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IZZY & SLASH

OF GUNS
N' ROSES

TRANSCRIPTION TO
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THE JUNGLE

VAN HALEN

TRANSCRIPTION TO
GET UP

ROBBIE KRIEGER

OF THE DOORS
TRANSCRIPTION TO
LIGHT MY FIRE

THE ACOUSTIC INFLUENCE

TRANSCRIPTION TO
CLASSICAL GAS

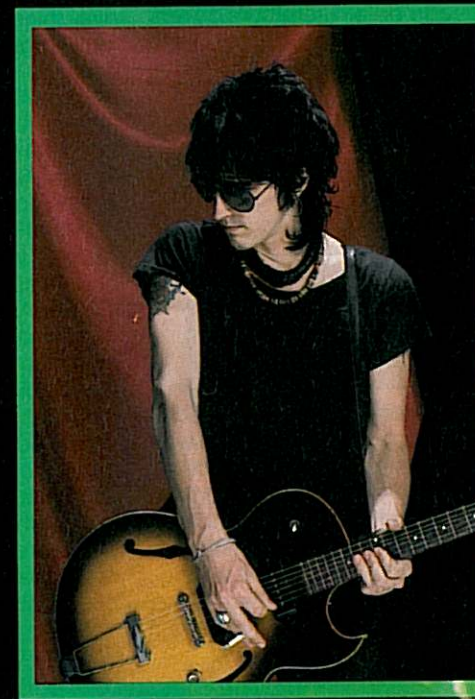
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IZZY AND SLASH
GUNS N' ROSES

The street rep acquired in the past year by Guns N' Roses, this year's reigning kings of L.A., is no surprise to Megadeth's Dave Mustaine. "Guns N' Roses is one of the bands that's actually offering something for people to see there's a youth movement out there with a lot of attitude. They're an honest to goodness rock 'n' roll band, in it strictly for the fun and games of it, the kind of band you think about and associate with the word rock 'n' roll." Known around town as a latter day West Coast edition of Aerosmith, their off-the-cuff approach and party-down attitude is epitomized by Slash and Izzy, their ragged two guitar lead/rhythm section, players who are determined to walk this rock 'n' roll road in the classic way. As one L.A. label exec has gone off the record as saying, "These guys will be huge, if they live long enough." While they're still around, GUITAR sat down with them both, to discuss all the elements that go into creating a record year.

IN THE CLASSIC WAY



Rick Gould



Rick Gould

You had a leg up on many of us because of your music situation at home.

My parents were in the business so I was weaned on music when I was a kid. My dad used to do all the album covers for Geffen Records. I've known David Geffen all my life, which is a real nice connection. I picked out what I liked and didn't like real early. I listened to Who albums, I listened to Cat Stevens. I was into Sabbath albums. I got into a few albums which made me start playing guitar: *Rocks*, by Aerosmith, *Cheap Trick Live at Budokan*, any Ted Nugent album at the time, and Zeppelin. Then I started listening to UFO, *Strangers in the Night*.

How quickly were you good enough to enjoy playing?

I picked it up pretty quickly. I started a band as soon as I started playing. I was so single-minded that I played 12 hours a day. I can't say that I was so talented; I can say I was so into it I had no choice but to learn what I was doing. When I first started playing I was naive and ignorant about it. I didn't know what lead guitar was. I didn't know if I wanted to play bass. I just wanted to play. I thought if I'm going to play I need lessons. I went into this music place without an instrument and said I want to learn how to play. The teacher asked me did I want to play bass or guitar or what? I said, "What's the difference?" He said the bass has four strings, the guitar has six. I said I'll take the guitar because it's got more strings. But I couldn't take lessons because I didn't have a guitar. I started playing this guitar that had one string on it, doing UFO and Aerosmith songs on one string by ear. I finally got an acoustic guitar and went back to the music school and started learning how to play. They started teaching me "Mary Had a Little Lamb." It wasn't Aerosmith, so I quit and started learning from records. I'm completely taught by ear. If there was something that I liked, that I thought was cool, I'd learn it. I'd learn Jeff Beck like you wouldn't know. I'd learn any lick that I thought was really good from *Wired*, *Truth* and *Blow by Blow*. Then he got into *There and Back* and it was too jazzy for me. Jeff Beck is the most amazing guitar player out of anybody that I can think of. He is the only guy that blows me away. So I would sit down and learn licks that hit me. With Aerosmith and Ted Nugent songs it was basically any song that I liked. I wouldn't learn whole albums, just whatever hit me in the heart. I didn't learn because I wanted to be a rock star or to be able to play it live. It was nothing like that. I learned it because I liked it and because if I wanted to play that way or be as good as that then obviously I had to learn it.

Did you have friends who helped?

I've never had a relationship with another guitar player. I've known Tracy from L.A. Guns for a long time and that was a rival thing that I've had with him since junior high. I've never played with another guitarist except for Izzy. I had bands from junior high all the way to now, but they weren't cover bands. I wrote songs, and that's the way it's always been. I had a real hard time coming up in bands. In junior high I had a guitar and a killer Fender Twin, which I sold because I was an idiot. I had a drummer and bass player. I could never find a singer. Axl was the only singer in L.A. I've ever met who could sing and I didn't meet him until way later on. I'd go in with these guys and I was very serious about it. I was going to go the whole nine yards. I didn't know if I was going to be a big rock star and play at the colosseum; I just wanted to go out and do it. I'd stick with the drummer and he'd have fits and eventually we'd split up. I was real ignorant. I didn't have any goals, but I had a subconscious drive that I couldn't stop. If somebody couldn't hack it I would move on.

How did you hook up with Izzy?

When we first met we didn't click musically at all. Izzy and Axl had a band together. I wanted to get Axl and I didn't want to work with another guitar player because I'd never done it before. Working with other guitar players, I couldn't be in control of what was happening on the guitar. I wanted to get Axl away from Izzy, which was impossible. At the time when I met Axl we started a band and Izzy was in it, but he split to join a band called London, which I had just quit. That was cool, so me and Axl had a band going. That broke up. Eventually Axl joined L.A. Guns. Then Izzy joined L.A. Guns because everybody just wanted to be in a band and be working. That didn't work out and I got this call that said, do you want to come back and play with us? At first I didn't want to do it because me and Axl had been through some bad times together. I did it and worked with Izzy because that's what was happening. It was the only band I could find that I could relate to. If you listen to the record, me and Izzy don't play anything alike. Our sound is completely different. He doesn't play lead hardly at all, but his rhythm style is cool. I was a lot heavier than he was. But we worked it out and it wasn't even a conscious thing. We just played together and eventually got better and better and now we sort of jell more.

How did you sound five years ago?

I can't look back that long, and I don't have any tapes of it. I've got tapes of before this band. The stuff I was doing then was heavier. When Metallica came

out, I was really into them because that was sort of like the stuff that I was writing. In a sense that's still the style I play. When I play really hard stuff I play a lot like Metallica. That's why I like them. It's the heavy part of it, it's not their chords. It's the feel of it. Listen to "Paradise City," the actual riff is heavy as far as heavy goes, but at the same time I have a major blues thing happening. The stuff I play is bluesy but I play the bluesy stuff heavily or at least that's the way I approach everything. Because of Izzy and Axl and Duff and Steve, everything comes out sounding like Guns N' Roses, which is different.

How does your Ep stand up?

It was live, it was punk rock, it was great. I enjoyed it because it was fast and straight in your face.

It doesn't sound like *Appetite for Destruction*.

We didn't have the time to get it together. That's why it's important to me. Live, "Like a Suicide" is indicative of what this band was all about when we first got together. We didn't sit around in rehearsal studios saying we have to be like this or that. We wanted to go out and play live. We would write songs real fast because we had already booked the gigs. We were an angry bunch of kids. That Ep means a lot to me, because we wrote songs, got them together in an evening, and then went out and played them. The album has songs that we sat down and worked on and actually wrote and worked it out. "Suicide" was from the early days, the beginning. "Welcome to the Jungle" is the first song that me and Axl wrote together. We still write the same way. We write a song in a day, in three hours of rehearsal, but it's not as desperate as it was. Doing an album is completely different when you have a record company behind you. You have an actual corporation happening. You can go into the studio and lay the stuff down and the song unfolds in the studio. Of the songs on the record, "Think About You" Izzy wrote before Guns N' Roses was even a nightmare. "Paradise City" we wrote before we were thinking about going in the studio. There's a lot of songs on there that are pretty old. "Brownstone" was after we were signed. We wrote everything on the record and didn't change anything for the album.

You've got a raw spirit on wax, which is rare for a first time trip to the studio.

Because we did basic tracks in two weeks and then I went back in. Izzy did the basic tracks, that's it. Otherwise what's coming out of the left speaker is what we did in two weeks. Everything he did was in mono. I went back and did all the stereo stuff. Izzy is on the left, I'm on the right and I'm in stereo with the echo

and slide stuff. I'm more distorted than Izzy.

Are you enough of a perfectionist that your offhand solos are not particularly offhand?

I went in and did basic tracks and played along with the drums and bass and Izzy. I would screw around but keep the actual song going. Then I would go back later and redo the whole rhythm and all the leads in front of the monitors in the control room. I had the monitors cranked up really loud and would just play along. I can't play with headphones. Most of the stuff on there is pretty improvised. "Brownstone" was the first lead that came to me. There's a long lead on the end of "Paradise City," which was basically improvised. "Sweet Child" was basically off the cuff.

Did you know what you wanted when you went in for each track?

I had a great Marshall half stack and it was just me and the guitar and the amp. I had nothing else except for the Dean Markley voice box and Cry Baby wah pedal. I've always liked wah pedals. I don't use any effects that I don't have control of. A wah pedal is a statement. A flanger is a sound that is produced electronically and that's completely inhuman and not happening. You can play around the sound it gives you and that's cool, but I just don't have fun with it.

Do you practice for better technique or more control?

I should practice and concentrate more on technique but I don't. I just keep playing licks the way I hear things in my head. My right hand technique sucks. Live, I play a lot faster than I do in the studio, just because of the energy level.

Who do you listen for live?

Totally drums and bass. I don't listen to Axl or Izzy. I know what Axl's doing and he's got a handle on it, so I don't have to worry about that. I don't really need Izzy to play off of. I have him come out of my wedge in front a little bit. Mainly I have tons of bass and drums coming out the side.

How do you avoid stepping on Izzy?

Because we know each other so well and I know what he's doing. The main thing is, what we wrote and what we played live before the album was done is the way we play live. Even if I change a lead around I still know what's going on because that's the way we play together. When we play live I improvise a hell of a lot because I can't hold true to sitting around and trying to duplicate stuff. I have no reason to. I don't have to do the stuff that's on the record if I don't want to. When I improvise a lot of the stuff I do is by myself. Before a song I'll make up something to lead into the intro. As far as the stuff I play within the song, I improvise on the basis of the

song.

Do you know the solos on the record?

I know the way it sounds to me, that's the reason it's on the record in the first place.

How important are guitars and amps to your sound?

I went through 20 Marshalls before I got the right one to do the album with. As far as live goes, any good 100 watt Marshall will do. As far as guitars, it's a Gibson Les Paul. There is nothing else. I have two '59s, which are God to me. I have Seymour Duncan Alnico II pickups, which are great. I don't have any effects. I play straight through the amp. Did you pick your Paul up because of Joe Perry?

No, I picked up a Mockingbird when I was starting to play because I saw a picture of Joe Perry with a Mockingbird. I thought it was bitchin' looking. I saved up all this money and bought one. It was great and the only thing I played for a long time. Then I was progressing as a guitar player toward being more of an

individual and picked up all kinds of different guitars along the way. When Guns was happening I was playing a B.C. Rich Warlock. I sold that and got an endorsement from Jackson. I had a



Rich Gould

Firebird from them which was black with my tattoo on the corner of it. When I got in the studio I learned that when you're using headphones you can really hear what your guitar sounds like. I went through all these guitars which didn't

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Rich Fuscia

How did you get interested in playing?

When I was 13 I started going to block parties and there would be bands playing. Every once in a while on *American Bandstand* you'd see a good band. Don Kirshner's shows helped cement the foundation. I started on drums moved to bass and then guitar. I played bass for a year because I found it real easy to get around on. I've only been playing guitar about five years. I wasn't a frustrated guitarist who chose the bass, I was a frustrated drummer.

Does that have any influence on how and what you play?

I'm sure there's some connection between the way I play the bass and the way I play the guitar. It's straight from the hip. G'n'R doesn't have much conscious planning involved in the songs. It's get a groove and some notes together that are thrown back and forth in the studio or rehearsal studio. The Ramones were a big influence when I first started playing bass. All the songs were real easy to play and speedy. That got my dexterity cranking. After I picked up the guitar I still went back to that stuff and started soloing over what I originally played bass over. I've learned everything from playing with records or in garages or in studios.

What do you remember about switching to guitar?

It was mostly because of writing. I liked the sound of strumming a guitar when I'm writing a song more than strumming a bass. I played an old Les Paul acoustically, which still sounded better than a bass. I ran it through my tape deck. I'd push play and record with the levels for the meters up to ten and get this incredible distorted sound.

Were you in many bar bands?

Axl and I have known each other for 15 years. We grew up together back in the Midwest. We had a couple garage bands that never went out and did anything. We came out here and played every club in the city off and on over the years. We still go back and play there once in a while too.

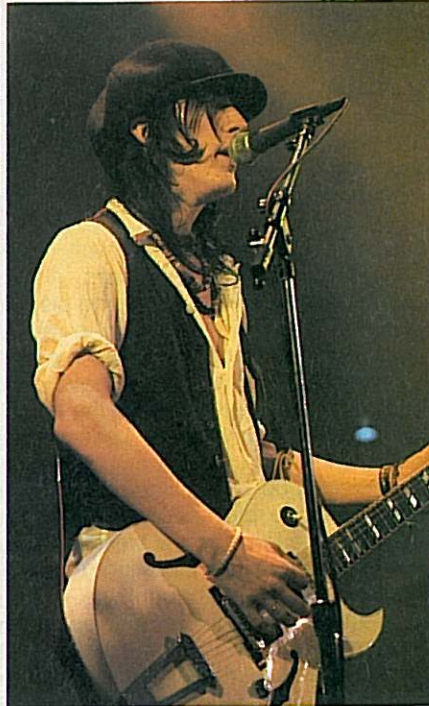
Were you doing originals or covers?

Both. I wrote pretty much right away with Axl. He would come over with a lot of lyrics. It was basic stuff but it got us going and it was fun.

What records were important to you as you started playing the guitar?

Exile on Mainstreet, by the Rolling Stones. *Double Live Gonzo* has some of the most incredible guitar on it. It had energy and I love the way he goes at it with the guitar. I was listening to that way back. I still listen to it. I'll add the Ramones *Road to Ruin*. It was the 1,2,3,4 go, with three or four chords and melody over the top. Aerosmith's first record had the arrangements and the

Michael Uhl/Ebat Roberts



playing. I also love *Permanent Vacation*. The guitar sounds are a little cleaner than the old stuff. Bo Diddley was one of my favorite old time guys. I never learned anything off him from the guitar but the beats were great. Rick Nielsen is clever and talented in a simple way, but arrangement-wise he blows me away. I love the sound he gets. I saw those guys when I was 15 and 16. I was completely taken back. I'd never seen anything with so much energy. The place only held 300 or 400 people and had these 15 foot doors that they used to drive trucks through and the kids literally tore these doors out and rushed into the place. They're an awesome talent. They were as good last year as when I saw them when I was 15. Rick has some wild guitars too. When we played with him I

remember walking to the side of the stage and there were about 15 or 20 guitars and they were all in stands and his guitar tech was tuning them all. What a gig this guy had.

Were you a practicer?

Consciously, I never thought I've got to rehearse to get better. I found that never worked. I don't know the notes. I only know three or four of the chords that I play. I don't know anything about it except the sound. But sometimes you get in the mood to pick up the guitar. When I'm touring I spend more time with my guitar than anything else. It's something I don't notice unless I record something and a month later I hear it after doing it over and over on stage and notice I've improved. One day I found a tape I made soloing over the radio. It was just screwing around and playing for the hell of it. I was listening to the tape and I started thinking, have I gotten better?

So how do you find a new sound?

I do riffs and pull-offs. I slide things around and try drilling on a single note. Slash and I will bounce things. I'll come in with a riff and Slash will say that sounds like something else. I'll turn it sideways and backwards as we're playing and throwing it back and forth.

Did you work with other guitarists before you worked with Slash?

I was playing drums with Axl. Before Slash there was never any actual work involved. There were a couple of other guitar players I might have played with for a month in different projects. There was never an understanding of how two guitarists can actually enhance the sound. It was almost the battle of the ego guitars.

How did that attitude change?

Our musical taste and influences were exactly the same. I loved Zeppelin as a band. As far as the playing I never com-

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Mark Weiss

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prehended it. It was over the last couple of years that I sat and listened to how Page played the guitar. Aerosmith was the main click for their style of two guitars. Right from their first album there is great guitar stuff. From that we understood that you can get some good stuff going with two guitars. At first meeting it was like, here's another guitar player, because you always think you're hot. But we got on really well.
What did you do the first time you played together?

I borrowed one of his amps, because I didn't have one. We did some Hollywood Rose songs, or "Whole Lotta Rosie." He had a couple 4x12 half stacks and we put them up on chairs. The first time I can remember working out parts with him was on "Brownstone." We wrote that a couple years back in my kitchen. We were sitting around with acoustic guitars. When we really started hammering on the guitars was over at the Garden studio we used to live at. It was this little studio that the whole band kind of moved into. We all lived together in a 12 by 12 room. We would sit in there endless nights playing whatever guitar was around. We would plug in at four in the morning. It was back in an alley so we could play as loud as we wanted and any time we wanted. That's when we really started. I found an old cassette of "Out to Get Me" on acoustic guitar. It was three or four in the morning and we were playing really fast.

Did you play differently because there was another guitarist?

It was very natural. I'm a real basic player. I always hear the simplicity of a song. He's more of a soloist. It turns around in some of the tunes but for the most part there is no problem at all. I solo on "Think About You." On "Night Train" I did the first half of the solo up to the chorus. He covers the rest of the solos and the rest are lines and chords.
How worked out was everything before you went into the studio?

If you can play your songs good live you don't have any real problems in the studio. We did the basic tracks in two weeks. We'd have all the amps set up in one room. We had the guitar amps isolated and the bass direct and Steve's drums were in the room and we played in the room off the drums, putting all the tunes down in two weeks. Once in a while Slash would do a live solo and he usually would go back and recut them. He is a perfectionist in a lot of ways.

Did you record with a scratch vocal?

When we were going to do that Axl got a sore throat so he ended up doing it later. There were previous recordings where we recorded with vocals. We spent time with Manny Charlton from

Nazareth. He came over because we were thinking about having him produce the record. We were in the studio for two and a half days and we did everything live. We recorded 25 or 30 tunes. We never did anything with that album but we have the masters to it. It's something where we'll go back and pick through it. A lot of the stuff that comes out when you're just jamming as a band is the best.

"Appetite" sounds so live. How much of the interplay is worked out exactly?

In the studio our drummer is completely hyper. We'd do a song two or three times and if you don't get it you move along. Sometimes you'd have to slow him down. Even now when I listen to him these songs sound kind of fast. Plus we were so excited to finally be working on a record. We were signed for a year before we actually got in with the right people and knew this was it.



Rick Liskong/Artist Publications

What did you do during that year?

We tried out a lot of different people for producing. We worked with Manny for three days. We tried a lot of people who wanted to come in and change the music. We were totally against that. You figure if there's nothing else you have it's your music. At least you can say this is my record. We stuck with that. We spent a year in L.A. We played clubs. This manager got us this huge house in the hills. We thought we had it made. We were partying a lot. We wasted a lot of time but had a great time at the same time. Now it's great because the record is out and doing well and we're already working on the new one in Redondo Beach. We've pulled together nine or ten new songs.

Is there anything you learned from the first record that will make the second that much better?

Being more efficient when you're in the

studio. If you stay out till 5 in the morning and come in the next day, it makes it even harder to make sure you're in tune. Basically we're more focused on what's happening and with less distractions. There would be times when you pull out your hair saying, why do I have to sing that part over again? When you hear it all together it might make sense.

Is there a sound you must have in order to play well?

I can play through any amp and any guitar, anytime. There is a sound I prefer; in between country clean and Marshall distortion. Most of the time I use a hollowbody, in fact on the most recent tours that's all I play. It's an ES-175 with a soapbar pickup. It's one of the best sounding guitars I've ever heard. I did the whole record with it. George Thorogood uses them. I always loved Thorogood and whenever I heard his stuff on the radio I loved the sound. At one of his

concerts I saw the guitar he was playing. I went into some shops and a guy showed me a Gibson catalog and I found it. I've got a Tobacco Sunburst and a Cherry Sunburst. I anchored the bridges. This new Gibson I've got, which is 5" deep, had a sliding bridge which I Superglued down. The tone on that through a Boogie is incredible. Slash plays a Les Paul with a Marshall. Between those two sounds you've got a good distinction. I don't think they brought that out as well on this record as I would have liked. I recorded with a full stack. When I look back now I see the way to go is to push with a small amp. I'd like to get a bit more mids out next time. I'll try a Boogie with one 12". I've been messing around with Carvin amps and getting good tones out of those.

How much do you play outside of the

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band's music?

I'll sit in my hotel room and record ballads and all kinds of different music. Recently I went down to the Garden studio where we used to live and a friend of mine had moved in there. His band was auditioning a singer and I jammed with them for three hours. I love to play. The more free style the environment the more fun it can be. I've seen bands audition people where it's real stiff, which takes the fun away from it. I have no problem playing with other people. We did that soundtrack thing with Alice Cooper (*The Decline of Western Civilization Part II The Metal Years*). In Long Beach we played "Under My Wheels" with him.

Has success changed your playing?

When you're successful all it does is enable you to enjoy it more. You can play a little more, so hopefully you can get better. You have more time to play. But sometimes I go for four or five days without even wanting to pick up a guitar. Then all of a sudden I may not want to lay it down for a week. I've always got a guitar close at hand, on the bus, at the apartment. Wherever I go there's a guitar nearby.

Do you write songs all the time or just when you need to for the record?

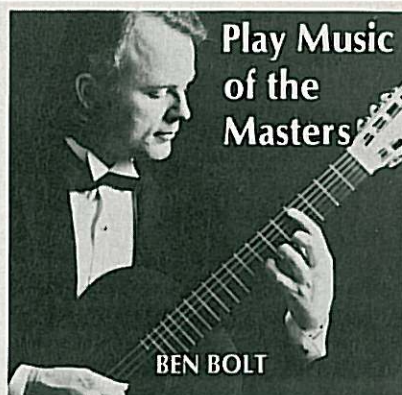
I think subconsciously I'm always writing. Whenever I'm playing for pleasure I'll turn on a radio or tape and just jam. Once the tape ends I might go off for another hour and suddenly pick up something interesting.

What song is mostly your input?

"Think About You" was cut and dry when I brought it in. Even if you write a song completely, when you bring it in it always ends up a little different when you record it. For "Michelle" Axl called up and said he had this melody. I had a riff and it was a slow smooth melody. When we were playing with it, Slash turned his amp up and went into this bashing thing and we said wow. It turned into a hard rock song, but it started as an acoustic song.

Do the songs change now that you've had a chance to play them live in front of a big crowd?

The more you play on tour the easier it is for the band to adapt to a situation. If Axl disappears off stage during a verse I'll look at Slash and we'll improvise a riff over a verse. If the bass goes out I'll flick up the toggle switch and pound on the E string. You become adaptable. We played in Atlanta and Axl jumped off the stage to help out a fan who was getting beaten by these security guys. He never made it back on stage so we improvised a seven minute blues jam. You adapt. That's how you get better. ➤



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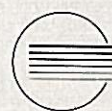
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