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The house where Slash lives is nestled into the side of a hill that overlooks Laurel Canyon. There's little to glean from the narrow roads up there, which fork and wander like so many twisted tynes, beyond their view of anonymous garages and security cameras, and the sweet rustle of eucalyptus trees. There's money in the canyon, of course, but it's warm and woodsy too. It was a groovy popstar/hippie enclave back when Joni Mitchell sang about the ladies; since then, canyon culture has died the sad, slow death of appreciating real estate. But there are still places where you can feel the vibe. ¶ You might not figure Slash's house to be

*Access
to Excess with
Guns N' Roses'
Slash*

coiled around each other, snoozing. It's a surprisingly homey scene. Slash points out Clyde, the anaconda he's had for eight years: "Snakes aren't really supposed to have any kind of personality," he admits, "but Clyde bites everyone else but me, so that tells me something. He bit my last girlfriend," he adds dryly. "That told me something too. ¶ I have had a couple of poisonous snakes in my time, but one of the rattlers got out once and scared the whole family. I had visions of one of these B horror movies! And one time me and Izzy caught a five-foot Pacific rattler, without any tools—that was a real experience. I wanted to take him

A p p e t i t e f o r R e c o n s t r u c t i o n

among them. But there you are, in a living room of tapestries and antiques, with French doors opening to a stone-walled terrace and a full moon silhouette of surrounding hills. There's even a portrait sketch of Joni on one wall (old friend of the family, he explains) by Slash's dad, graphic artist Tony Hudson. Many little kittens scurry about; the dogs, a pair of Rottweilers, are off at obedience school. Artistic representations of lizards and dinosaurs abound. And around the corner, in what was once a Jacuzzi room, live the snakes. ¶ "When I was a kid, I always had animals around," Slash recalls. "And I always had this thing for snakes. I used to go to the Renaissance Faire every day out here and catch frogs, lizards, snakes...I'd put them all in a huge tank. The lizards would eat the snake eggs, the snake would eat the frogs, or whatever. It was really fascinating. I got to learn about the whole cycle of life."

¶ Several of the snakes, mostly non-poisonous pythons and boas, are

**BY MARK
ROWLAND**

home, but at the time I was living in the same room with Axl and two anacondas—so," he shrugs fatalistically, "I let him go." ¶ Slash began collecting in earnest after buying this house about a year ago; before that, he admits, he was pretty much "Mr. Hotel Room." Now he talks about getting a bigger house, in part to give the snakes more room. ¶ "It took me a long time to adjust to this place," he says. "Before this, I had an apartment which I got solely because it looked like a hotel room. I've always been sort of a night person. ¶ And I never drove. Now I have two cars in the garage that I never drive either," he laughs. "A 'vette and a Porsche. They're solely for investment purposes. I mean, I got this house 'cause I needed an investment. Which is the most depressing thought," he muses. "You're buying all this stuff just to sell it when you need to. All the investments

I've made are to save my ass when I fuck up." ¶ Not far from here Slash grew up, or at least came of age. He



was born Saul Hudson in England 25 years ago; his father British and white, his mother American and black. When he was about 11 the family—which by now included a younger brother, Ash—moved to Los Angeles. Both parents were connected to the music industry by their work; as a result, Slash grew up relatively sophisticated to the ways of the biz. He knew David Geffen when the boss of his current label was a partner in Geffen-Roberts. He witnessed his share of “egomaniacal prima donna bullshit,” as he puts it, and artists with drug problems. At the same time, he says, “some of these people were really magical in their way.”

He experienced “total freedom” as a kid. He recalls his mom—“a real happy-go-lucky, San Francisco hippie”—and her best friend cruising around the cliffs near Big Sur in a VW, stoned on pot, while Slash sat in the back and absorbed the rush. “It was the time of ‘free love,’ and there was no saying no,” he remembers. “It’s one of the

first guitar. She was very patient and supportive, especially because she’d come from a rich black family where, at the time, soul music was considered in bad taste and she wasn’t even allowed to listen to it. So when I’d crank up ‘Black Dog’ she’d get really upset—she’d been raised to hate stuff like that. And of course, being the punk that I was, I’d crank it up even higher.”

As a rocker, his instincts were classic—Stones, Zeppelin, Aerosmith. And eventually, as Keith found his Mick, Slash hooked up with Axl Rose. The parallel here has less to do with music—in fact, Slash credits Mick Taylor, once the Stones’ “other” guitarist, as his biggest influence—than with complementary personalities: the charismatic, mercurial singer and the gentlemanly outlaw guitarist. But there are equally significant dynamics between Slash and fellow Guns N’ Roses guitarist Izzy Stradlin (as influenced by Keith Richards as Slash was by Taylor); with bassist Duff McKagan,

As amazing
as it seems in this drug-free exercise and health age,
there’s a bunch of us who are still clinging fast
to the late ‘60s and ‘70s.”

things that’s made me comfortable with myself as a person and at the same time has probably made me...not necessarily the way I should be, in certain areas,” he says. “But my parents were always supportive and I love them for it.”

He liked watching life on the streets of Hollywood: “I was home-based but always somewhere else.” For a while he was a rowdy kid, in trouble a lot, racing bikes with a bike gang. Then he met drummer Steve Adler, “and we ditched seventh grade together.” They walked around Hollywood a lot, discussing their dreams. One day they ended up at Steve’s house. There sat a guitar and an amp. Steve put on some Kiss records, “who I always hated,” Slash avers. “But he turned the amp all the way up and we’d hit—anything! That sound was so powerful, so intense, we decided to put a band together. I quit riding my bike and started playing guitar.”

While no technical whiz, Slash can be a galvanizing player, with a sure sense for melody and dramatic solos over a tough, R&B-inflected feel. Like Eddie Van Halen, Vernon Reid and not a whole lot of other contemporary metalists, he rocks and he swings. He still doesn’t consider himself a “natural.” But while learning his instrument, he points out, “I was never intimidated, I wasn’t scared. I just did it diligently every day. So even if it wasn’t any good, there was no boundary. When I look back on it, I used to practice and practice, hours and hours...but I always enjoyed it. I don’t have a history of going through hell to learn how to play.

“I didn’t really know how to start; I was looking in a book playing scales and didn’t know where I was going ‘cause that didn’t sound anything like ‘Cat Scratch Fever,’ you know? But my grandmother used to play piano, and she got me my

a drinking buddy and no-nonsense musician; and with childhood friend Adler.

In retrospect, of course, it’s easy to analyze what made Guns N’ Roses special among the endless wave of L.A. hard-rock hopefuls—the mix of out-of-control personalities and single-minded group devotion; their willingness to go against the grain of Hollywood glam-rock with a sound that evoked the often disturbing truths of their lives; talent, vision, luck. “But when we first started out, everybody wanted to hate us,” Slash says. “We’d fight promoters tooth and nail just to get a gig. Once we played, people would get really into it. I think they’d be impressed by the fact that we’d just get up there and play.”

Offstage, the stories surrounding Guns N’ Roses have become legend. Most concern one sort of debauchery or another, and to be fair, most of them are true. Between gigs they existed in a succession of seedy apartments, always broke but with a floating retinue of girls and hangers-on, drug dealers and cops. “For years I was living out of a duffel bag, and I was happy,” Slash says. Though by now he’s resigned to that aspect of the band’s reputation (“people love dirt and if you die, that’s really great too”), what hurts is the presumption among casual fans that Guns N’ Roses’ success was somehow contrived.

“We thought we’d made a record that might do as well as, say, Motorhead,” Slash recalls. “It was totally uncommercial. It took a year for it to even get on the charts! No one wanted to know about it. Even today, when I hear ‘Civil War’ on the radio, it’s like left field to me. Everybody else seems to be doing something completely different, pushing the nice pop single.

Photography by Aaron Rapoport



'Sweet Child o' Mine' turned into a huge hit and now it makes me sick! I mean, I like it, but I hate what it represents. We started out as a hardcore band and we toured our fucking asses off. Next thing you know we've turned into pop stars. And now certain people are ripping us off—I won't mention any names—like we started this 'scene,' you know? And for us it was all so personal and heartfelt."

Appetite for Destruction sold about 10 million copies. In the summer of '88 Guns N' Roses went on tour with their heroes, Aerosmith; by summer's end they'd become the bigger draw. In the cocoon that is more or less life on the road, however, the guys in the band were only dimly aware how much their lives were changing. The crowds were bigger, the hotels were nicer, security was tighter. But they were still opening for another band, moving from one gig to the next, playing hard and partying harder. In other

machine and you don't even pick up the phone."

As many who meet him will testify, Slash can be funny, disarmingly honest, just plain likable. But behind the breezy personality there's a more fragile character, one who likes to drink, even in the best of circumstances, as a way of "loosening up" during social situations. For a self-described musical "workaholic," sitting around with no band and not much to do was far from the best: "As pathetic as this may sound," he admits, "my personal life and existence has nothing to do with anything beyond the band and being a player. I'm very single-minded. All I do is music, or else I do something—entirely different."

In that regard, of course, Slash has much in common with his bandmates. In the summer of '89, the group had reassembled in Chicago to work on a new album, but for weeks the sessions hob-

O n "One in a Million":

"Everyone on the black side of my family was like, 'What is your problem? You could have stopped it.' Axl and I don't stop each other from doing things. Axl is a naive white boy from Indiana, was brought up in a totally Caucasian society, and it was his way of saying how scared he was."

words, they were doing what they'd been doing for five years. Then the '88 tour ended, and the members of Guns N' Roses, newly rich and famous, exhausted but triumphant, were free to go home and enjoy the rest of their lives.

That's when the real trouble began.

"OUR REALITY IS THAT WE CAME FROM nowhere—or maybe even a subzero level," Slash says, "being on the road, doing that every day—and having no other life. And there is a pace to that, which is kind of exciting. Then all of a sudden, bam! That life comes to a screaming halt. You don't have your crew guys, the maid doesn't come in, you're laying in bed waiting for the gig to happen...and it's not gonna happen."

"But there was no other life for us to come back to. We'd never had any other life. And now we were all separated—we had our own little places, which had never happened before. I remember a point where I was just sitting in bed bored and uninterested in anything. You hear one of the guys in your band on the answering



bled along miserably. Depressed, Slash and Duff began drinking heavily, consuming up to a half-gallon of vodka daily. "I'd wake up with the shakes so badly, detoxing just from waking up." Steve and Izzy found their own forms of intoxication. Only the notorious Axl, ironically, was relatively straight ("He's never let himself go off the deep end," Slash remarks), though not necessarily

any more productive. Fed up, Slash scribbled a goodbye note and flew back to L.A. He and Axl didn't speak for a long time after that.

In October, the band finally got back together for a local gig, if that's what you'd call preceding the Rolling Stones for four nights at the Los Angeles Coliseum. By this time, however, Slash was further out there, shooting heroin and speedballs. "Before and after the gig I'd have my dealer meet me," he recalls. "I'd built a place in the hotel room to hide my shit. Axl was tripping out on the whole thing but as far as I was concerned I was fine—at least the gig was happening and I was playing."

On opening night, Axl made a thinly veiled speech about certain

people who were killing themselves and their band. "I almost walked off the stage," Slash remembers. "Being in that frame of mind, it was like, fuck you, you dick! But he was also a little intimidated by the gig, I think. He always pulls that kind of avoidance." Nonetheless Slash promised to clean up. To that end he went to a golf resort in Arizona. "Of course I took 10 grams of coke with me," he notes wryly. "I'd be telling the limo driver to stop at a restaurant to get me a silverware set and he'd come back with a knife and a fork. I'd be like, 'No, the complete set...'"

The quantity of coke he was doing had begun to incite hallucinations, and one day in the hotel room he imagined a knock on the door and men with guns. "I flipped out," he says simply. He destroyed the glass in his shower room, attacked a maid, ran outside bloodied and naked. With a little help from his friends, he avoided going to jail. Now he figures he's luckier than that. "I really should be dead by now. That's how bad it was."

"I guess I always felt I was indestructible," he says. "And that if I died, I didn't care about that either. I'd OD'd lots of times, would wake up and go, 'What happened?' But finally, the people close to me made me realize...."

His voice trails off for a moment. "I spent Christmas and Thanksgiving that year with my girlfriend at the time, who was very family-oriented. She'd stuck with me through this whole thing and I feel the worst for her, 'cause I put her through a lot. But anyway, I spent time with her family and they were really wonderful people. My regular life started to come back and I realized that I was somebody

who still had ambitions.

"Luckily enough, some trigger I'm not even aware of seems to have kept me from killing myself. And now I'm really happy, really sparked. I'd be missing all this, had I kicked the bucket. So," he smiles engagingly. "Here we are."

THIS IS A GOOD TIME FOR SLASH. HE'S PUTTING IN 10-12-HOUR DAYS, SIX days a week, on the new Guns N' Roses album. He's also probably the only guitarist around who's recently put in studio time with Bob Dylan and Michael Jackson. The studio date with Dylan turned out to be less than propitious, however; Slash only appeared on one cut, during which Dylan told him to strum an acoustic like Django Reinhardt, and later erased his guitar solo. "Upon meeting him I thought he was an Eskimo," Slash says. "It was the middle of summer and he was wearing gloves and one of those big surfer sweaters with a thing over his head. An interesting experience," he decides, diplomatically.

Slash has played on three songs for the upcoming Michael Jackson album, which is still in progress, but has yet to meet the star. He seems a little torn between worrying that he might be asked to do "the Eddie Van Halen thing" and worrying that he might not be. "It's at once the most sterile and creative process I've been involved in. Everything is pieced together from samples; you use the same drum beat and chords then later add things to make it different in some places. Which is so different from what we do. Michael hires out the studio for like 10 years and shows up once a month. I'll

probably never meet him..." He shakes his head and smiles. "It's sort of weird."

Slash has also been playing with Iggy Pop and Lenny Kravitz, who are a little more up his alley. Slash had flown the Iggster to L.A. to perform at a local benefit he was playing, where they "blew doors" on an old Stooges song. He and Duff reciprocated by appearing on four tracks on Iggy's *Brick by Brick* LP, Slash even picking up a co-writing credit for revamping "My Baby Wants to Rock and Roll." As for Kravitz, "my girlfriend and I were just head over heels in love with his album. When I met him I told him, 'You're so great, we fuck to your record all the time!'" He was probably a little shocked," Slash laughs, "but he's a really good guy. I put a solo on one of his new songs, which is the most out of tune first-take dry guitar solo—but he really digs it. He's really raw, one of the most soulful people."

Slash says his home listening, while heavy on rock, also encompasses Erik Satie and Joni Mitchell, even classical music. "If there is a certain mood to it, a certain melody that really hits your heart, I can listen to anything," he says, sounding for a moment like Tony Bennett. "My thing is really R&B. But even when it's sort of over-aggressive, it has to have a blues foundation and not be some weirded-out pyrotechnical stuff. I think people get sick of hearing totally 'amazing' musicians all the time. You hear it and they are amazing and then you go get a cup of coffee and forget about it."

"Times and attitudes change," he goes on, "but I think there's a vein in popular music that's always significant, an emotional vein

that everyone shares. People are cold a lot of the time, or trying to be, trying to hide the fact that feelings really do affect the way you live. You try to put it back on your job, or whatever, just getting on with your life. But there's always a need for release, to get that out—which is what rock 'n' roll is about. So that part will always be there. You try to be as honest as possible and if you're lucky you have the vehicle to put it out there for the public."

In that respect, Slash figures, Guns N' Roses was lucky: "We were the ones who got signed. I do believe we're a good band—though we may suck more often than not," he cracks. "But I know there are others out there who are just as good or have the same feelings and are struggling."

"I think we're a pretty decent mirror for what kids and young adults go through, if you're not brought up in a totally stiff atmosphere. For people who have spent time on the street or have family problems, alcohol problems, we've voiced some opinions about what we were going through. And some of the reason we did so well is that a lot of kids related to that. Of course their parents might have freaked—it's that 'our generation' kind of thing—but it's what we went through. And now, what we have to say is a little different."

The Guns N' Roses album-in-progress, again produced by Mike Clink, is tentatively scheduled for release early in 1991. In the past three weeks, Slash says, he's put on nearly all the guitar parts for the record's 50-plus tunes. While many of the new songs have a familiar ring—"there's a lot of songs about, you know, drugs and sex"—Slash claims the overall feel is at times more romantic.

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"Which is something I believe in strongly, surprisingly enough."

To underscore the point, he puts on a rough mix of "November Rain," a very melodic mid-tempo ballad with a beautifully contoured vocal from Axl and a long, elegiac guitar coda many teenage boys will have memorized six months from now. "We call it the 'Layla' song," he admits.

Some of the other songs on the record will be familiar to Guns N' Roses followers, like "Civil War" and a cover of the U.K. Subs' "Down on the Farm," both of which the

band performed at Farm Aid last spring. There are tunes exhumed and refurbished from the band's early days like "Ain't Goin' Down" and the not-terribly-romantic "Back Off, Bitch"; there's even a metallic cover of Paul McCartney's "Live and Let Die." Slash plays a banjo to introduce one track; Izzy plays sitar on another. Musically, "no two scenarios are the same," Slash contends. "We all wrote together and individually. So the range of material is pretty wild.

"Left on our own, I'm sure everyone would make very different albums. I write

AMPS N' AXES

WHEN SLASH WAS 13, he owned a poster of Steve Tyler and Joe Perry, the latter holding a tobacco sunburst '59 Les Paul: "That was the coolest looking guitar," he says, still savoring the memory. Through a curious turn of events, the guitar turned up years later for sale while Guns N' Roses was touring Japan, and Slash quickly snapped it up. It joins a growing retinue of Les Pauls, including two he's had on the road "since the beginning," a '60 model and the handmade '59 copy he played exclusively on *Appetite for Destruction*.

For the second Guns N' Roses record, Slash has expanded his palette considerably. Striving for a "different tone" on every song, he's employed all of the aforementioned axes, as well as a '58 and yet another '59 Les Paul, an early '60s Strat and two Music Man "Strat-type" guitars, one with humbucking pickups and the other with single coils. He also uses a Travis Bean, a '58 Flying V and a classic '56 Les Paul gold-top.

As you might figure by now, the guy has a thing for Les Pauls. "I even have an early-'70s black Les Paul custom," he adds. "I could never use it live 'cause the sound is too thin, but it sounds great on the record."

Acoustically, there's a couple of "great" Guild 12-string acoustics and a Gibson six-string. Not to mention a dobro "with a hula dancer on the back and palm trees—wood carved." On all of the above Slash uses Dunlop picks and Ernie Ball strings.

The sound gets pumped through a Marshall half stack with a Roland JC-120. There's a couple of wah-wah pedals, a voicebox and, occasionally, an echo added through the boards. "But it's really a basic setup," he points out. "You can hear how raw it sounds. You'd be surprised at the variety of sounds you can get from an amp, a guitar and a cabinet."

When recording with Guns N' Roses, Slash says, he ends up laying down all the guitar tracks by himself. "I hate headphones with a passion," he explains, "which is why it sometimes takes us longer to do our records—'cause when we do basics I consider them dummy tracks. I play completely different with headphones, I hate it. So after we lay down the track I take all my crap off and play my guitar parts in the control booth with huge monitors. I just blast everything out.

"Mike Clink has to wear earplugs when I do that," Slash smiles. "But I need the ambience."

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songs that are maybe a little more intricate than what Izzy wants to play—there's one on the record, 'Coma,' that's about 10 minutes long and 500 chord changes. But if the melody doesn't catch you at first it's hard to develop an interest in anyone else learning it. We all have different ideas, but there's no hierarchy. We still have to do everything as a band."

The band, however, no longer includes drummer Steven Adler. The forced departure of his childhood buddy from Guns N' Roses is the one topic of conversation Slash appears pained to discuss. The problem, he says, was not so much Adler's drug use per se, as his refusal to clean up after it became apparent that he could no longer play very well. Once rehearsals began for the new record, "his chops were all over the place," Slash says. "And he was lying to us on a daily basis. I was trying to talk some sense into him but it never happened. He wouldn't listen to anybody—none of us will! And Axl and Duff had had it.

"As amazing as it seems in this 'drug-free' exercise and health age, there's a bunch of us who are still clinging fast to the late '60s and '70s," he observes. "But Steve never grew up to the fact that it's not all just sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. To him it was a big fantasy and we took care of him. And now he's on his own."

Do you keep in touch with him?

"I did keep in touch. I'd pop into his house every now and then to see how he was doing. I stuck with him, as you'd do for a loved one. And then he started getting on my case, saying, 'I've heard you guys are all on heroin and what's the difference, blah blah blah....' And finally I couldn't talk to him anymore. I'd take him out to dinner and it would turn into this huge fight, to the point where I couldn't take it. So now I don't see him anymore. I call his doctor and I think about him a lot. And I worry. 'Cause it's a scary thing. And he was my best friend for a long time."

Replacing a member of "the family" had been heretofore inconceivable, and for a while no one was sure how to go about it: "I mean, we couldn't place an ad in the paper." They tried the usual route, people they knew, but no one really worked out. Then Slash went to see the Cult, and came away thinking that their drummer, Matt Sorum, had "the best groove I'd heard. So we got together, and he fit in with us from day one."

You can hear the difference; from blues-

funk riffs like "Bad Apples" to the anthemic "November Rain," the newly recorded tunes are anchored in rock-solid tempos. "Yeah, we finally have a rhythm section," Slash figures. "In the past, Steve used to watch my feet for meter, and I always rush things in certain places—not on purpose," he admits. "So a lot of our tempos would be all over the place. We just got used to that. A couple of times we had a drummer fill in for Steve on the road, and in the middle of 'Welcome to the Jungle' I'd realize I'm four bars ahead of the drummer. So, now I'm learning to play

with an actual musician."

Part of the reason there will be so many tracks on this record, Slash says, is that, given their stormy history, no one is too sure just how long Guns N' Roses will last. But another is acknowledging that they just might last, and that time—and success—changes everything: "It's all material we would never have gotten off our chest if we didn't do it now.

"You learn from experience. We were very arrogant and in many ways an ignorant band, that just thought we could do every-

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thing our way. And we try to hold on to that. I mean, there's still no formula for us. But then you see how people love to drag out dirty laundry, they expect you to come onstage and throw up or something. Which has nothing to do with music and everything to do with attitude. But of course, attitude has a lot to do with music. Personally, I don't want to piss off anyone. But we'll probably always be controversial," he shrugs. "Life goes on."

Still, Slash says, he's torn at times between the allure of rock 'n' roll as an

instrument of danger, and what the effect of that danger can be. He's still troubled over a metalfest in England two years ago during which several people were trampled to death while Guns N' Roses performed, unaware of the catastrophe.

"It's way different looking at it from the end I'm on now," he says. "I remember going to see Aerosmith and Van Halen in the '70s in those huge festivals, and it was just insanity! You're sitting behind some 200-pound muscular blond guy who smells like a 12-pack fistfucking the air in every direc-

tion—and the shorter you are, the less you can breathe, you know? It gets a little weird and chaotic. But that's the fun, too.

"We brought back that whole element of danger, along with a few other bands—which was severely lacking. I like that energy. But then you have to stop the show for people to settle down, or else the casualty tent is filled with all these injuries. So now I have to change my music, so people don't get killed?

"It seems to me that maybe our audience is getting a little more civilized," he adds hopefully. "I've noticed that they can sit back and actually listen to what's going on, as opposed to ranting and raving the whole show." Just to be sure, though, the next Guns N' Roses tour will include several slower numbers, "where everyone can chill out for a minute."

Slash also found his conscience racked over the release of Guns N' Roses' "One in a Million," an Axl Rose-penned narrative with references to "niggers" and "faggots" that, despite Rose's assertions to the contrary, black people and gays could understandably regard as hateful and insulting. On the one hand, Slash says, "I knew where Axl was coming from." On the other—well, he is half-black himself.

"Everybody on the black side of my family was like, 'What is your problem?'" Slash recalls. "My old girlfriend said, 'You could have stopped it.' What am I supposed to say? Axl and I don't stop each other from doing things. Hopefully, if something is really bad, you stop it yourself.

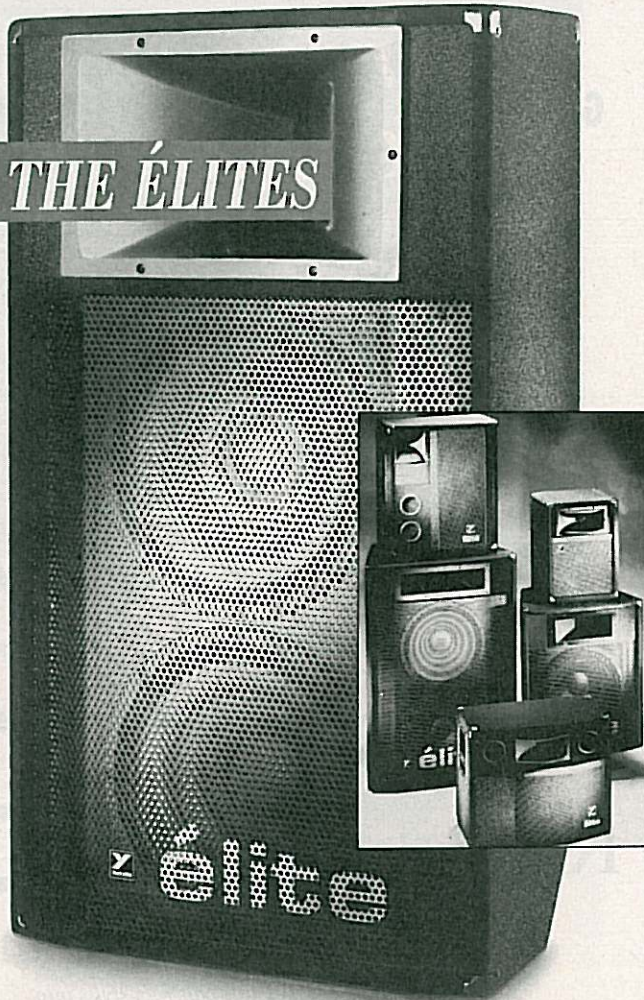
"It was something he really wanted to put out to explain his story, which is what the song is about. Axl is a naive white boy from Indiana who came to Hollywood, was brought up in a totally Caucasian society, and it was his way of saying how scared he was and this and that. Maybe somewhere in there he does harbor some sort of [bigoted] feelings because of the way he was brought up. At the same time, it wasn't malicious.

"I can't sit here with a clear conscience and say, 'It's okay that it came out.' I don't condone it. But it happened, and now Axl is being condemned for it, and he takes it really personally. All I can say, really, is that it's a lesson learned."

In a way, Slash suggests, lessons learned are what the last couple of years have really been about. "A little perspective doesn't hurt," he says. "I just turned 25, and something went off in my head. When I started

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this I was 19, and at that age there's nothing to stop you, so far as you can see. And then as you get older—not to say I'm old now—but you do change a little and see things differently. It's pretty natural. Some people are a little luckier than others as far as living through it. 'Cause there are extremes. When you're 22 and on the road with access to excess—well, you can get in trouble."

These days, he feels relatively stable, at least in Slash terms. He says he hasn't used any hard drugs since he weaned himself nearly a year ago. He has a steady girlfriend,

with whom he recently celebrated their eight-month anniversary. At one point he even allows that one day he'd like to have a child. A daughter, that is: "I don't need another one of me."

Asked about his chances of wiggling out again, he allows that it's always a day-to-day proposition. "But at this point it's not something I'm worrying about. Even though I didn't go through any counseling, I think I understand where it all stemmed from and how it could happen again. If it did happen it would have to be a different reason. To go

from nowhere to here was such a huge mind trip; now that it's happened and we've managed to keep it together, I don't think we'll go through that kind of shock again."

Last year, when Slash was riding that rollercoaster, Joe Perry and Steve Tyler would call him up from time to time, just to see how things were. "That was really nice—and weird too. 'Cause I used to have posters of those guys."

"Now I listen to the new Aerosmith record and it's got some of the greatest grooves—but the whole 'raunch 'n' roll' thing is gone. And I'm sure that'll happen to us at some point. We're not always gonna be the brash teenage hardcore band because we won't always be brash and teenaged. Of course kids hate hearing that, 'cause it reminds them that they're gonna get older some day too."

"I look back sometimes at the things I've done, and I see that what gets me off is working real hard towards something, to reach a goal. So that's what I'm doing now. Just to finish this record and then we'll go on tour. And I think we can go out and concentrate on the music; we'll be a lot tighter band on tour this time, and better musicians. I know I have a lot more patience. I want to spend a lot of time concentrating on my playing..."

Slash suddenly catches himself and laughs. "But then when we go out there, we'll all go fucking crazy. And those plans'll go right out the window." **M**

WESTERBERG

[cont'd from page 58] ferentiate between love or a relationship and a hangover. It's all sort of one. Hopefully that will change.

MUSICIAN: Are you still drinking?

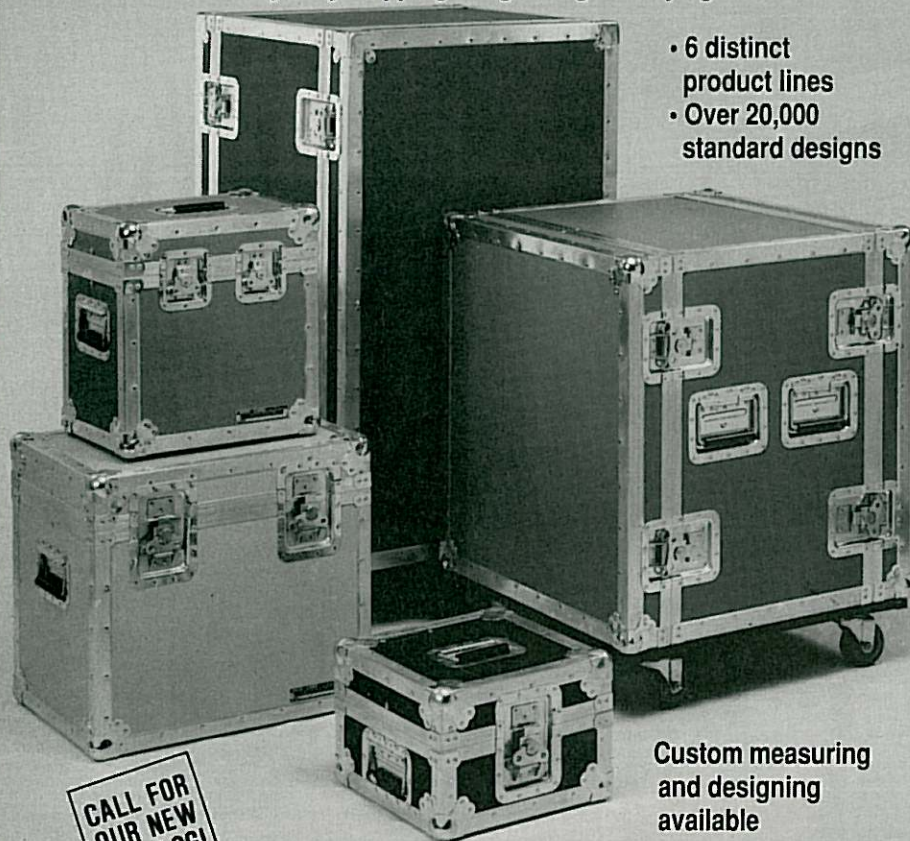
WESTERBERG: Non-alcoholic beer. I've been doing that for quite a while now. Since the record was completely done. I love to do things backwards, go out on a tour and kill myself, write and record, and then I hit a brick wall. I've been waking up for years looking in the mirror and thinking, "I've got to put the bottle down." One day I looked in the mirror and said, "If I was the bottle I'd put me down." It was very evident that I had run my course. I can't promise and I can't say what the future holds, but I would like to do it sober. We could have a cup of coffee next time.

MUSICIAN: Well, good luck, Paul. I hope this record goes through the roof.

WESTERBERG: Or the window. **M**

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