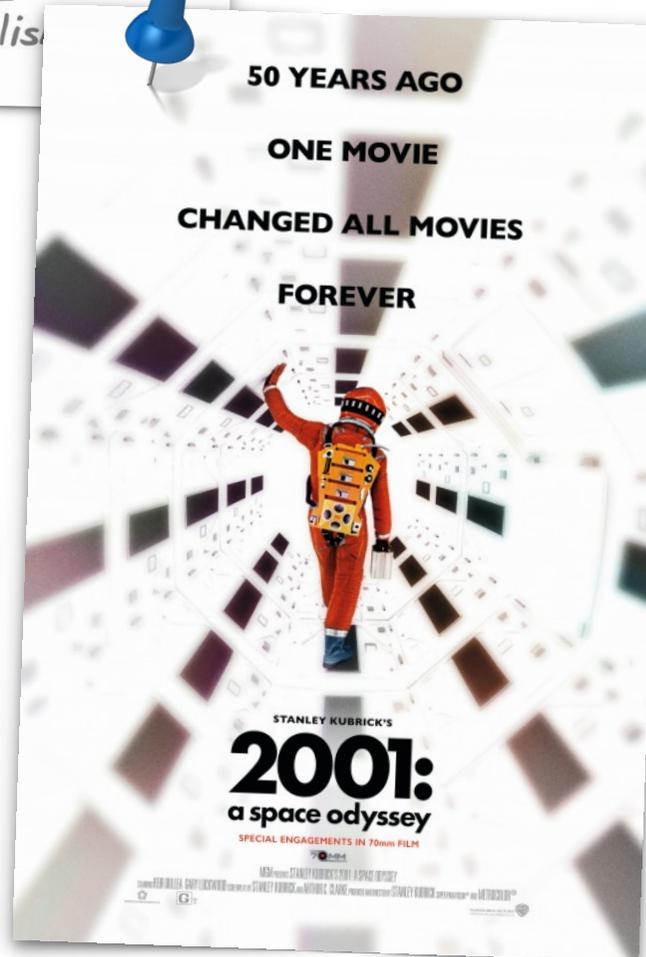
The last Friday of every month from October to June, come to ECP to watch a film in English (with English subtitles) and talk about it afterwards.

WhatsApp John for more details on:
657 73 13 54

Time: 19:30 to 21:30

Place: ECP Hub (C/San Ignacio de Loyola 15)

Price: Free! And friends are welcome :-)



Come to our
'Halloween Social'
on Wednesday 31st October!

Meet at 20:30pm in **Bar Arbara**

(c/San Ignacio de Loyola - next to ECP)

Then we'll go to the **Abisinia** (Calle Kutxa)

Then the **Carlvingford** (c/Cercas Bajas)

Ghost stories in every bar!

Let's socialise in English!!

Song Facts - I Don't Like Mondays

- * The Boomtown Rats leader Bob Geldof wrote 'I Don't Like Mondays.'
- * While touring with the band in Atlanta, Geldof heard the news story about Brenda Spencer. He composed the song on the spot, originally as a reggae number. Back in Los Angeles after the tour, a studio demo was recorded with grand piano and vocals. By the time 'I Don't Like Mondays' was introduced onstage in Loch Lomond, Scotland, the song had been transformed dramatically.
- * Geldof organised charity efforts such as Band Aid, Live Aid and Live 8, earning a KBE - the equivalent of a knighthood ('Sir') and given to people born outside the UK - for his efforts. The Boomtown Rats played the song as part of their set at Live Aid.
- * Brenda Spencer's parents tried to have the single banned in the US, without success.