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GUN IN A MILLION

That's what SLASH's mum calls him. Not that he's got 9,999,999 brothers and sisters y' understand, but cos he's a good boy an' 'e loves his mum. 'WHAT!?' Shurely shome mishtake?!' you cry. Not at all – read on here (and again next week) for the shocking truth in yet another MICK WALL exclusive two-parter. The GUNS N' ROSES guitarist may be universally infamous for his hideously hungover alter-ego 'SLOSH' but behind that image (and that fringe) is a thoughtful, caring and modest young chap. . . even after midnight

IT'S 'ROUND midnight when the f**ker finally calls. I have spent the second successive evening holed-up at the West Hollywood abode belonging to Arlett Vereecke, Guns N' Roses' flamboyant 'n' freewheelin' publicist, waiting for word to filter down from the hills that Slash is finally 'ready' and 'able' to sit down with his old mate the snake-charmer and talk.

Originally, our taped rap was scheduled to have taken place the previous evening . . . I am, to be precise, when Slash got off rehearsal. That is, as far as anything can be 'scheduled' with the errant lead guitarist, at the moment. "Right now, he's into staying up for three days straight, then crashing out for the next two. It all depends, which cycle you catch him in," explained Arlett, with a nervous laugh, the first night.

Deadlines are terrible things . . . and I have suffered enough of them to know when to hit the panic button. After another long evening of falling asleep at the wheel in front of the TV I was ready to give myself until midnight before I allowed my system to go into full panic mode.

Arlett had called him up during part two of 'Dynasty' and been told by his roadie that Slash was still sleeping . . . "That could mean anything," grimaced Arlett. "He could sleep right through 'til tomorrow night, or he might wake up at any time . . . What do you wanna do, Micky?"

Micky ripped open another can of Sappuro and thought about it . . .

When the 'phone rang just after midnight, I was in the bathroom staring into the mirror at a face I didn't recognise and still thinking about it . . . What the hell was I going to ask him this time?

I was tired, of course, and not thinking straight any more. I'd had my arse parked in an armchair in front of the TV so long my brains were scrambled and I'd let my grasp on the story start to slip . . .

The sound of Arlett's piercing voice yelling through the

bathroom door was just the jolt I needed to snap me back to the present.

"Micky, I just had Slash on the 'phone! He says to come over right away . . ."

Boots on, jacket . . . cigarettes, keys, beers, tape-recorder, we throw all the essentials into the car and crank her up. 10 minutes later, we're out on the freeway, merging with the late-nite traffic that crowds Sunset, headed like a slow-moving crab for the steep brown Hollywood hills that smother the neon-encrusted skyline to the north.

"Let's get there before he changes his mind and goes back to sleep," I say, jokingly, to Arlett, but she just nods grimly and stares straight ahead, putting her foot down hard on the gas pedal . . .

SLASH IS living in a rented house at the top of a narrow dirt road wound high into the Hollywood hills. With only enough room to support one vehicle at a time, and a sheer drop of several hundred feet down one side, it's not a comfortable drive to make at any time, let alone in the middle of the night.

The view is something else, of course . . . all of Toytown splayed out beneath our feet like a coat of stars . . . I just don't want to become part of the Goddamned view . . .

"Taxi drivers refuse to take me here," Slash tells me later, with a genuinely puzzled expression on his face. "The last part of the road is so bad it makes it easy for your tyres to skid, I guess . . . We had a limo, nearly go over the side the other night."

"But it doesn't seem to stop people just comin' by whenever they feel like it," he shrugged.

Indeed . . . Slash opens the front door for us when we arrive and leads us into a spacious living area, replete with half a dozen miniature red Marshalls stacked against one wall, even more guitars both in and out of

cases scattered about the floor, and, curled up asleep in a ventilated glass case in a corner of the room, one of three snakes that Slash owns – Pandora, an eight-foot python with, Slash assures me, "a heart of gold".

Another python and a boa constrictor are being looked after by friends until Slash moves into the new house he has finally bought himself, which was then still in the process of being decorated and made ready for the arrival of its exotic new owner.

For the time being, however, this is home for Slash . . . 'King Kong' flickers silently on a TV screen; on a shelf beside the TV are stacked a pile of VHS cassettes with titles like 'A Clockwork Orange', 'Richard Prior Live In Concert', 'Scarface', and 'Animal House' . . . There's also what must be a bootleg video – 'Aerosmith Live 1977'.

With the exception of a copy of 'Separated At Birth' and an unofficial biography of Frank Sinatra, the only books in evidence are the ones that came with the lease of the house.

Slash fixes himself a tall Jack Daniel's and Coke ("I gave up on the vodka and went back to the Jack," he says by way of explanation as I eye the 'family-size' bottle he's pouring from in the kitchen) and I say good evening, or good night, or good morning or whatever the hell it is, to another of my friends the cold, cold Sappuros . . .

"Is this breakfast for you?" I ask him as we settle ourselves down in a couple of easy chairs next to the snake case.

"Uh . . . I'm not sure. It's either an early breakfast or an incredibly late lunch, I can't make up my mind," he says, with a weary smile.

Shoeless, dressed in white socks, black jeans and a black Misfits T-shirt, Slash is in a more mellow mood tonight than I am used to seeing him. He looks tired, shagged out. And though at first he does his best to

conceal it, it becomes apparent before long that Slash's nerves are jangled right now . . .

He's jumpy as a cat. Why, I can only guess. I wait for him to talk about it but we only circle in those directions a couple of times. It's everything and nothing, he says.

Halfway through the interview the doorbell rang. "I'm really not in the mood for company," he mumbled under his breath as he went to answer the door. It was Izzy and a few friends – including Billy Squier – just back from the Cheap Trick show that night over at the Forum.

Slash let 'em all in and showed them downstairs to another room, with drinks and guitars in their hands, to wait for him to finish his interview with me . . . "I'm really *not* in the mood for company tonight," he repeated, as if to himself, when he sat down again.

Later, after Arlett and I had left the house and driven home, I snatched a few hours sleep, got up again, showered and breakfasted on some solids for a change. Then the 'phone rang and it was Slash.

It was 11.30 am.

"What are you doing?" he asked me.

"I just got up," I replied.

"What are you doing?"

"Oh, I'm still at it," he said with a throaty chuckle that made me think of sandpaper and glue. "Everybody's still here and we're all going strong . . ."

"I thought you weren't in the mood for company?" I teased him.

"Ah, shit . . ." he croaked, and we let the subject drop.

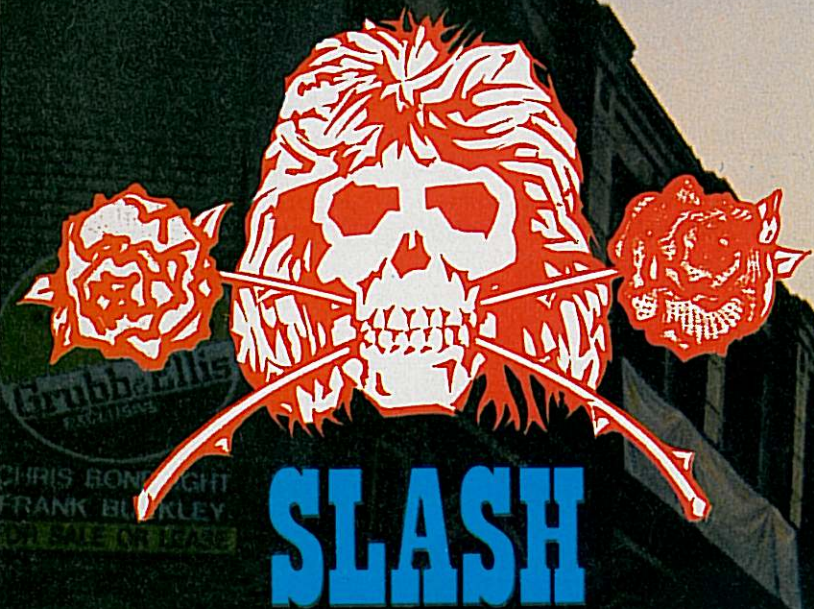
WHAT FOLLOWS is a 90 per cent verbatim transcript of that interview with Slash. After all the waiting around and the on-off-on-again 'phonecalls in the middle of the night – all begun weeks before my actual arrival in LA – it was, in spite of everything (or maybe just *because* of everything), a good time to catch the thoughts of the kid who plays lead in what must be right now the most sought-after rock 'n' roll band in the world . . .

When we'd last met, at the end of last year, Guns N' Roses had just finished touring with Aerosmith, and Slash and the



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GUNS N' ROSES



W Axl Rose (inset pic) has heard that he's real excited about. . . "



GUN

FROM PAGE 26

rest of the band were off the road for the first time in 18 months.

Back home in L.A. for the first time since their album, 'Appetite For Destruction', went to Number One in the *Billboard* charts, Slash appeared to be revelling in the first honest flush of multi-platinum success, still alive with the smell of the road – and particularly those Aerosmith dates – clinging to him.

Since then, he's had another four months to get used to being off the road and to facing up to the boring particulars of everyday life.

"The thing about being on the road constantly is that you never really have any big problems hanging over you the whole time," he says, at one point. "When you're moving around from city to city all the time you don't think about anything except getting to the next gig.

"Then when you come off the road, it's like this whole other world that you thought you'd left behind, but that's been waiting for you to come back so it can start f**kin' with you . . . I mean, I hate having to deal with normal day-to-day shit. It leaves no time for anything else . . ."

Slash slots a tape into a machine of his own and soon the familiar sounds of the Sex Pistols, Rose Tattoo, Motörhead and others fill the room with their own peculiar brand of background noise.

Then I fish out my little portable job from under my chair, hit the bright red 'record' button, and we begin like this . . .

HOW LONG have you been shackled-up in this house?

"What happened was, the last time I saw you I had an apartment, but that got so hectic and crazy that I ended up having to sort of sneak out of there . . . I had the cops there every day, and a lot of heavy traffic, and it was just a bad scene after a while, y'know? Everybody knew where it was . . .

"So I snuck out of there, then I spent a little bit of time sleeping on people's couches again. Finally, my broker found me a house to lease until I can get into my own house, right?

"I had this place for about two weeks, though, before I actually moved in. The day I got the keys I was sick – I had strep throat or something – and I just didn't have the patience to deal with it. So I left and went back to someone else's house and slept



GUNS N' ROSES: "When you come off the road, it's like this whole other world that you thought you'd left behind, but that's been waiting for you to come back so it can start f**kin' with you"

on the couch for a few days, then stayed with someone else for a few days . . .

"So I've only actually spent about a week sleeping here. I couldn't adjust to it, at first, at all . . ."

Do you live here on your own, mostly?

"Well, no . . . Downstairs there's Adam, my guitar tech. He's been staying here.

"I have to leave here in about a week anyway. Then I'm back to sleeping on couches again while my house is being decorated and everything. I don't have the patience to live there while people are f**kin' coming in and out all day long and all that shit . . ."

What are the band doing at the moment – rehearsing and writing?

"Yeah . . . supposed to be. There's a lot of songs that I've written that Axl's heard and that he's real excited about. I still have to teach them to the rest of the guys in the band, though . . . And that's basically what I'm supposed to be doing right now.

"Izzy's got a few songs, too . . . I had him over here for a few days, and managed to get those songs on tape. In a couple of

weeks we'll be ready for Axl to come down and start putting melodies and lyrics to the stuff. Hopefully, we'll be in full-blown pre-production in about a month-and-a-half."

It's very different from the way the songs were written for 'Appetite' . . .

"The whole thing now is completely different. A lot of those songs were written over a space of time, y'know? There was no real deadline, or feeling of pressure to have to come up with something.

"There's a couple of songs, though, that were written while we were in pre-production for the album . . . 'Mr Brownstone', 'Sweet Child O' Mine', and a couple others . . . So we've already had all the different sort of songwriting scenarios.

"I don't think this is going to be too foreign, you know – writing all the songs and then going straight in and recording them. Plus, we have the rehearsal studio block-booked 24-hours-a-day so we can hang out there whenever we want . . ."

DO YOU still all socialise together as much as you used to?

"Yeah. Same as we always have."

Then this roaring success you've become hasn't interfered with the personal relationships within the band?

"No. Actually, because the success has f**ked with everybody's heads so much, we're sort of like . . . clinging to each other for support, and to keep some sort of mental balance, y'know?

"I mean, I was thinking about it the other day . . . The success has just sort of exaggerated everybody's personalities. And for me it's, like, being anti-social and, er, you know, whatever you want to describe me as . . . It's just made me even worse."

Have you got over the initial rush of adrenalin that seeing your debut album go to Number One must bring? Or are you still riding it in private moments?

"Actually, there hasn't really been a real high . . . The initial high was doing those first coupla tours, y'know? That was it. Getting off the road and then realising you're as successful as you are, doesn't really make me feel all that excited.

"To me it's like, well now you're off the road and you have a lot of money and you can do anything you want . . . But there's nothing that I wanna do except play. I just wanna get back on the f**kin' road . . ."

"I envy all the bands that have their new albums done and are getting ready to go out. I'd love to have the album finished already and go back out. That's life as I know it, y'know?"

Do you find you can't move around as freely as you used to?

"No, I can't move about as freely as I used to, and I find it very mentally trying. I feel sort of like a cartoon character. People come up to me and it's always like, 'Hey dude, drink this beer, dude'. Or they wait for you to do something crazy, or whatever . . . People don't see you as a real human being, and they're constantly trying to grab at you and sit down with you and be your buddy for five seconds.

"It's just really awkward. And I find that going out to clubs, which is something I used to do, you know, every single night and get trashed, isn't something I can really do and enjoy any more. It's actually at the point where when I go out to a club, I end up leaving just totally depressed. It really brings me down.

"And everybody wants to have your undivided attention. And if you don't give it to them they act like you're an asshole who's on some rock star trip . . . Which I think is something that everybody goes through.

"But you just can't do it . . . It's like, they never wanted my attention before . . . It's really a

KONTINUEZ PAGE 34

Pic Neil Zlozower

Pic Joe Giron

Pic Ross Haffin

GUN

FROM PAGE 31

pretty traumatic experience sometimes."

What's the answer then? How do you propose to deal with it?

"Well, I just don't really go out any more . . . So, you know, there's been a real downside to all this. I'm only just now realising. I don't go out that much; I don't have that many close friends. And what close friends I have, the times I get to see them are usually few and far between . . ."

Do you get lonely?

"It gets to be a little bit lonely sometimes, yeah. And then there's the situation with women . . . Of course, that's completely f**ked up because all the girls you run into that are interested in you, are usually interested in you because you're in a band. And so that tends to be pretty . . . er . . . I don't know . . . pretty low."

Do you have a steady relationship with anybody at the

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moment?

"Not really, no."

Is that something you'd like to have?

"Well, I'd like to have one with the right person. Somebody who has their own career and has a life of their own that was active, y'know? My old girlfriend ended up being so dependent on me I couldn't take it, it nearly drove me out of my mind."

"Then after we split up I realised that, you know, everybody else is just sort of like . . . I don't know, you just need to find somebody really special, and it's not that easy."

I met my future wife in the toilets of the Rainbow . . . ?

"Yeah . . . that sort of thing. Anyway, so all those things have a sort of bleak aura round them. It's a weird feeling . . . It does fuel the fire for some emotional material, though."

HOW MUCH has your present situation influenced the new material you've been writing?

"Like I said, in a pretty emotional way . . . It's like, the songs we wrote before were written when we were nobody and being f**ked with all the time and we were the outsiders and the underdogs and all that shit."

"Now it's like, the amount of bullshit that you have to put up with and the amount of crap that you have to take from people, and the fact that you can't just, like, find people to be close with and maintain any kind of normal lifestyle, starts to make you very bitter . . ."

"And that's when you start sitting down and writing things in that vein . . . So it's not like there's a lack of material, you just sort of like shift from one f**ked thing to the other."

You said the last time we spoke that the new material was even more bitter and twisted than the songs on either 'Appetite . . .' or 'GN'R Lies' . . . Some would say that's hard to imagine.

"Don't forget, since we wrote those songs we've been on the road for a year-and-a-half."

There's a whole lot of new things we want to look at and want to communicate . . .

"First album wasn't all that good, I don't think."

Tell me about the decision to finally shoot a video for 'It's So Easy' . . . Are you going to re-release it as a single?

"Yeah, well . . . we're gonna have a home video, at some point. So we wanted to do some stuff that was, like, no-holds-barred, uncensored things . . . Not worrying about whether MTV's gonna play it, y'know? Just go out there and do a f**kin' blown-out realistic video . . ."

*Do you think MTV will show it anyway, because it's Guns N' F**kin' Roses — and just bleep out the 'F' words (like Kerrang! does)?*

"I don't know. I have no idea. I mean, I don't really give a shit, to tell you the truth . . . I mean, we've done three videos already — four videos now, with 'Patience' — and this is more or less just for us, so we're just gonna put the harshest stuff in it, you know, and leave it like that."

"I really don't care if MTV or anyone else plays it or not, it'll just be there all the same, and if people wanna see it bad enough, they'll find it . . ."

To be continued next week . . .

