

5 SONGS
WITH BASS LINES

GUNS N' ROSES
"NOVEMBER RAIN"

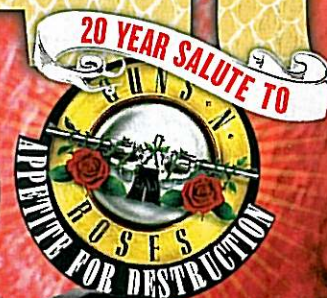
JIMI HENDRIX
"SPANISH CASTLE
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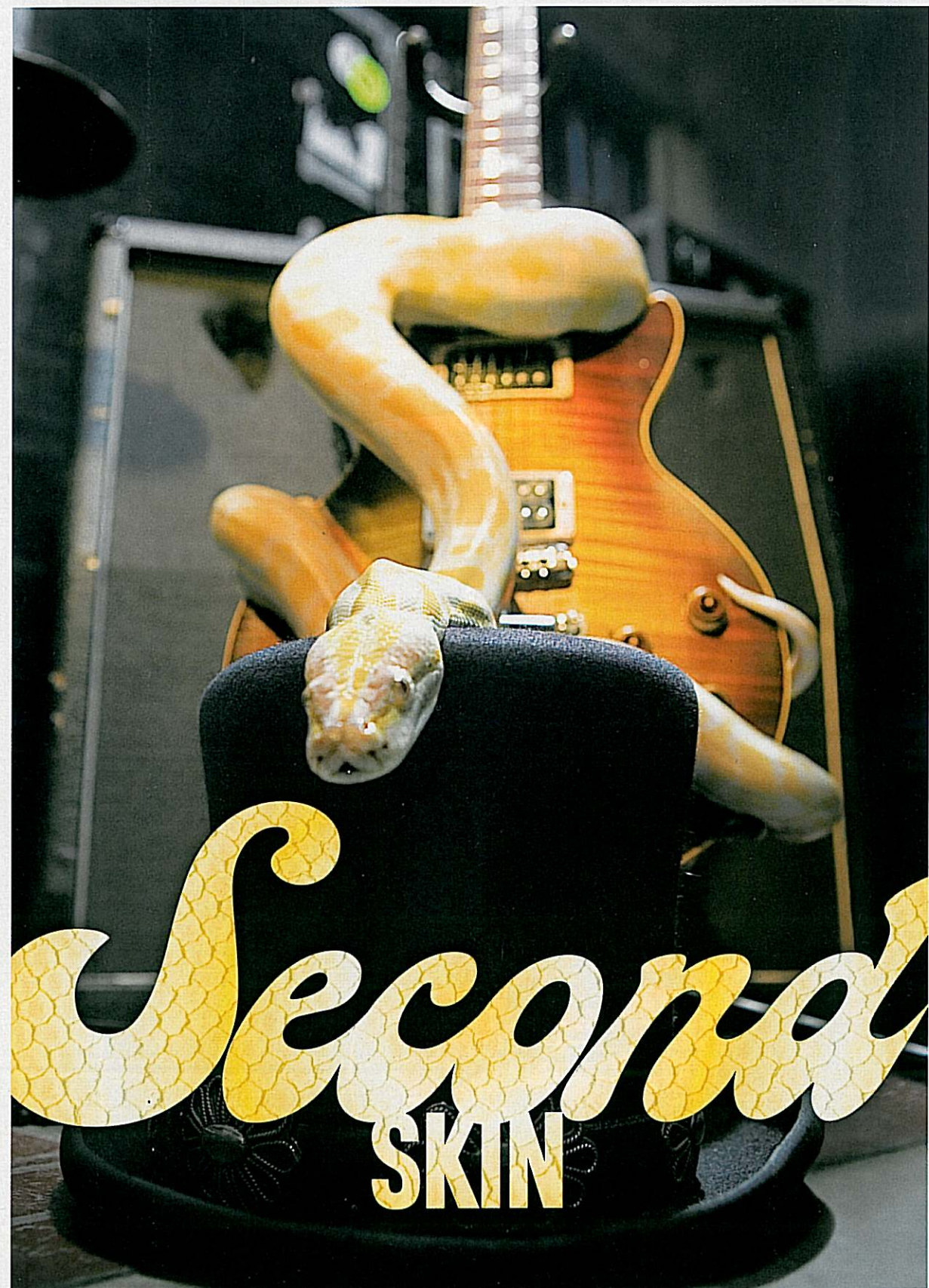
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SLASH HAS SHED HIS DEMONS AND CHANGED UP HIS GUITAR TONE. AND ON VELVET REVOLVER'S NEW ALBUM, LIBERTAD, THE FORMER GUNS N' ROSES GUITARIST SOUNDS BETTER AND Badder THAN EVER. WHO SAYS THERE ARE NO SECOND ACTS?
BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRAVIS SHINN





“It’s

CRAZY, BUT I STILL GET TURNED ON BY THE SAME STUFF as when I was first starting out,” Slash says, reflecting on his 20-year career as a recording artist. The guitarist has plenty to contemplate: his years of infamy with Guns N’ Roses, his subsequent stints as the leader of his own ragtag bands, Slash’s Snakepit and Slash’s Blues Ball, and, more recently, his role in the star-studded rock band Velvet Revolver, which has just completed its second album, *Libertad* (RCA). The man formerly known as Saul Hudson is happy to acknowledge that, for all that has changed, his life feels very much the

same. ●●● “To this day it excites me, and almost naïvely so, to pick up a guitar and plug into an amp,” he continues. “The whole process of coming up with a riff or a lick and then bringing it to fruition as a song; all of the writing, arranging and recording—I get off on that. And then when you finally play it for the world...” He looks away, as if searching the air for the right words, and then turns his head back with a smile. “That, to me, is the money shot.” ●●● Slash leans back in his chair, pulls another cigarette from a box of Gitanes and lights up. It’s an unseasonably cool March evening in Los Angeles, yet the balcony doors in his room at the Beverly Hills Hilton have been thrown wide open out of fear that he’ll trigger every smoke alarm in the place. Slash is dressed in a motorcycle jacket, black T-shirt, skintight jeans and sneakers, his mane of curly black hair pulled back and topped with a grey tweed cap. Though it’s nearing midnight, and we are seated indoors, he’s wearing

a pair of mirrored aviator sunglasses. Despite decades of abusing his body in ways that would have killed a lesser man, or perhaps a small horse, Slash looks surprisingly fit and considerably more youthful than his 41 years, or his lifestyle, should allow. In fact, other than having filled out a bit, he doesn’t look very different from the scrawny Sunset Strip street urchin who rose to worldwide guitar-god prominence all those years ago, back when he was too young to be served legally in a bar.

These days, the guitarist doesn’t drink at all, having recently completed a stint in rehab. “It was a really positive experience,” he allows, with a wry grin. It is yet another part of his life that has changed over these past few years. There was a time not too long ago when, despite releasing a couple of Snakepit records and popping up every so often for the odd guest spot, it seemed he would be forever inextricably linked to Guns N’ Roses, that his every move would be viewed as a mere pit stop on that band’s inevitable road to reunion. That changed with Velvet Revolver, which he formed with ex-Guns bassist Duff McKagan and drummer Matt Sorum five years ago, and who are currently one of the biggest, baddest and most successful American rock acts going.

That was far from the expected outcome. From the outset, popular opinion had it that Velvet Revolver—which also includes former Stone Temple Pilots singer Scott Weiland (himself no stranger to conflict and controversy) and guitarist Dave Kushner—would go down in flames. “It was like there was this strange desire to see us fail,” Slash says. “There was so much undue pressure put on us because of who we are and the bands we came out of. People basically pigeonholed us as this chemically abusive group of guys, and it seemed like all anyone wanted to talk about were these tired stories and incidents from our pasts.”

Although the band garnered its fair share of tabloid-style turmoil early on, most notably for Weiland’s public bouts with drug addiction and tangles with the law, in the end Velvet Revolver proved their detractors wrong. Their 2004 debut, *Contraband*, entered the *Billboard* charts in the top position,



spawned four hit singles, nabbed a Grammy and has since sold more than two million copies in the U.S. alone. In addition, the band pulled off a hugely successful globe-spanning tour in support of the album, during which, cynics be damned, they didn’t break up.

Now they’re back with *Libertad*, an album that is arguably more enjoyable, and undoubtedly more ambitious, than its predecessor. *Contraband* was a tumultuous, menacing record, an antagonistic response to the intense public scrutiny placed on the nascent band (the airing of a VH1 reality show documenting their first steps didn’t exactly help matters in this regard), as well as the strife caused by their singer’s personal and legal troubles. *Libertad*, on the other hand, is stylistically diverse, musically deep and, at times, almost jubilant.

Slash contends that he and Velvet Revolver “weren’t looking to do anything particularly different” this time out but were simply in a better place, both individually and collectively, than when working on *Contraband*. “One thing we were conscious of was that we wanted to create something better than anything any of us had done in the past. As a result, I think we came up with a

record that’s pretty dynamic. Also, we were more comfortable writing with one another this time, and certainly, after all the touring, more used to playing together. In every way, we’re just a better band now.”

The evidence of this is all over *Libertad*, on which Velvet Revolver sound positively reinvigorated. Full-throttle cuts like “Let It Roll,” “She Builds Quick Machines” and “Just Sixteen” tear by with an energy and exhilaration too often lacking in musicians more than half their age. The songs continue to be anchored by McKagan and Sorum’s powerhouse rumble and characterized by Slash’s bluesy riffing and curlicue leads, but there’s also a substantial sonic contribution from the other band members, as well. Dave Kushner, for one, took on a larger role in the writing process this time, most notably on the funky “Get Out the Door,” for which he supplied much of the music. “Dave was coming up with cool stuff all over the place,” Slash says. “And he wrote some guitar lines that really offset what I



I WENT ON A BINGE AND TOOK IT TO THE NINES, KNOWING THAT ON A CERTAIN DATE I WAS GOING TO WALK INTO REHAB.”

ROBERT KNIGHT/RETNA (LIVE)

was doing, which gave the songs a little more depth."

Weiland, for his part, while always the band's primary lyricist, had yet to join Velvet Revolver when much of the music for *Contraband* was conceived. This time, Slash says, Weiland "had a lot more input on the songwriting. What's more, the rest of us were writing more consciously for Scott, whereas with some of the material that was on the last record, we were writing without having any specific voice in mind." Indeed, Weiland's more overt pop sensibilities, so pronounced on many of Stone Temple Pilots' biggest hits, seem to have rubbed off on his current bandmates on *Libertad*, as evidenced by the slinky groove of "She Mine" and the soaring melody of "This Fight."

"Overall," Slash says, "the key to this album is that everyone's voice was heard. We all just wrote, both individually and together, and then went into a rehearsal space and worked through everything as a band. When it came time to record, it really felt like everyone had put their stamp on each song."

That's not to say, however, that things were rose tinted throughout the making of *Libertad*; this is, after all, Velvet Revolver. "It's never that simple with us," Slash says with a laugh. "And I can't really see a time when it will ever be." For starters, there was the Rick Rubin affair. The band initially tapped the renowned rock and hip-hop producer to man the boards for *Libertad*, but after almost three months of spinning their wheels, they let him go. "Rick just wasn't offering the kind of hands-on interaction that we needed," Slash explains. "We were ready to go, and he would just show up and say, 'write more songs,' and then take off. He's a guy who has a lot going on—the new Metallica album, some other bands he's working with—and it sort of felt like he was double dipping, you know? He wasn't around enough."

Returning to *Contraband* producer Josh Abraham was also out of the question. "Josh didn't have a very good understanding of the old-school way we do things. He was used to working with metal bands who used, like, [Line 6] PODs and shit to record their guitars." In the end, Velvet Revolver enlisted Brendan O'Brien, the producer behind all five Stone Temple Pilots studio albums. "What's funny," Slash says, "is that at first I was wary of Brendan because of his work with STP—I never really liked the STP guitar sound. But he and Scott obviously go way back, and it turned out that Brendan had a really good feel for what we're about. Plus, he's a great musician, so it was easy to communicate with him on a musical level."

After spending much of the previous year writing and rehearsing the new material, Velvet Revolver finally began recording *Libertad* at Henson Recording Studios, in Hollywood, in early January 2007. The band worked on the album through much of the winter, cutting many of the basic tracks live. Slash says, "We did tons of preproduction before going in and had been playing the songs together in a room for so long that we were able to just get the material down on tape that way."

In the studio, Slash relied primarily on his 1959 Les Paul Standard replica, fitted with Seymour Duncan Alnico II zebra pickups, that was built in the mid-Eighties by luthier Chris Derrig. "I used that guitar on *Appetite for Destruction*," Slash



I'VE BEEN GETTING INTO THE IDEA OF USING A CLEANER SOUND TO GET A MORE DYNAMIC ATTACK FROM THE GUITAR."



says, "and every album I've recorded since." Other instruments included a 1965 Fender Strat, which he played on the ballad "Grave Dancer," and a Gretsch 6119 Tennessee Rose hollow-body, the round, clean tones of which can be heard on "This Fight." Rhythm tracks and solos were recorded through a mid-Eighties Marshall JCM800 2203 and a 1988 Marshall JCM2555 (in 1996, this amplifier was reissued as the Slash Signature model). Both amps were fed into Marshall 4x12 cabinets.

Additionally, Slash employed various small combo amps, including a "tiny, old beat-up" Vox AC-15, for color and tonal variation. Outboard gear used on solos included a Dunlop MXR gain/boost, a Chicago Iron Octavia and a variety of Dunlop wahs, including his signature model and a rack-mounted Custom Shop unit.

While his guitar and amplifier setup has been fairly consistent in recent years, Slash changed up his tone for *Libertad*. In particular, he reveals that he used "less saturation than in the past, because I really wanted to hear the steel of the strings and the wood of the instrument. Over the last few years I've been hearing some great guitar sounds, real punchy stuff that hasn't been quite so overdriven. It's cool sometimes to dial in tons of distortion, but doing that will also kind of

'phony up' your tone. I've been getting into the idea of using a cleaner sound to get a more dynamic attack from the guitar." And from a performance standpoint, he says that *Libertad* features "more of my live rhythm tracks than any record I've done. And there are also some scratch solos that made it to the final mix. My leads are usually only somewhat worked out in my head before I lay them down, but this time I was even more spontaneous. I'd come up with something on the spot, and the first or second take was what made it on the album."

By the end of the sessions, Velvet Revolver had laid down music for nearly 20 songs. Weiland then cut his vocals at Henson, as well as at Southern Tracks Recording in Atlanta. It was around this time, however, that tragedy struck. While in the midst of tracking his vocals the singer received word that his younger brother, Michael, had died of a drug overdose. "It was just a terrible thing," Slash says. "Scott was completely devastated, but he kept it together." Despite Weiland's history with substance abuse, the band never worried that he might relapse. "You never know how someone's going to react when they're hit with that kind of news, but Scott's done so much to keep himself straight. He's in a much better place than he was a few years ago. I mean, when

we were making the last record, he was living in a halfway house and looking at jail time. We knew he wasn't going to let himself go there, so we just let him know we were there for him."

In an unfortunate turn of events, the members of Velvet Revolver soon found themselves lending their support to another bandmate when Matt Sorum took leave to attend to his own brother, who was in the final stages of a long battle with cancer. He passed away not long after the recording sessions for *Libertad* were completed. "It was a tough period for those guys," Slash says. "With this band, it seems like drugs and death and all that shit is all that gets written about, and all anyone talks about. But then stuff like this happens and you realize how poignant and sad these situations really are."

That said, the guitarist faced his own, albeit less severe, "situation" during the making of *Libertad*. Early on, while Velvet Revolver were still working through material in preparation for the studio, Slash took some time off and quietly checked into rehab. "There were a lot of crazy things going on in my life, and it just got to a point where I needed to get away to get my head together," he explains. "We hit some downtime from writing and rehearsing, and I decided to check in."

As to what it was that specifically led to his decision, Slash will say only, "it wasn't like a long, drawn-out drug thing. I hadn't been using all the time; I just went on a little binge and took it to the nines, knowing that on a certain date I was going to walk into rehab." He smiles. "And after I got out, we went straight to work!"

And it's the work that's always been key for Slash. The guitarist admits that he finds it hard to deal with periods of inactivity—"It's usually when things aren't moving a million miles a minute that I get myself in trouble," he says slyly—and as such he shouldn't have any problem being a good boy for the foreseeable future. *Libertad* is being mastered as we speak, and tomorrow afternoon Velvet Revolver begin rehearsals for their upcoming tour. First up is South America, where the band has booked a string of dates in Chile, Brazil and Argentina. After that, it's back to the U.S. for a headlining club jaunt, and then over to the U.K. and Europe for a slew of festival appearances, after which they'll head back out on their own.

Of course, controversy will always be lurking. Take, for starters, the band's bizarre part in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony in New York City this past March.

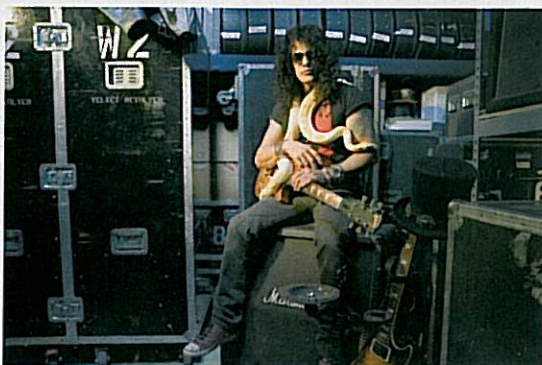
After signing on to perform in tribute to beleaguered inductees Van Halen, most of whose members opted to not show up for the event, Velvet Revolver nixed an offer from estranged Van Halen frontman David Lee Roth to back him in a run-through of his former group's keyboard-heavy hit "Jump." In the end,

Slash and Co. phoned in two Van Halen covers and Roth slagged them in the press. More recently, Scott Weiland was back in the news when he allegedly trashed a hotel room during a domestic dispute with his wife, Mary, and, a few days later, when his wife was arrested for torching \$10,000 worth of the singer's clothing outside their Los Angeles home.

But, Slash says, it all just comes with the territory. "I couldn't imagine being in a band where everything is just peachy all the time. That's not what rock and roll, at least to me, has ever been about. So yeah, in Velvet Revolver we have our issues." He laughs. "And we

probably always will. The way the personalities in this band work... I just don't see that changing."

Slash reaches for another Gitanes and continues. "But the thing is, we take what we do pretty seriously. We've gone through a lot of shit, but we don't make light of any of it. There's a lot of life in this group, a lot of emotion and angst and anger and passion, and all of that comes out when we write together, when we record together, when we play together." He lights the cigarette and takes a long drag. "So I really don't spend a lot of time worrying about what other people are thinking, or what they're gonna say about things that are going on in my band. They can just keep talking about all the bullshit. We're just gonna keep making music." 🌟



ODD MAN *In*

MEET DAVE KUSHNER, SLASH'S COGUITARIST AND VELVET REVOLVER'S BEST-KEPT SECRET.

AT FIRST GLANCE, it would seem that Dave Kushner couldn't be more unlike Slash, his coguitarist in Velvet Revolver. One is known for his wild mane of curly hair, the other always sports a freshly shaved dome. One favors the classic lines of a Gibson Les Paul guitar, the other the unorthodox shape of a Fernandes Ravelle. And where one plays in a style steeped in the tradition of classic rock and blues, the other tends toward a decidedly modern musical approach, embellishing his sound with all manner of effects. "Duff likes to call me 'Morpheus,'" says Kushner, a reference to the character played by Laurence Fishburne in *The Matrix* films. "I'm always playing around with gadgets, trying to create the craziest, most out-there sounds."

Of the many effect pedals Kushner brought into the studio during the recording of the new Velvet Revolver album, *Libertad*, he is particularly enamored with the Electro-Harmonix Flanger Hoax, which can be heard on the

song "Let It Roll." "It makes this weird oscillating sound that's completely insane," he says. "I remember when I first tried out the pedal, I just sat there laughing."

Kushner's main guitars on *Libertad* were a pair of semihollowbody electrics, a 1965 Gibson ES-335 and a new Yamaha SA2200. He also used his Fernandes Ravelle Elite Dave Kushner Signature model and says the guitar will be his main instrument when the band goes on tour this spring. For amplification, he relied primarily on two Mesa/Boogie combos, a Lone Star and a Stiletto, which he ran in tandem for his rhythm and lead tracks. "They gave me such a great sound that I'm taking them out on tour as well."

Though Kushner is regarded as the "unknown" member of Velvet Revolver, he's actually a seasoned musician whose career stretches back two decades, to when he played bass in the Los Angeles punk act Wasted Youth. He's been a member of numer-

ous bands since. His résumé includes a one-year tenure, in 1996, with Danzig—"It was a

period when Glenn had lost his voice, so for most of the time we just rehearsed without

him"—and a stint a few years later with Vanilla Ice, during the rapper's "heavy" phase. "That wasn't much fun," says Kushner, "and it ended kinda crappy: I got stiffed on a couple weeks' pay."

It was while Kushner was playing with the Japanese rock act Zilch, at the turn of the century, that he crossed paths with Duff McKagan. "Duff's band at the time, Loaded, came over to Japan and opened some shows for us," he says. "We started hanging out, and I eventually joined the group." Later, when McKagan hooked up with his

former Guns N' Roses bandmates Slash and Matt Sorum in a new project, he asked Kushner to come down to jam. "And I never left," he says.

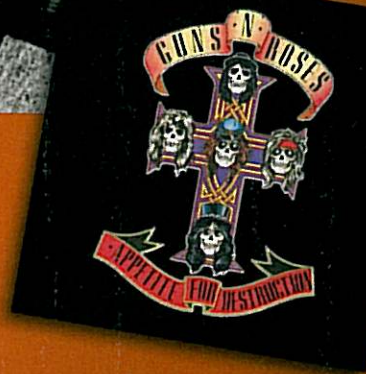
And though it was Duff who brought Kushner into Velvet Revolver, the guitarist has a deeper history with his fellow VR guitarist. "Slash and I went to junior high and high school together," he says. "I remember going to see him play at all these local parties around L.A. Over the years we'd bump into each other now and then, but it's a total coincidence that we wound up in a band together."

It turned out to be beneficial for both guitarists. "I think that a lot of guys would be intimidated to be in a band with someone like Slash, just given his persona and the player that he is," says Kushner. "But we have so much history together that I'm pretty comfortable playing with him and have no problem just doing what I do. And that, in turn, gives him the space to do what he does." —Richard Bienstock





BOYS MEET *Guitar*



ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF *APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION*, SLASH RECALLS THE MAKING OF THE ALBUM THAT TURNED GUNS N' ROSES FROM RAW RECRUITS INTO SEASONED SUPERSTARS. BY RICHARD BIENSTOCK

It's

BEEN 20 YEARS SINCE GUNS N' Roses—singer Axl Rose, guitarists Slash and Izzy Stradlin, bassist Duff McKagan and drummer Steven Adler—recorded their monumental debut effort, *Appetite for Destruction*. A rough-and-tumble collection of bluesy hard rock tunes fueled by a combustible mix of desolation and desire, the album not only launched the band to superstardom but also left an indelible, if somewhat grimy, imprint on the pop music landscape. It has since sold more than 15 million copies in the U.S. alone and remains one of the best beloved and influential recordings in rock and roll.

In celebration of the 20th anniversary of its release, Slash sat down with *Guitar World* to discuss the events leading up to and surrounding the making of *Appetite*, the band's first, and undoubtedly finest, album.

GUITAR WORLD Does it feel like 20 years have passed since *Appetite for Destruction* was released?

“

I REMEMBER THAT I WAS REALLY PROUD OF WHAT WE HAD DONE. I STILL AM.”

SLASH In some ways it seems like it was yesterday, and then in other ways it seems like a long time ago. But yeah, I can't believe it. I wasn't even 20 years old when we wrote a lot of that record. [laughs]

GW Is it strange to hear the album discussed in such reverent terms?

SLASH Yeah, I mean, it's not like we're talking about the making of, like, a Zeppelin record, or a Queen record or something like that. Albums that were *projects*, you know? *Appetite* was basically just an off-the-cuff recording. Guns were a club band, and like most first records from club bands, it was mostly made up of material that we had been playing onstage for a while. We were pretty rough around the edges and had virtually no studio experience. We went in there and threw the album together pretty quickly.

GW With *Appetite*, Guns N' Roses came to be regarded as something of an antidote to the glam acts that dominated the Sunset Strip at the time. Although prior to that record you guys weren't averse to using a bit of makeup or hairspray.

SLASH I never used hairspray!

(continued on page 104)

GW You, and maybe Izzy, excluded.

SLASH You know, I don't recall sitting around with the guys and strategizing the look and all that shit. It all just came from a pure, guttural place. I will say that, in the early days, there was definitely a heavy New York Dolls and Hanoi Rocks vibe to what Guns were doing. And I guess in some way all the glam bands at that time sort of came from that world, but I just think we approached it with a little more depth. A lot of the others just skimmed off the top without really getting into the nuts and bolts of the sound. The one exception was Mötley Crüe—Nikki [Sixx]'s roots were similar to ours, and he knew exactly where he wanted to go with his band, how he wanted it to look and how

he wanted it to sound. But most of the other guys in the scene just didn't do their homework.

GW Prior to Guns N' Roses, you auditioned to be the guitarist in Poison, perhaps the prototypical L.A. glam band.

SLASH And I almost got the gig. What happened was, Matt [Smith], their original guitar player, quit the band and moved back home to Pennsylvania. I had just been sort of scrounging around L.A., looking for anything that was happening, just to get out there and play. So one day Matt called me up and said "Poison's going to be auditioning guitarists. You should go out for it." And I thought...well, I really didn't like Poison! I didn't like that whole thing. But there was something exciting about them, and the thought of being able to get out there and start working the scene was enticing to me.

I was willing to do whatever I could to break into it. So I learned a few of their songs and went down to the rehearsal space they were all living in at the time to audition.

GW So how did it go?

SLASH I played the shit out of those songs! And I got called back, twice. Then I was asked to come in a third time, which is when it got serious. And I remember as I was walking in that last time, C.C. [DeVille] was coming back the other way. We passed each other in the hall. So it came down to C.C. and me.

GW And he got the gig.

SLASH He clearly fit the part better than I did. I mean, he came in with his hair all done up, he had all the right clothes and was wearing stiletto heels. I showed up looking the way I look now. And I also remember I had on a pair of moc-casins, because the Poison guys looked at me and asked, "What do you wear?" I was like, "This is...it," you know? And they said, "Well, do you have some different shoes?" So I knew that was it. When I got the phone call that C.C. got the job, I wasn't surprised. He was perfect for them.

GW How did you hook up with Axl?

SLASH After the Poison thing, I joined this band called Black Sheep. Before me they had been playing with Paul Gilbert, which is pretty funny given how different we are as guitarists. And it was at a Black Sheep gig that I started talking to Axl. He told me he had had a falling out with [then Guns N' Roses guitarist] Tracii Guns and asked if I wanted to join the band. Izzy, of course, was already there, and so was Duff. Then we needed a guy to fill in for our drummer at the time, Rob Gardner, so I called up Steven [with whom Slash had played in the band Road Crew, and which also included, briefly, McKagan]. And it just happened, you know? The five of us got together, and from that point on, Guns were the scourges of Hollywood. And we hated Poison!

GW Was Guns N' Roses the first two-guitar band you were a part of?

SLASH Yeah. I was used to being the only guitar player, but Izzy came with Axl, and that's just the way it was. And ever since then, I've preferred having that other guy.

GW As a lead guitarist, were you conscious of having to stand toe to toe with all the flashy players that dominated the scene at the time?

SLASH Not at all. Guns just weren't that kind of band, and I was never that kind of player. I was into guitarists like Gary Moore, Michael Schenker and John Sykes—guys who were fast but also very tasty. And while the energy of our music called for some fast playing, I never did it to keep up with all the Eddie Van Halen clones or anything. I had no interest in that.

GW What did you think of Izzy's guitar style?

SLASH I loved the way Izzy played. When I first met him, he was a Les Paul—and-Marshall guy, just real dirty and kinda punkish. He had a great sound. Around the time we began playing together, he kinda lightened up his attack, and started going through these different phases. But he always had a great sense of rhythm. He didn't play with any kind of real defiant prowess, but he always hit the song perfectly. And he's a great songwriter.

GW How did the two of you work together?

SLASH We never sat and really worked shit out, you know? It just sort of was what it was. Like, he would never play a riff the way I showed

it to him. He would play off of it, somehow, and then I would just play how I play. It made for a really cool two-guitar combo, because somehow our parts always locked together.

GW Were you each aware of what the other was doing in a given song?

SLASH No, not at all. Though if there were set licks, like in, say, "Welcome to the Jungle," I would have a pretty good idea of what he was going to do. But if you asked me to play Izzy's parts for all the songs on *Appetite*, there's no way I could do it. I just don't know a lot of them.

GW You recorded much of the basic tracks for *Appetite* live, with the band playing together at the same time. I understand that many of Izzy's performances made it to the final mix, while you went back and recut your parts at a later date.

SLASH That's because Izzy would never come back to the studio! Our producer, Mike Clink, would try to get him to come down to fix something up, but I think he only managed to get him there once or twice. So we just kept all of Izzy's scratch tracks.

GW Why did you redo your rhythm guitar parts?

SLASH I couldn't get a good sound in the studio, because I didn't have a set guitar or amp at the time; I had hocked a lot of gear before we went in due to some drug problems. So I was left with three different guitars: a B.C. Rich Warlock, a Jackson prototype and a Jackson Firebird. And they were fine onstage, when everything was cranked to 10, but in the studio they sounded awful. I was fucking freaking out! I knew I couldn't record the album with any of those guitars. So when we cut the basic tracks I was drinking a bottle of Jack Daniel's, easy, during the process, and just playing along to help with the live vibe. Luckily, right after that I got some new gear. It was like it was in the cards or something. I came upon the right Les Paul and the right Marshall.

GW People tend to think that the Les Paul—and-Marshall combo was your setup from day one, as if you came out of the womb that way.

SLASH Yeah, right. [laughs] That has always been my favorite setup, but it wasn't until we did *Appetite* that things truly solidified for me. It took me a while to find my identity. During Guns' club days I had a Les Paul that had belonged to Steve Hunter [Alice Cooper, David Lee Roth], but I also used a B.C. Rich Mockingbird, a Strat, some Jacksons. Then when we were recording *Appetite*, our manager [Alan Niven] found me another Les Paul—it was a handmade copy [the Chris Derrig-built 1959 replica], but it sounded great, and that was it. No more fucking around. And I use that guitar to this day.

GW What was your main recording amplifier for *Appetite*?

SLASH A Marshall head that we rented from S.I.R. studios in L.A. I think it was a JCM800, though I really don't remember. I actually tried to keep it after we were done with the album. I said, "Just tell S.I.R. it was stolen." But then we had a rehearsal over there, and my fucking roadie brought the amp down. The guys at S.I.R. took it right back, and I never saw it again. But there are people who have gone to great lengths to find out everything about that Marshall. There's one guy who tried to put together an identical head. I actually tried it out while we were recording the new Velvet Revolver album. It was good, but it didn't sound like that S.I.R. Marshall.

GW How instrumental was Mike Clink to the sound you achieved on the album?

SLASH As far as my personal guitar tone, I would say that it's one of the best I ever had in a recording studio. A lot of that was the gear and the room, but Clink was also a great engineer. He was able to keep everything real tight, with a lot of punch and midrange. Another thing was that he got a really good drum sound, especially for those days, when drum sounds were fairly over the top. Overall, the album has a little bit of an Eighties sound to it, but it's still better than most of the stuff from that time. I'd also have to give a lot of credit to Steve Thompson and Michael Barbiero, who did a lot of EQing during the mixing stage.

GW Let's talk about some of the songs on *Appetite for Destruction*. You've said in the past that "Sweet Child O' Mine," which is probably the biggest song from that record, began as something of a joke.

SLASH Yeah. There was a point after we signed with Geffen when the band was living together in this house that a management company had leased for us. And we were sitting around one day when I came up with that little guitar figure that's at the top of the song, just messing around. I didn't think it was anything particularly good, but Duff and Izzy were there, and they started to play some chords behind it, and Axl, who was upstairs at the time, heard what we were doing and wrote down some words. I never thought that little intro thing would turn into anything.

GW Along with the opening to "Sweet Child," your unaccompanied intro to "Welcome to the Jungle"—that descending line with the heavy delay on it—is one of your most well-known licks. And given that the song was the leadoff track and single from *Appetite*, it was also the first sound many people heard from Guns N' Roses. How did that come together?

SLASH I wrote that part specifically with the effect in mind. I had one of those old, funky, grey plastic Boss pedal boards, and one of the settings on it was a delay. I turned it on and just started messing around. The line is pretty simple, but it sounded very cool with the echoed notes. What's funny is that there are those few extra notes at the very beginning—that diggita diggita—before the pattern kicks in. That's because whenever we would do the song I'd hit the first note a few times to make sure I was in time with the delay. And it just stuck as part of the intro.

GW Do you have a favorite song from *Appetite*?

SLASH "Paradise City" is still my favorite. We wrote that as a band, all five of us together in a van, on our way back to L.A. from a gig in San Francisco. There's a lot of spirit and energy there. It just encapsulates a lot about that time period for me.

GW Any tracks you're not too fond of?

SLASH I always had a hard time with "Think About You." It was one of the songs that Izzy wrote that was very indicative of the sort of Hanoi Rocks thing that was going on at the time. I never really got off on playing it all that much. And after that would be "Anything Goes," which is probably the oldest song on the record. By the time we recorded it for *Appetite*, that song had been played by so many different configurations of the band and gone through so many revisions. It came out cool in the end, I guess, but it's a little

choppy as far as the arrangement is concerned.

GW There are some great Guns tunes from that period that didn't make it onto *Appetite*. Why didn't you record, say, "Shadow of Your Love" instead of one of those?

SLASH Actually, when we were first considering whether or not to work with Mike Clink, we went in and demoed a few songs with him to see if it would work. And "Shadow of Your Love" was one of the ones we cut. I can't really say for sure why it didn't make the record in the end. It was just a real simple, good rocking song, but I guess it wasn't as "seasoned" as a lot of the other material. And probably Axl didn't quite see the potential in it.

GW "November Rain" was around at that time as well.

SLASH The thing with "November Rain" was that, back then, it was, like, this 20-minute epic that just went on forever. We were never able to edit it down until we did it for the *Use Your Illusion* albums.

GW That song always seemed to be particularly close to Axl's heart. I'm surprised he allowed it to be put on the backburner.

SLASH Tom Zutaut [Guns N' Roses' A&R representative at Geffen at the time] was the one who said, "Let's save that for another record." And I think Axl was a little miffed about that. But it was fine with me. I was already fucking petrified about doing one ballad!

GW "Sweet Child O' Mine" was enough for you?

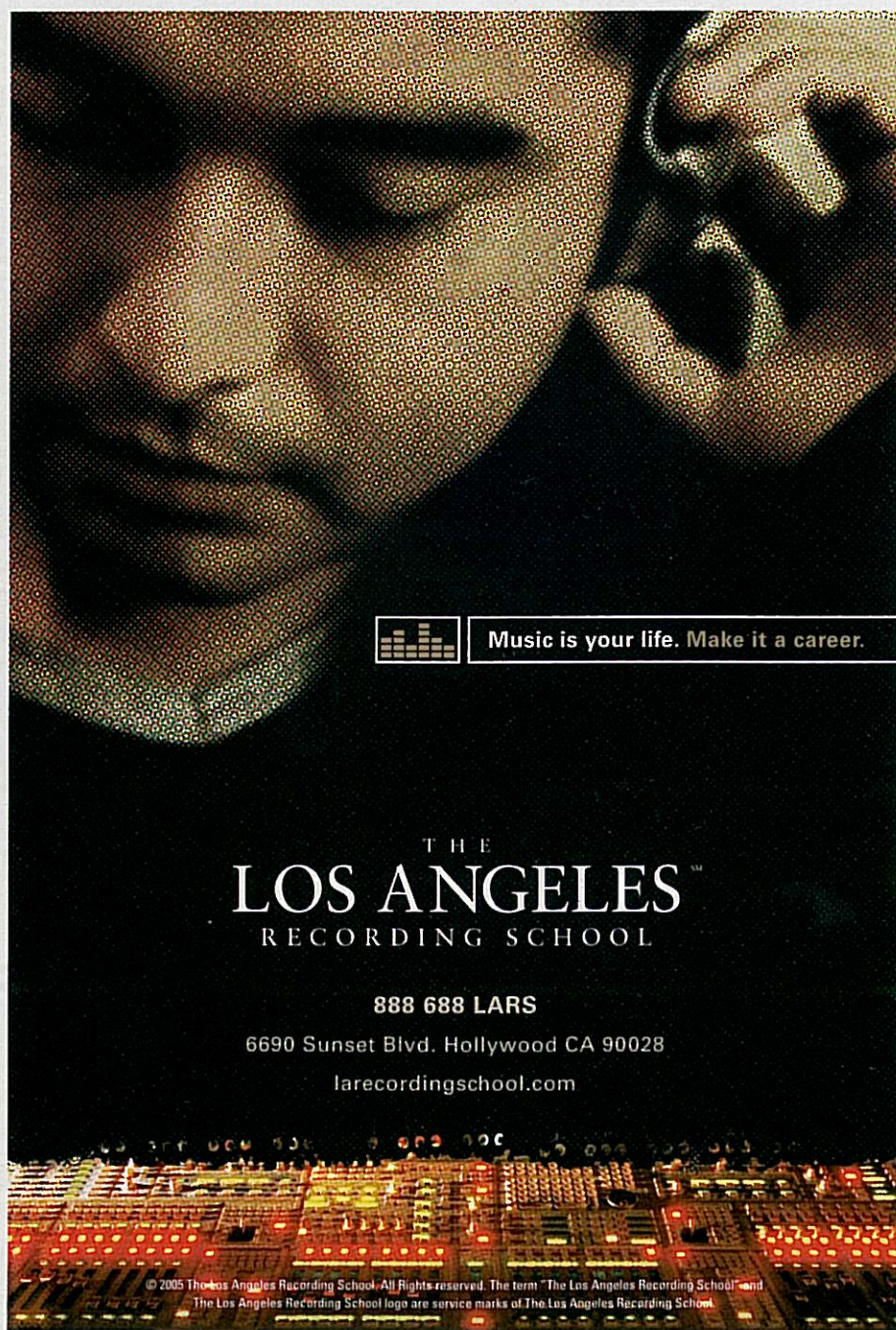
SLASH Yeah, and I wasn't even crazy about that one. But Axl was bitter about the "November Rain" thing for a while, until we did it for *Use Your Illusion*. And, actually, there are a few songs on the *Illusion* records that date back to the *Appetite* period. We wrote "Perfect Crime" while we were in preproduction for *Appetite*, and "You Could Be Mine" came together right before we went in to record the album.

GW Back in the *Use Your Illusion* days, you gave an interview in which you said something to the effect that if the band were to fall apart you would never be able to shake the fact that you're the "ex-Guns N' Roses guitar player."

SLASH I said that? That's funny. I guess it was like a premonition or something. But, you know, it actually doesn't bother me all that much when people want to talk about it. It gets a little irritating when that's all they want to talk about, but I think it would get to me more if I didn't have anything else going on—like if I was working at Wal-Mart now or something. But I've managed to keep myself going. [laughs]

GW From that vantage point, what resonates with you most about that time spent making *Appetite*?

SLASH Just that it was all such a new experience. It was like we were doing everything for the first time. I didn't even know what that record was supposed to be, but when it was done, I knew that it was complete—and also not nearly as messy as it could have been. The songs sounded on the album the way we played them, and it was a pretty honest representation of who we were and what we were about. There was one time toward the end of the sessions when I took home a rough mix of "Welcome to the Jungle" to listen to with my girlfriend. I put it on, and I remember that I was really proud of what we had done. I still am.



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