

Drug tests exonerate punk rocker

Don Bolles, arrested in Newport Beach on suspicion of possessing a date-rape drug, is freed after analysis shows it was only soap.

By Roy Rivenburg, Times Staff Writer

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It was soap, not dope.

That's the verdict from additional testing of the peppermint-scented liquid that got punk rocker Don Bolles arrested on drug charges this month.

Bolles, 50, the legendary drummer for the Germs, spent three days in jail after Newport Beach police said they found GHB, the date-rape drug, inside a bottle of Dr. Bronner's Magic Soap in Bolles' 1968 Dodge van.

Police ran a field test on the yellowish goop after stopping Bolles for a broken taillight on April 4.

But a more sophisticated analysis by the Orange County Sheriff's Department crime lab detected no GHB in the soap, officials said Monday. As a result, all charges against Bolles will be dismissed, a spokeswoman for the Orange County district attorney's office said.

Meanwhile, the makers of Dr. Bronner's announced that other liquid soaps, including Neutrogena and Tom's of Maine, also can mistakenly register positive for GHB with the field test kit used by Newport Beach police.

Bronner's officials said they experimented with the ODV-brand NarcoPouch 928 test kit and various soaps over the weekend and would post a video of the results on their website next week.

"Police departments nationwide should immediately stop using the ODV field test for GHB," Bronner's president David Bronner said.

A spokesman for Armor Forensics, which manufactures the ODV test, said he wasn't familiar with the kit and couldn't immediately comment.

Bolles rose to fame in the late 1970s when he joined the pioneering L.A. punk band the Germs, a group credited with influencing generations of musicians and popularizing Mohawk haircuts.

The Germs dissolved in 1980 after 22-year-old singer Darby Crash committed suicide. Surviving members reunited in 2005 and plan to tour this summer.

Bolles, a Huntington Park resident whose real name is Jimmy Michael Giorsetti, took his stage name from an Arizona investigative journalist who was killed by a car bomb in 1976.

The drummer said he and his girlfriend, musician Cat Scandal, were driving to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting when Newport Beach police pulled over his van. Bolles said he always carries Dr. Bronner's organic soap, which he said helps keep his skin like that of a 15-year-old girl.

Bolles didn't return calls seeking comment Monday.

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