

An edgy name is living the dream

IF ELVIS was The King, and Bruce Springsteen is The Boss, then what are we to make of The Edge? We all know he's U2's guitarist, but the name raises more questions than it answers.

What is beyond question, though, is that The Edge pioneered a radical pseudonym form (definite article + noun), which has only relatively recently taken hold in the music world. It seems to draw on both the template of "The King" and the one-word name, or mononym, now so commonplace in showbiz that U2 frontman Bono, perhaps the most famous mononym since Voltaire, is addressed as such without a trace of irony by heads of state and spiritual leaders.

It was in fact Bono himself who gave The Edge – birth name David Evans – his moniker. According to popular legend, Bono wanted to come up with a name alluding to Evans' sharp facial features and incisive mind. Bono hit upon the idea of calling Evans "The" something, eventually deciding on The Edge (perhaps after realising that "The Sharp Facial Features and Incisive Mind" wouldn't catch on).

In recent years, other artists have embraced this innovative approach. American record producer Terius Youngdell Nash realised early on that his own name, while far more interesting than David Evans, was just as unlikely to lodge itself in the public consciousness and hence, in 2001, rechristened himself The-Dream (that hyphen is a masterstroke).

The-Dream has worked with contemporary pop's biggest names and indeed some of its shortest names (Rihanna, Beyoncé, et al). He adopted his new title early in his career, having already established himself as a songwriter for artists like Britney Spears. As with

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"The Edge", the creation of "The-Dream" was a calculated move to attract fame: Live The-Dream, as it were.

The latest celebrated member of the "The" team is LA rapper and tattoo enthusiast The Game, although he's sometimes known simply as "Game". The controversial rapper was born Jayceon Terrell Taylor, a birth name curiously reminiscent of The-Dream's. His professional name was coined by his grandmother, a fan of David Fincher's 1997 thriller entitled – you guessed it – *The Game*. In the rap world, brimming as it is with ludicrous stage names (including "Ludacris"), Taylor's, er, nom de guerre is notable for its understated charm.

Unlike mononyms, "The" names have yet to enjoy mainstream acceptance. While we can easily imagine The Dalai Lama exclaiming, "Hey Bono, cool sunglasses", it's hard to picture, for example, The Game's mother-in-law saying, "The Game, would you mind passing me that cheese platter?"

But the trend is in its infancy and I foresee it taking off within the next few years. In the meantime, it will evolve. The next phase is uncertain but I believe we'll see a move away from abstraction to more concrete nouns (The Leopard, The Bookshop); nouns preceded by compound adjectives (The Three-Bedroom Apartment); and even nouns suggesting corporate sponsorship. I'm looking forward to the day when The Coffee Club releases its debut album.

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