

## Censoring The Scorpions

In 2008, six British ISPs blocked access to a Wikipedia page featuring an album cover with an image of a prepubescent naked girl, writes Maryam Omid.



On 5 December 2008, six British internet service providers [blocked access](#) to a Wikipedia page belonging to the German heavy metal band, The Scorpions. The entry was about the band's album [Virgin Killer](#), which features on its cover an image of a prepubescent naked girl with a broken glass effect covering her genitalia. The cover generated controversy when it was first released in 1976 and was [sold in a black plastic covering](#) in several countries. In the US and the UK, it was eventually [replaced](#) by an image of the band.

The ISPs blocked the page after it was blacklisted by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), the UK's self-regulated online watchdog, which had responded to a complaint lodged by a member of public. The decision angered UK Wikipedians, some of whom were unable to edit the site – one of the unintended consequences of the block. According to [a report from the Electronic Frontier Foundation](#), the entire online encyclopedia became unavailable to some users, whose ISPs' filtering systems were overwhelmed by the traffic. On 9 December 2008, the IWF reversed its decision. In a statement, [the watchdog said](#) that despite the album cover's potential illegality, the "length of time the image has existed and its wide availability" made censoring it futile.

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