

★ CLASSIC ★ ROCK

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HIGH VOLTAGE ⚡ ROCK 'N' ROLL



At last! The full story
GUNS N' ROSES

BY THE PEOPLE WHO WERE THERE
PLUS THE LOST GN'R MOVIE

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The Days of Vine and Roses

Guns N' Roses were the biggest and most dangerous band in the world. Now - as the latest version of GN'R switches publishers and gears up for the release of *Chinese Democracy* - *Classic Rock* reveals their full story, as told by the band, their friends, managers, contemporaries and more.
Plus: "I still love Axl!" Steven Adler breaks his silence.

Cast of characters

STEVEN ADLER:

Former drummer, Guns N' Roses

ROB AFFUSO:

Former drummer, Skid Row

MICHAEL BARBIERO:

Mixer, *Appetite for Destruction*

RODDY BOTTUM:

Former keyboardist, Faith No More;

JOSEPH BROOKS:

Influential L.A. club DJ; former owner, L.A. record store Vinyl Fetish

MARK CANTER:

Early supporter of Guns N' Roses; owner, Canter's Deli

GILBY CLARKE:

Former guitarist, Guns N' Roses

COLLEEN COMBS:

Former personal assistant, Axl Rose

BAMBI CONWAY:

Former member, The Pandoras

ALICE COOPER:

Rock legend; restaurateur; golf enthusiast

MITCH DEAN:

Former drummer, punk band T.S.O.L.

ERIN EVERLY:

Ex-wife of Axl Rose

KIM FOWLEY:

Producer/manager, most famously of the Runaways; would-be Guns N' Roses manager

TRACII GUNS:

Founder, L.A. Guns; former guitarist, Guns N' Roses

LEMMY KILMISTER:

Vocalist and bassist, Motörhead

MARK KOSTABI:

Artist; creator of the *Use Your Illusion* cover painting

DUFF MCKAGEN:

Former bassist, Guns N' Roses; currently in Velvet Revolver

BRET MICHAELS:

Lead singer, Poison

MOBY:

Techno musician; producer

BRENDAN MULLEN:

Former owner, L.A. punk rock club The Masque

JIM PASDACH:

Owner, J.L. Records in Lafayette, Indiana

KEVIN QUINN:

Tattoo artist; guitarist, American Pearl

RIKI RACHTMAN:

Former owner, L.A. rock club The Cathouse; former

host, MTV's *Headbangers' Ball*

VERNON REID:

Guitarist, Living Colour

JOSH RICHMAN:

Actor; friend of Axl Rose

STEPHANIE SEYMOUR:

Supermodel; former girlfriend of Axl Rose

NIKKI SIXX:

Bassist, Motley Crüe

SLASH:

Former lead guitarist, Guns N' Roses; currently in Velvet Revolver

MATT SORUM:

Former drummer, The Cult and Guns N' Roses; currently in Velvet Revolver

TC:

Early friend of the band

STEVE THOMPSON:

Mixer, *Appetite for Destruction*

LARS ULRICH:

Drummer, Metallica

ROBERT WILLIAMS:

Painter, original *Appetite For Destruction* cover

ZAKK WYLDE:

Former guitarist, Ozzy Osbourne's band;

guitarist, Black Label Society

MICHELLE YOUNG:

Slash and Steven Adler's high school classmate;

inspiration for the song *My Michelle*

TOM ZUTAUT:

Former Geffen A&R executive who signed Guns N' Roses; co-president of the Enclave record label

INTERVIEWS BY MARC SPITZ

Born on February 6, 1962, in Lafayette, Indiana, W. Axl Rose is raised as Bill Bailey, the oldest of three children in a strict Pentacostal family that forbids him to listen to rock music. At 17, Rose discovers that his stepdad,

L. Stephen Bailey, isn't his biological father; William Rose, his real father, had walked out on the family when Axl was two. A former choirboy, Rose begins to get into trouble with the law as a teenager, mostly for public intoxication. In 1980, Rose – who, Lafayette legend has it, took his nickname from the wheel axl of his skateboard – hitchhikes to Los Angeles and hooks up with Lafayette buddy Izzy Stradlin (né Jeff Isabelle).

JIM PASDACH: Axl couldn't get a job in the mall stores because they had all caught him shoplifting – I always had to watch when he came in. The last memory I have of him is when he came into the store and told me he was going out to LA to become a rock star. I was, like, "Yeah, right."

MICHELLE YOUNG: I went to high school in LA with Steven Adler and Slash – I met Axl through them. Axl was always like, "I'm from Indiana." He would wear blue-and-white-striped Dolphin shorts, cowboy boots, and a cropped T-shirt. I'd say, "I'm not going out with you dressed like that!" He was very insecure and naive, but he knew he had something.

TRACII GUNS: Izzy was the drummer in a band called The Babysitters. He wore a dress, and I think somebody beat his ass, so he joined this band called Shire, which was a Scorpions kind of metal band. That's when I became friends with him. When Axl moved out here, Izzy and Axl ended up getting this little pad on Crescent Heights and Sunset. They put together Hollywood Rose: first it was called A-X-L, then they were Rose, and then Hollywood Rose.

STEVEN ADLER: Slash and I were in a band called Road Crew. One day we found a flyer for a band called Rose.

We said, "These guys look cool – we oughta check them out." So we went to see them at [the Sunset Strip rock club] Gazzarri's and said, "We got those two in our group and we're gonna have the hottest band around." The next day, I was leaving a girlfriend's house and Axl was walking up and we got to talking. We rented a studio and we were jamming on this song called *Reckless Life* and Axl grabbed the microphone and started running up and down the walls, screaming like I've never heard in my life. I knew this was gonna be it.

MARK CANTER: When Axl hooked up with Slash, Slash joined Hollywood Rose. Living the way they did just gave them more things to write about.

Welcome To The Jungle was the first song they wrote together, and it tells you everything.

BRET MICHAELS: I remember going down to see them at Madame Wong's East, just me and Tommy Lee's sister and her boyfriend at the time. There were maybe 15 people in the club and Axl was playing as if he were in front of a million people.

TRACII GUNS: A bunch of people revolved in and out of Hollywood Rose – it's the way these bands are. Izzy got an offer to join this band called London, so he left. Axl ended up singing for LA Guns until he got in a fight with our manager. But Axl decided we should continue writing songs together since we lived together. Then we came up with the name Guns N' Roses – it was like, "I'm Tracii Guns and you're Axl Rose." We pulled in Izzy, who was

trying to do another version of Hollywood Rose. Steven Adler was the next guy in the band – he had great hair. Duff was in some weird Top 40 band, but Izzy was like, "This guy's got short hair, but he's into the New York Dolls and stuff like that." He had a Johnny Thunders T-shirt on, and we were like, "This guy's perfect."

STEVEN ADLER: We played our first show at The Troubadour and it was sold-out. It was like we were rock stars, but just in Hollywood.

BRENDAN MULLEN: Axl told me they wanted to be a cool underground band but no one would give them the time of day because of their look. So they ended up playing all the strip clubs, and they eventually just exploded.

BAMBI CONWAY: Girls wanted Axl cos they could see his butt when he played with his chaps on.

TC: The first time I saw them was magic. It felt like seeing something that was gonna be taken away.

STEVEN ADLER: The rehearsal space we lived in was disgusting. No toilet, no nothing, but who cared? We didn't have jobs. We lived off girls – off strippers. We were doing what we wanted to do. We had women, and we were playing rock'n'roll.

KIM FOWLEY: You have to give them credit for cranking out all those songs in the middle of hell. I saw where they lived – it was horrible.

JOSEPH BROOKS: They slept here, there, and everywhere. Izzy made leather-studded wristbands I sold at my record store. That's what he did for a living.

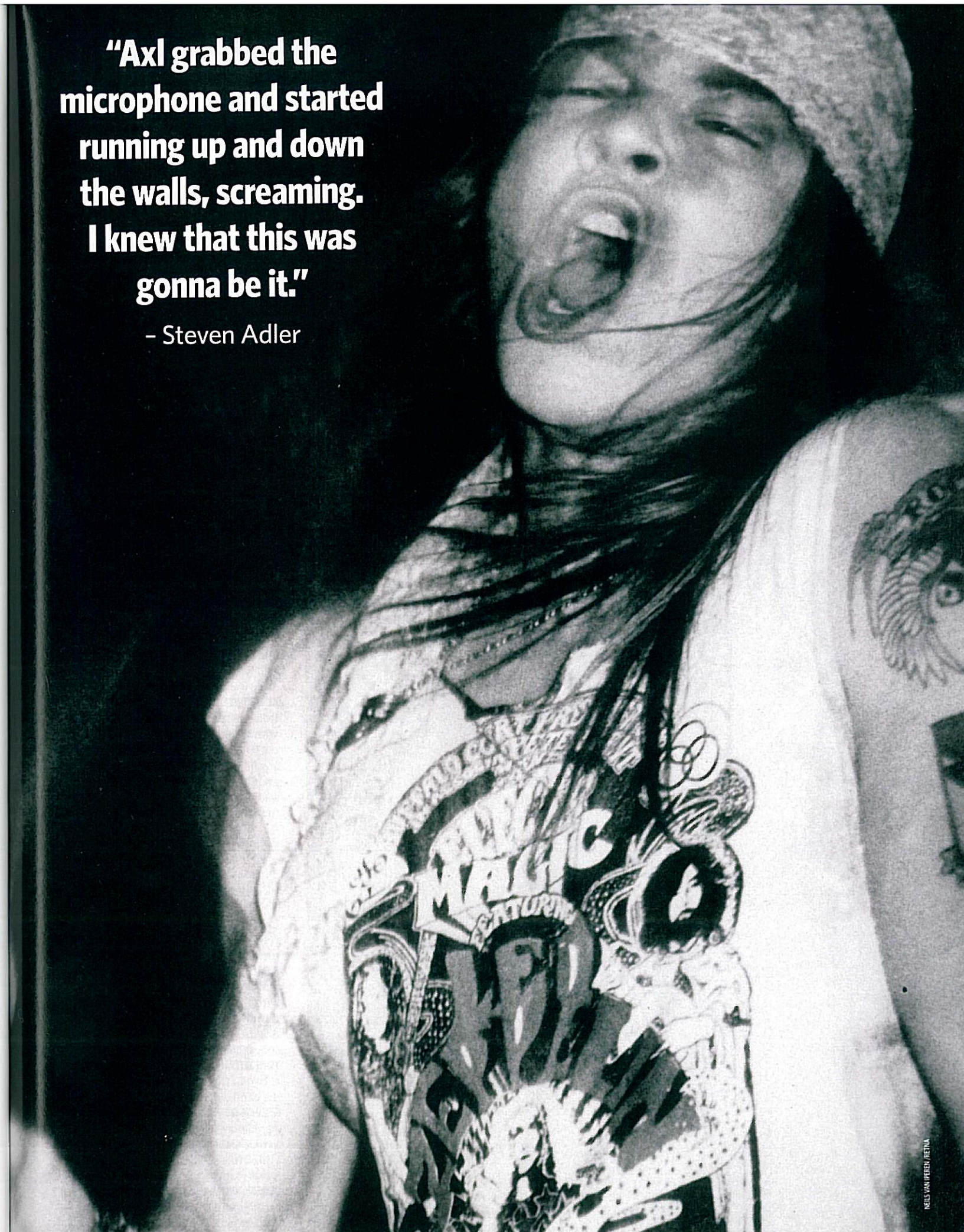
COLLEEN COMBS: When we would leave the Rainbow, Izzy would drink the remnants of all the drinks on the table.

TRACII GUNS: [In 1985] I just wanted to get away for a week or something, and I recall Axl or Izzy calling and leaving a message: "We got rehearsal this week." I just ignored it. I didn't hear anything for a couple of days and then finally the whip came down: "Slash is going to play guitar because you haven't come to rehearsal."

LA booking agent Vicky Hamilton becomes the group's first manager in 1985, securing them bigger gigs and better equipment. Rose legally changes his name to W. Axl Rose.



All Guns blazing: the classic line-up, still wide-eyed if not innocent



"Axl grabbed the microphone and started running up and down the walls, screaming. I knew that this was gonna be it."

– Steven Adler

"THEY WERE THE LAST GREAT HARD ROCK BAND."



"Guns N' Roses were the last great hard rock band in America. The first time I ever saw them was when I came out of the hospital and was going to go onstage sober - for the first time in my career. I'm sitting there worrying my head off. I knew that this band was going on before us. They opened and they just killed the audience. So... we just went on and killed the audience too. It didn't bother me that they weren't sober. The first thing I did when I got out of the hospital was I went to a bar and had a Diet Coke 'cos I knew I'd be around people who are drinking for the rest of my life."

Alice Cooper

"We wrote *Welcome To The Jungle* in my bedroom in about an hour. Where Axl got the lyrics, I have no idea." - Slash

→ **STEVEN ADLER:** Vicky was very sweet, very motherly. We were pretty much living in her house, having sex with strippers on the roof. We destroyed it. **JOSEPH BROOKS:** I dragged A&R people to their gigs and played the *Welcome To The Jungle* demo on my show on [LA radio station] KROQ. I brought Tom Zutaout to see Guns N' Roses and he loved them. **TOM ZUTAUT:** Joe at Vinyl Fetish was like, "There's this new band called Guns N' Roses - you should check them out." I went to see them at the Troubadour and there were a lot of A&R people. So I left after two songs - I didn't need to see any more to know they were going to be the biggest band in the world. On my way out I said [to one of the other A&R people], "They suck - I'm going home," knowing full well I was going to sign them to Geffen come hell or high water. **BRENDAN MULLEN:** I booked GN'R at Club Lingerie. It was a chance-of-a-lifetime gig. The band set up and did a sound-check. No Axl. The band was freaking. Then, ten minutes before the gig, he strolled in. They signed with Geffen immediately after. **TOM ZUTAUT:** Axl didn't strike me as being particularly savvy or into his career. He was more like a wild animal from the African jungle. I remember Axl saying to me on the Monday after the show, "If you can get me a cheque for \$75,000 by Friday, we'll sign with you." It was unheard of. Then on Wednesday, he called me and said, "Look, man, we told the A&R person at Chrysalis that if she walked naked down Sunset Boulevard from her office to Tower Records, we'd sign with her." Dead serious. And I was thinking, "My office is on Sunset - I'm going to have to watch until Friday at 6 o'clock, because if she does the nude walk, I'm going to lose the band." **KIM FOWLEY:** The day they got their cheque from Geffen, Axl came into The Rainbow with a Xerox of a cheque for \$37,500 made out to Guns N' Roses. It was half of their advance, so they must have gotten 75 grand. He said, "Look, we got our deal." I said, "Congratulations," and he said, "Buy me a drink - I don't have any money."

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE: 1986-1990

In order to build a buzz, Guns N' Roses record the EP *Live ?!*@ Like A Suicide* for their Geffen-funded Uzi Suicide label. In August, they hire Zutaout-recommended manager Alan Niven (who also worked with Great White) to replace Vicky Hamilton, who later sues the band. In August, 1986, they begin recording the songs that become *Appetite For Destruction*. **TOM ZUTAUT:** The sessions would happen at two or three in the morning - whenever the band was inspired. **STEVEN ADLER:** Most of the songs on *Appetite* are first, second, or third takes - *Sweet Child O' Mine* we only played once. I think that's why the record did so well: it was real. **SLASH:** *Welcome To The Jungle* was just a riff I made sitting in my bedroom on an acoustic guitar and Axl just happened to

be there. Where he got the lyrics I really have no idea, but when we put the song together I think it took maybe an hour. **MICHELLE YOUNG:** I'm the subject of My *Michelle*. I was driving Axl to a gig and *Your Song* by Elton John was on the radio. I said that I wished somebody would write a beautiful song about me. But, you know the song. At the time, I didn't care because I was so fucked up, but what it says is all true: my dad does distribute porno films and my mom did die. **STEVE THOMPSON:** Axl wanted some pornographic sounds in *Rocket Queen*, so he brought a girl in and they had sex in the studio. We wound up recording about 30 minutes of sex noises. If you listen to the break on *Rocket Queen*, it's in there. **MICHAEL BARBIERO:** I didn't want to be around for recording a girl getting fucked. That wasn't the high point of my career. So I set up the mikes and had my assistant record it. If you look at the record, it says, "Vic Deglio, fucking assistant engineer." So it's literal.

Geffen Records releases *Appetite For Destruction* on August 1, 1987. Fearing that retailers will refuse to stock the album because of its cover - a painting by LA-based artist Robert Williams that seems to depict a woman who has been violated by a robot - the label decides to move the image to the inner sleeve. **ROBERT WILLIAMS:** When Guns N' Roses wanted to use my picture *Appetite For Destruction*, I told Axl he was going to get into trouble. Then they asked if they could use the title of the painting. I said yes, but I knew there'd be a problem. None of the guys in this band were too articulate, so they would direct the media to me to defend the cover. **LARS ULRICH:** I was sitting on an airplane going through a bunch of cassettes that I had finagled over at our record company, and one of them was *Appetite*. When *It's So Easy*, the second song, came on, it just blew my fuckin' head off. I had never heard anything with that kind of attitude. It wasn't just what was said - it was the way Axl said it. It was so venomous. It was so fucking real and so fucking angry. **TOM ZUTAUT:** MTV was afraid that if they played GN'R, local cable systems would throw them off. So *Appetite* was up to about 200,000 and it was standing still. I got called up into the president of Geffen's office and he said, "This record is over." So I went up to David Geffen's office and I said, "Could you get MTV to play the video for *Welcome To The Jungle*?" A couple of hours later, he said, "They're going to play it at five in the morning on Sunday as a personal favor to me." Even in the wee hours of Sunday morning, MTV got so many requests that it blew their switchboard.

Guns N' Roses begin opening arena shows for Mötley Crüe and headlining small clubs with T.S.O.L. as support. In February 1988, Rose refuses to leave his hotel room the night of the band's Phoenix concert. Rose is fired by his bandmates, then reinstated three days later. In August - while the band are

DUFF McKAGAN

Current Velvet Revolver bassist and former Gunner remembers the mad times...



★ According to Slash, while the rest of Guns were on hard drugs you just stuck to alcohol. "That's not quite true. I had periods... The thing is, I took acid for the first time in sixth grade, aged about 12. By the time I was 18 I'd already had my fill of psychedelic drugs and cocaine and stuff. I'd tried heroin. Then for a long time I was just drinking - but I eventually got back into drugs again."

★ You grew up in Seattle - a notorious place for heroin. "Oh yeah. Round about 1983 there was so much heroin coming into Seattle. It's a port city so there's just this constant influx of drugs. X [Ecstasy] was around a lot too - but heroin was the problem. My girlfriend got strung out, my room-mate got strung out. The guitar player in my band Ten Minute Warning - bear in mind we were the biggest band in Seattle at the time, we'd toured with Dead Kennedys and Black Flag - this guy kept stealing our money to cop dope. I was like, 'Enough. If I'm gonna make my move I gotta make it now.' So I moved to LA."

★ It's ironic that you left Seattle to escape heroin... "Exactly! After two weeks in LA I met Slash, who loved the stuff. Then Izzy moved across the street from me and he's a heroin dealer, you know?"

★ So when did drugs re-enter the picture for you? "I stayed away from drugs until after the *Appetite* tour. I'd do the odd line of coke. But after the *Appetite* tour we went to Chicago to start writing for *Illusion*. Just Slash, Steven and I. At that point I started doing a lot of coke. I was drinking a lot. Axl didn't show up and we were in Chicago with not much to do. That's when Steven Adler really started getting into speedballs - shooting coke and heroin. Slash was in and out of dope phases. I was just... you know that rollercoaster of booze, coke, booze, coke? That was me. Then I stopped getting high off what I was doing so I really started to dive into harder shit. Anything I could get my hands on to get a high. Dope, pills... It was a black two years. I just resigned myself to dying by the age of 30. I tried to quit a bunch of times but I couldn't stop. I couldn't stop any of it. The skin started falling off my hands and feet. All kinds of health problems."

★ There must have been an immense amount of the pressure on the band at that time. "Yes, especially towards the end. Shows being cancelled, we'd be coming on stage four hours late, people would be chanting 'Bullshit! Bullshit! Bullshit!' You hear 80,000 people doing that and... [shakes his head]. We'd created this thing for music. Not to get pussy or to cop drugs. I came from a very pure musical background. All my brothers and sisters played music, I just wanted to be a player. I was playing with Slash, you know? Great singer, great band. But we weren't allowed to just be musicians. The insanity of that whole thing drove me to drugs."

★ What's your earliest drug memory? "Probably getting too high on mushrooms. In Seattle

"Gilby had a shirt I really liked. So I swapped him a brand new \$30,000 black convertible Corvette for it."

you can pick mushrooms wild just walking home from school. This one time I ate too many, went to band practice - and saw Mt St Helens explode in front of me! I saw fucking trolls coming out of my heart and shit. I was freaking out. But I had my ticket to this Iggy Pop show that night and I wasn't gonna let go of it. So I walked ten miles to the show, and when Iggy came on I just focussed on Iggy and he got me down off that mushroom high!

"Ten years later I got a call from Iggy on my home phone: 'Hey it's Iggy, would you like to play on my record?' That was cool. After that I thought, 'If I don't do anything ever again, at least I played on an Iggy Pop record. Nobody can take that away from me.'"

★ Describe your 'Spinal Tap' moment. "That would be playing in Japan, just after Gilby Clarke had replaced Izzy. We were playing three nights at the Tokyo dome. I kinda figured out how much I was making from those shows - and it was a lot. Anyway, I'd bought a Corvette a couple of years before, which had always been my dream car. It was great. A convertible black Corvette. Beautiful. So after this show in Tokyo, Gilby was wandering around in this shirt that I really liked. I said, 'Tell your wife to go to my house in LA and get the keys to my Corvette. I'll trade it for your shirt.' He said, 'You're fucking kidding me! This car was worth over \$30,000! But I didn't care, I just bought another one straight away. Do I still have the shirt? I do. It's a nice shirt.' X

On the road in '88: Axl's live appearances were becoming erratic



ROSS HALETH / MOLE ABOVE LARRY BUSACCA / RETNA

"THEY WERE VERY RESPECTFUL. SLASH IS A GENTLEMAN..."



"We were in London in '86 doing the *Orgasmatron* record. Guns were there playing the Marquee. Slash and Duff and Izzy and Steve came down to the studio. Axl was the only one missing. They just sat around being like young fans... just amazed. Because we influenced them. They were very respectful. Slash was always a gentleman. That's rare in this business. But he's English after all."

Lemmy Kilmister

"Izzy told Axl that if he insisted on going on late, he should pay the fines. That was it. Izzy was out."

opening Aerosmith's *Permanent Vacation* tour – *Appetite For Destruction* reaches No.1 on the *Billboard* album chart. **MITCH DEAN:** We do our set in Phoenix, and the whole band is there except Axl, and they say, "Play another song." Then it's "Can you play two more?" By that time, we were in the middle of John Lennon's *Cold Turkey*. **TOM ZUTAUT:** I cut a deal with [then Aerosmith manager] Tim Collins for the band to open for Aerosmith. He made a rule that nobody in GN'R could be seen with a joint, hard drugs, or even a beer in front of Aerosmith. If Slash was caught in front of Joe Perry with a beer, they'd be thrown off the tour. So all the insanity was happening behind closed doors. **SLASH:** When we were doing stadiums, it was like playing The Troubadour – I could never tell the difference. When the tour was over, I came back to LA and realised what a household name the band had become. **RIKI RACHTMAN:** I was sitting around with Axl and I was saying, "Man, I should do that *Headbangers Ball* show." And Axl says, "I'll make some calls." He flew to New York with me for my audition. I walked in with Axl and they're, like, "You have the job."

On August 20, Guns N' Roses take a break from the Aerosmith tour to play the Monsters of Rock festival at Castle Donington in Leicestershire, England. The

general admission concert is overcrowded and the group stops playing three times in an attempt to calm the audience. As he leaves the stage, Rose tells fans to "Have a good fuckin' day and don't kill yourselves" – unaware that two concertgoers were crushed to death during their set. **STEVEN ADLER:** Donington was the worst show we've ever played. You don't know what's happening so you can't stop it. **TOM ZUTAUT:** The band was upset about it. They wondered what kind of security they had at a gig if people could be crushed.

Geffen releases *GN'R Lies* on November 30, 1988. The album consists of the *Live ?!*@ Like A Suicide* EP and four acoustic tracks, including *One In A Million*, which contains racist and homophobic epithets. **STEVEN ADLER:** When I first heard *One In A Million*, I asked Axl, "What the fuck? Is this necessary?" He just said, "Yeah, it's necessary. I'm letting my feelings out." **VERNON REID:** When I heard that song, I was probably more disappointed than anything, because I liked the band. I thought the objectification was wack, like I'm somehow standing in the way of this guy. **TOM ZUTAUT:** Axl resented being accused of being homophobic. He was also really pissed off about being called a racist. **TC:** When they started to get money, they

would drink all day at Barney's Beanery. Slash bought all the snakes he wanted but he was always losing them. **SLASH:** I had a walk-in room where there were four or five 10-foot pythons. I had all these little rooms in the house that were supposed to be maids' rooms, but if I had a space that didn't have any practical purpose, I'd turn it into a snake room. **COLLEEN COMBS:** Axl went through a couple of cars. There was a Corvette and a red monster truck with an insane stereo system that never worked right because it would drain the battery. **MICHELLE YOUNG:** Axl was changing – he and I had a falling out. I was high one night and I pushed his buttons, saying, "You're famous now and you don't need your friends." He said, "Get out of my face."

In August 1989, Stradlin is arrested for urinating in the galley on an LA-bound US Air flight. Along with Living Colour, Guns N' Roses are booked as an opening act for the Rolling Stones' October concerts at the Los Angeles Coliseum, prompting critics to cast the show as a battle of the bands and speculate on whether Living Colour frontman Vernon Reid would address Rose's racism onstage. **TOM ZUTAUT:** GN'R had a separate area backstage. Living Colour were on the other side and the Stones were in the middle,

with an army of security. **COLLEEN COMBS:** Axl became more and more paranoid. He really thought someone was going to take him out. He thought someone was going to kill him. **VERNON REID:** We went out with a mission – I think that was true of all three bands. I made a statement about *One In A Million* onstage, and I remember afterward Keith Richards made it a point to come over to the dressing room and shake my hand. The first show was a little weird. Onstage, Axl said [that it might be the last Guns N' Roses show because] "There are too many people in this band dancing with Mr. Brownstone." He was real pissed. **STEVEN ADLER:** He said to me "Just start playing *Brownstone*." So I'm playing *Brownstone* and he comes out and says everybody's fucked-up on dope. He was so gone that I'm hiding there behind the drums thinking, "I don't know this guy."

On April 28, 1990, Rose marries girlfriend Erin Everly, daughter of the Everly Brothers' Don Everly, in Las Vegas. Less than a month later, Rose threatens divorce. They get back together, then split up again, annulling the marriage in January, 1991. **COLLEEN COMBS:** Axl and Erin bought a house somewhere up in the Hollywood Hills after they got married... They redesigned it, furnished it, pushed a grand piano through the French doors. They helicoptered in two topiary elephants. But they never moved in. **JOSH RICHMAN:** Axl and Erin really wanted to be together. This was a guy who desperately wanted a family, having come from a busted family. The annulment happened right away.

MICHELLE YOUNG: Erin would call me and say, "Axl's crazy – he's throwing things around." She pushed his buttons, but I know that he loved her. **ERIN EVERLY** [from a sworn deposition in her lawsuit against Rose for physical and mental abuse, which was later settled out of court]: I was walking and he stubbed his toe behind me... And started just attacking me and telling me it was my fault that he had stubbed his toe because he was coming to tell me something. **COLLEEN COMBS:** Axl became vain, worrying about dyeing his eyebrows and eyelashes and going on prescription drugs for his hair and skin. He had his teeth fixed. He went on all-sushi diets. **ERIN EVERLY** [from her deposition]: Axl's beliefs were different than mine [After my dogs died] Axl believed that he had the dogs' souls transferred [into new dogs]... He said that I wasn't appreciative that he had given me the opportunity to have [our dogs] Torque and Geneva back, and that I should call [the new dogs] Torque and Geneva.

Over the course of 1990, Guns N' Roses begin work on the follow-up to *Appetite*. Drug problems set in. **NIKKI SIXX:** I'd been on tour, and I flew home, picked up Slash, and we went to The Cathouse and asked around about getting some smack. You always shoot yourself up – you never let anyone else shoot you up – but I was so drunk I said to the drug

SLASH

The Velvet Revolver guitarist on the highs and lows of being a Gunner



★ Everyone goes on about the misery of addiction. But there must have been times early on when you were having an amazing time on drugs...

"[Smiles] There was a brief period... Actually, it wasn't so brief. There was probably a year long period when Guns N' Roses had established itself as the biggest band in LA. Our lifestyle was definitely about as decadent as it could possibly be. This was 1985, '86, before we were signed. I got turned on to shooting heroin – as opposed to snorting it. And that changed me entirely. I fell so in love with that drug. For the whole period of us getting a record deal I was slamming heroin. But I hadn't picked up the full habit yet. It was still a new thing. I could do it once and be high for three or four days. It was great."

★ Once you signed to Geffen there must have been a lot of money flying around...

"I remember taking my advance money and immediately running out and spending it all on dope. Then there was almost a whole year between signing the deal and recording the album, because they couldn't find managers or producers who were willing to work with us. So we were just sort of out there, not doing much, and that was a great time of just hanging out, getting high. We had a certain circle of girls. We had our own little scene. It was all great material."

★ Did you have a particular hangout?

"No, we would just...be. We could be anywhere at any given time. We were basically just the underbelly. Copping dope and seeing wherever that took you. We would mainly hang out wherever we happened to be squatting at the time."

★ This heroin honeymoon period – did that coincide with the writing of *Appetite*...?

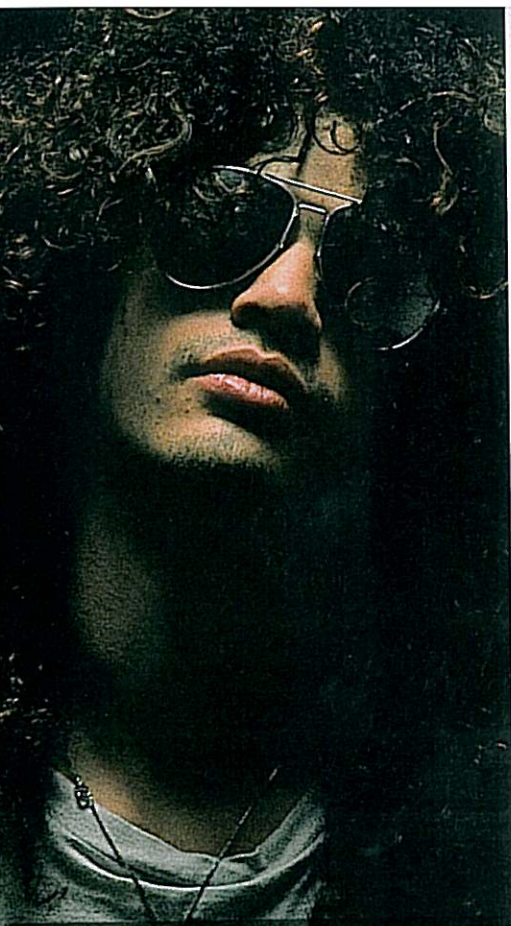
"Mostly. There were some songs that were written before that whole drug thing started. *Welcome To The Jungle*, for example. *It's So Easy* was maybe just on the edge – heroin hadn't quite kicked in for me yet when that was written. But *Mr Brownstone* was definitely me and Izzy at the height of our chemical bliss. *Rocket Queen*, *Nightrain* and *Paradise City* were mostly just drinking rather than drugs. *Sweet Child O' Mine* definitely came from the heroin period."

★ So you think heroin can aid creativity?

"Any musician worth his salt has written his greatest songs completely under the influence. I know that for a fact. I can think of one hugely famous band that's no longer together that wrote 98% of their material while on heroin."

★ Could you still play well while high?

"Yeah, but I would never work in the studio or go on tour carrying that kind of habit. It was too much baggage. I was lucky to have learned as a kid what happens to creative people if they do too many drugs. I was always around it from a young age. I'm not saying I didn't ever perform while high, but for the most part I made sure I was pretty much clean on



"A cup of half coffee, half Jack Daniels, in the morning. That's kept me on an even keel over the years..."

tour. I'd have a drink, that was it. Same thing in the studio. A cup of half coffee, half Jack Daniels in the morning. And that's carried me through, kept me on an even keel over the years. It was during time off, between tours – that's when I'd get in trouble."

★ Come on. You must have done a few gigs under the influence.

"[Laughs] There was one time when we supporting the Stones and we'd come out of a long hiatus. I booked those shows hoping they'd help get the band back together. But I was shooting amazing amounts of smack, and – I admit – I did those three shows while really really high. At one of them my dealer didn't show up on time and I was scared I was gonna have to go on without copping my shit – which meant I couldn't play. But he showed up at the last minute. That was a nailbiting experience. It was about that time that I decided I needed to quit for the sake of the band."

★ Describe your greatest moment of excess – the moment when it all went a bit 'Spinal Tap'...

"There was a whole period after *Use Your Illusion* that was pretty ridiculous. I ended up in Arizona dealing with some real low-life people on a regular basis in order to facilitate my habit. I remember buying a fucking Porsche and parking it underneath a freeway in Hollywood and leaving it unlocked overnight while I went to some ramshackle apartment so I could go get my fucking buzz on. A brand new Porsche! I'd bought it the night before. Was it still there when I got back? It was actually."

WORDS: KYLE STEPHENS; THE ROSS HALETH / MOLE



Izzy's out, Gilby's in:
"The best experience
was the Freddie Mercury
tribute," says Gilby.
"Axl was awesome."



MATT SORUM

The former Guns drummer remembers the moment when he realised he'd gone too far.

"It was towards the end of the *Use Your Illusion* tour. I'd just come off an airplane and there was this Porsche 911 parked on the runway. I saw the keys in the ignition and just assumed it had been delivered for me. So me and my girlfriend jump in and start screeching round in circles. Then the engine cuts out – it was an anti-burglary thing, programmed to cut out after a certain distance. Turns out this was the limo company's car! It wasn't mine at all. This guy comes running up to me and says 'Hey, that's my fucking car!' I go, 'OK, how much do you want for it?' He goes, '\$45,000'. I go, 'Fine'. I wrote him a cheque there and then and drove off with the Porsche."

SLASH: If anything, the lifestyle became more of a hindrance, because we were a pretty volatile band that hadn't grown up much, [and we were] given all these opportunities to take advantage of the lavish surroundings and chicks.

MATT SORUM: We had limos on-call 24 hours, burgers at the Trump Tower that cost \$35. The first night we played Giants Stadium, there was one pinball machine and a few bottles of booze backstage. Axl came in and said, "This isn't the Rolling Stones!" So the next night there's a full casino, tons of lobster, and champagne flowing everywhere.

After numerous delays caused by arguments over the final mix, *Use Your Illusion I* and *II* are released at the end of September. They debut in the top two spots on the *Billboard* album chart. Frustrated by Rose's increasingly erratic behavior, Stradlin announces that he will no longer tour with the band.

TOM ZUTAUT: The band was paying hundred of thousands of dollars in curfew violation fees. Izzy finally had it and went over to Axl's house and told him that if he insisted on going on late, the late fees should be charged to him. That was it – Izzy was out of the band.

GILBY CLARKE: I had known the guys through the early years – there was a very small contingent of people who thought bands like the New York Dolls and Hanoi Rocks were cool. When I heard Izzy was leaving, I threw my hat in the ring.

On April 20, 1992, despite objections from gay rights groups, Guns N' Roses participates in a Wembley Stadium tribute to late Queen singer Freddie Mercury, one of Rose's childhood heroes. The following month, the band – now augmented by a horn section and female back-up singers – begins the European leg of their tour, with Soundgarden and Faith No More as opening acts.

GILBY CLARKE: The best experience I had in the band was the Freddie Mercury tribute. Axl was awesome – he really respected Freddie Mercury. We went on time, we played great together, and everybody got along. I thought it was very moving.

RODDY BOTTUM: Opening for them was an absurd situation for a band like Faith No More. Their scene was about excess, excess, excess. There were more strippers

than road crew. We weren't into that type of male bonding. The only time I saw their show was when we were reprimanded for laughing about the absurdity of the touring environment in the press and told that we'd have to apologize to Axl or leave the tour. We made an attempt to explain where we were coming from, but I think it went over his head because as a sort of peace offering he brought us to a trailer backstage where two naked women strippers were having sex.

KEVIN QUINN: They had been on the road for so long by this time that they brought me out for their amusement: "Let's get Kevin to fly out and tattoo us." They would give me aftershow passes to give to pretty girls, only the average age of these girls was 14 or 15. What were we gonna do with them – serve them soft drinks and thank them for coming to the show?



"Axl had a separate dressing room. We would be ready to play. What Axl Rose was doing I had no idea." – Gilby

In an interview in an April 1992 issue of *Rolling Stone*, Rose says that therapy helped him recover memories of childhood sexual abuse. When he returns to America in July, Rose is arrested at New York's Kennedy Airport for assault and property damage charges relating to the St. Louis riot. The following month, the band begins a stadium tour with Metallica.

GILBY CLARKE: By then, Axl had a separate dressing room. We would be ready to play. What Axl was doing I had no idea.

JOSH RICHMAN: If there was a bad review, [manager] Doug Goldstein and I would be in the hotel stealing all the newspapers, because if Axl read it, who knows if he would get on the plane to the next city.

On August 8 at Montreal's Olympic Stadium, Metallica cut their set short after singer James Hetfield is seriously burned on stage pyrotechnics. Rose walks offstage after 15 minutes, and more

"APPETITE IS ONE OF THE ALL-TIME GREATS"



"I consider *Appetite For Destruction* to be up there with *Highway To Hell* – which, to me, is one of the all-time greats. With *Appetite* it's not just the songs, but the actual sound of the record..."

Bret Michaels,
Poison

dealer, "Go ahead and fix me." I turned blue instantly.
STEVEN ADLER: I saved Nikki's life. I dragged him into the shower. I had a broken arm and I was slapping him in the face with my cast. Then I finally got Slash's stupid girlfriend to call the paramedics. Nikki called me the next day and said, "Dude, what happened? My face is killing me."
JOSH RICHMAN: People got the impression that these guys were junkies – Axl wasn't.
TOM ZUTAUT: Steven Adler would show up at the recording studio completely high. Recording sessions would abort for several days when he couldn't put it together.
STEVEN ADLER: They said the reason they threw me out of the band was because of drugs, but I thought that was the pot calling the kettle black. I was doing [drugs] with them. It hurt more than anything. They were my family.

LIVE AND LET DIE: 1990-1999

On October 30, Rose is arrested for allegedly hitting a West Hollywood neighbour over the head with a bottle after

she complained about him playing music too loud. In January, the band debut new drummer Matt Sorum and new keyboardist Dizzy Reed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, before continuing work on *Use Your Illusion* – now planned as two albums.

SLASH: The recording process for the *Use Your Illusion* records was one of the hardest experiences. It took so much to get us together to write the new songs or to rehash the old ones that didn't make *Appetite*. But once we'd gotten over that hump, we went into the studio and recorded 30 songs.

MATT SORUM: There had been a four-year gap since *Appetite* came out – *Lies* was put out just to keep things going. We could have done anything and people would have bought it. But we recorded everything the band had ever written.

SLASH: *November Rain* was a song that was being kicked around on piano and acoustic guitar when we were doing preproduction for *Appetite*. When we first wrote it, I think it was about 15 minutes long.

ALICE COOPER: I was staying in LA at the Sunset Marquis when Axl called me to do the vocal on *The Garden*. When you're in the studio one-on-one with him, he's really

amazing – the guy can really sing. I did my bit maybe three times, but Axl was a perfectionist-almost to the point where you want to say, "At some point, Axl, it's gotta be good enough."

MARK KOSTABI: Axl wandered into this gallery and saw the *Use Your Illusion* painting. The next day, one of his representatives called and asked if he could use it on the cover of his next record. He said that he had been writing about illusions, so it made sense.

JOSH RICHMAN: Axl said to me, "I want to make videos more out-there than Michael Jackson's." When we made the *November Rain* video, we brought all these models in. Axl desperately wanted Stephanie Seymour – period. That night they went to the set, which was being built in an airplane hanger out in the Valley. That was their first date. She left Warren Beatty the next day.

COLLEEN COMBS: Axl told me, "I've been hit by a Mack truck and the license plate said 'Seymour.'"

Expecting that the *Use Your Illusion* albums would be ready for release by summer, Guns N' Roses begin their *Get In The Ring* tour (with Skid Row as an opening act) in



ROBERT JOHN JOOLS

THE LOST GN'R MOVIE

When Guns N' Roses first hit London, writer **Pete Makowski** was roped into making a documentary of the band...

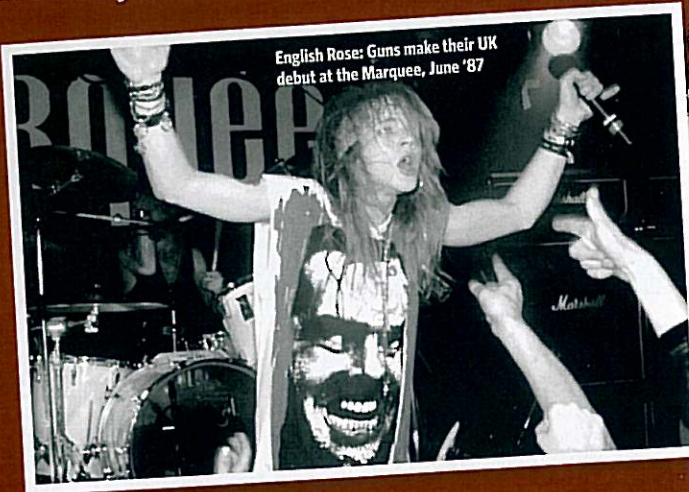
London, June 1987. Slash is on the phone. "Please don't give Izzy any heroin!" he says. Hell! Not only does my reputation precede me, it's walking in front of me, blowing a great big frigging trumpet. Of course I wasn't going to give Izzy any class As - I was a full blown addict who didn't share his wares with anyone.

Guns N' Roses had just arrived on the scene, and to my addled mind, along with Jane's Addiction they were the only American group that had any vague individuality, energy or style, and the opportunity to check them out even roused me out of an opiated stupor.

In London to promote the single *It Ain't Easy* and with a series of dates at the Marquee, I met the band at a record company apartment in High Street Kensington. They were hungover and jet lagged. An incredibly skinny and pale Duff was hunched over a microwave, trying to figure out how to make a ready meal. In the living room, the curtains were drawn and Indian scarves were draped over the lights: it looked like the boys had been to the Steven Tyler school of interior design. Both Slash and Izzy had already refined their image - raggle taggle electric gypsies with cigarettes permanently hanging off lips that sneered and pouted simultaneously. Steven Adler was an archetypal drummer - sociable and dopey - while a permanently restless Axl shuffled about the kitchen with a giant banner above his head that proclaimed 'I am uncomfortable in my skin'. A lovely man, but one totally ill-at-ease with himself.

After a pretty disjointed and incomplete interview, I agreed to hook up with Izzy Stradlin later. Izzy was the most grounded member of the band and a total anglophile. "Coming to England is a dream come true for the band," Izzy revealed, "A lot of our influences are British. It'd be great if we could record this visit on film."

At the time I was residing at a squat in Clapham with some very enterprising people, one of whom happened to have 'liberated' a video recorder during the poll tax riots. I immediately offered my services as film director and presenter to Izzy, who seemed quite enthused with the idea. "Let me tell the rest of the band," he said. "I can't see there being any problems."



English Roses: Guns make their UK debut at the Marquee, June '87

Now it seems hard to believe, bearing in mind Axl's reputation as a control freak, but they actually agreed to the idea - while making it perfectly clear that it was to made for private consumption and not general release. And that's how I ended up outside the Marquee on Sunday, June 28 with microphone, accompanied by camera man Og and producer Victor (well, when I say 'producer', he did actually 'procure' the camera in the first place!). The crowd were well lubricated and looked like demented future members of Dogs D'Amour. There was aggression and testosterone in the air, even with the women. In fact, especially with the women.

We interviewed the crowd and then filmed the band rehearsing and hanging out. By the time Guns n' Roses hit the stage, the crowd went crazy even though it was quite likely that most of them hadn't heard a note by the band. The audience and group seemed to melt into each other. In *It Ain't Easy* you could hear echoes

of what was to come out of Seattle and bury the group a few years later. It's easy to forget what a hardcore, ass-kicking band they were. In fact, Velvet Revolver sound like what Guns n' Roses could and should have become...

Our piece of *cinema verite* was recorded and duly handed over to the band and management. We were promised a viewing but it never transpired. In fact, we never saw the film again.

So what was on it? Well apart from the crowd, group rehearsals and general musical malarkey, there's a great scene where my good friend Roger turns up with an absolutely stunning French girl only to be informed

that I can only get one person into the show.

"Oh well, *au revoir* Roger, *mon cheri*," sighs the Gallic beauty as she totters off, all high heels and mini skirt... Before heading in the general direction of the dressing room.

With our chins on the floor, we dragged our beaten and bloodied torsos to the pub next door, as the next generation of rock'n'rollers proceed to conquer an unsuspecting planet

than 2,000 fans clash with police while exiting the venue.

GILBY CLARKE: Somebody said there was a big accident and it would be really great if we could go on early. So we did. But because of all the frantic stuff, the sound wasn't together by the time we got onstage. I remember Axl coming up to me and going, "I can't hear myself." The next thing you know, he left.

LARS ULRICH: After we left, it was up to Guns to play a blinding three-hour set, but that didn't happen. And quite a few kids who were upset about it found ways to show their displeasure toward the fine facilities of Olympic Stadium. Axl's so pure or set in his own ways that if he can't go out and deliver 110 percent, he'd rather not deliver. That was the wrong night to have monitor problems.

LEMMY KILMISTER: We played with Guns N' Roses at the Rose Bowl then, and they were already fragmenting. Axl was on his own - it didn't feel like they were thinking as a band anymore.

Already feuding with Mötley Crüe and Poison, Rose trades insults with Kurt Cobain and wife Courtney Love at the 1993 MTV Video Music Awards. At the end of the year, he disrupts a planned Christmas party at the Malibu home he shares with Seymour and allegedly physically abuses her - an incident that leads them to file lawsuits against each other.

TOM ZUTAUT: Courtney Love said something rude to Axl and it got ugly. Guns N' Roses were the ultimate rock stars and Nirvana were the ultimate anti-rock stars. It was particularly painful to Axl because he loved Nirvana's music.

In May of 1993, after two and a half years on the road, Guns N' Roses end their *Illusion* tour. In December, Geffen releases *The Spaghetti Incident?*, an album of punk rock covers the band had recorded during the *Illusion* sessions and on the road.

Despite the group's pledge to donate the royalties to the son of one of his victims, their inclusion of a song by Charles Manson as a bonus track prompts calls for a boycott of Geffen. In 1994, at the LA studio The Complex, Rose experiments with updating Guns N' Roses' sound, alienating Clarke and Slash, who both record solo albums. The group records the Rolling Stones' *Sympathy For The Devil* for the movie *Interview With The Vampire*.

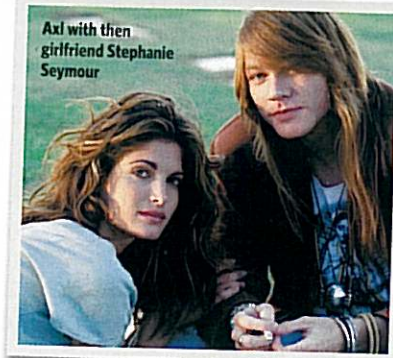
GILBY CLARKE: Axl played me the Manson song, *Look At Your Game Girl*, and I said, "That's pretty good." Then he told me what it was and I just went, "What?"

TOM ZUTAUT: The Manson thing was much more problematic than *One In A Million*. I could never understand why that song was so important to Axl.

MATT SORUM: I had produced [techno songstress] Poe and there were drum loops in the songs, and Axl wanted that. But Slash is a rock guitarist. He doesn't want to do techno-industrial.

GILBY CLARKE: I just wanted to play guitar in a loud version of the Rolling Stones. Axl wanted to change the direction of the band, and I was the first one dumped.

TOM ZUTAUT: Axl had a vision that GN'R



Axl with then girlfriend Stephanie Seymour

ROBERT RUH / JACOBS

should change and Slash had an attitude that Guns N' Roses was Guns N' Fucking Roses and that's who they were. I don't think they could get over their breakdown in communication. It wasn't announced publicly because nobody wanted to say the band had broken up.

SLASH: I went into the studio, and we got the Slash's Snakepit record together in two weeks. Once the record was finished, the GN'R hiatus was extended even longer, so I took the thing on the road, and that was that... There's really not much to say. I'm not a person to quit anything, but it got to the point where it was a miserable experience and I had to leave.

As various versions of Guns N' Roses continue to rehearse, Rose is sued by Clarke for using his likeness in the band's promotional material. Over the course of 1996 and 1997, Rose briefly adds guitarist Zakk Wylde, drum programmer Chris Vrenna, and former Pearl Jam drummer Dave Abbruzzese, and parts ways with Slash, Sorum, and McKagan.

ZAKK WYLDE: Axl called me up and said, "Hey, you want to get together and do some jamming?" I'd say "Dude, did you come up with any lyrics yet?" And he's just like, "Dude, I got people suing me right now." He's on the phone with his lawyers 24-7. He was, like, "I can't come up with any lyrics right now - they'd be about every other lawsuit I got going."

MOBY: Being the most successful rock star on the planet really took a psychological toll, and I think he invested a lot in his marriage and his friendships with the band - and those things fell apart.

MATT SORUM: It got really bad. The band was going down the toilet. We grew up listening to great bands like Led Zeppelin and the Stones. Guns N' Roses made that kind of music and the lifestyle we wanted went with it - rock music, drugs and women. You see these bands now on VH-1. It's all 'Waah, waah, whine, whine.' It wasn't 'waah.' It was a blast!

2004. Velvet Revolver, featuring Slash, Duff and Matt Sorum are the band of the year. In December, current GN'R bassist Tommy Stinson tells *Classic Rock* that he's heard "final mixes..." of Guns' new album *Chinese Democracy*. "It'll be going to mastering and ready very soon," he says. At the end of January 2005, it's reported that Sanctuary Music Publishing have signed up Axl in a deal which includes his "entire songwriting catalogue, including forthcoming new album *Chinese Democracy*". Will 2005 see another chapter in the GN'R story? ☒

STEVEN ADLER

Drummer Steven Adler's drugs use got him kicked out of Guns N' Roses - despite the fact that most of the band were in a similar place. Back with a new band, **Adler's Appetite**, he looks back to his Guns years

WORDS: DAVE LING



A few yards from the earshot of its subject, Jizzy Pearl and I have just had 'the' conversation. It's the muffled, confidential one in which the journalist expresses quiet doubt, and the artist attempts friendly

reassurance. "Steven's still got what it takes," insists the singer, also known for fronting Love/Hate and Ratt. "People expect him - and us - to fall on our ass, but he's playing like a motherfucker."

Steven Adler shouldn't even be breathing, let alone playing the drums. After what he once described as "a hellacious speedball" of cocaine and heroin, Steven suffered a stroke that left one side of his face completely paralysed. It still affects his speech, but hasn't prevented him from forming Adler's Appetite, along with Pearl, ex-Slash's Snakepit guitarist Keri Kelli and bassist Robbie Crane.

With just a smattering of original material to their name thus far, the band have been dismissed as a glorified Guns N' Roses tribute act, and the set they performed in London recently included most of the *Appetite For Destruction* album, plus among others *Civil War*, the song Adler's inability to play caused his final ejection from the band. So far, just an EP is available from the group's website (www.adlersappetite.com), though they hope to release a full-length debut this summer, and tour here again towards the year's end.

★ It's been 13 long years since you left Guns N' Roses.

"Yeah, and for the most part it feels like that time never elapsed. It's great to be back, and to get such wonderful responses from audiences and other bands, I couldn't be happier. And you know what? Writing songs with these guys is easier than it ever was with the GN'R guys. I've got the greatest job in the world again."

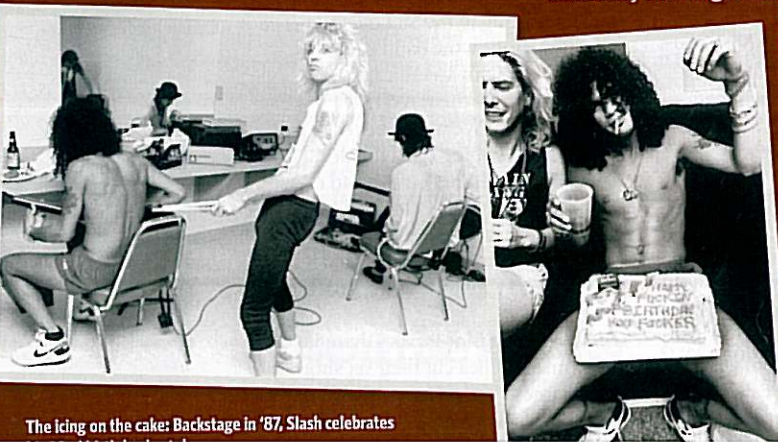
★ Did you actually stop playing the drums?

"Pretty much, I'm ashamed to say. I wish I could say that I did a lot of travelling or self-improvement, but all I actually did was sit on the couch and get high - while the TV watched me. It was a very, very hard time. Slash and I had started things off together at the age of 12, and from the garage our band went to the clubs to making records and travelling around the world. When you get to the level that GN'R was at - right up there alongside the Stones, Zeppelin and Aerosmith - what do you do when someone kicks you out? I wasn't gonna go back to the garage again. I didn't want it to get hurt all over."

★ You actually resorted to suicide attempts. How serious were they?

"Well, they're behind me now but I woke up a couple of times with charcoal coming out of every hole. I was very miserable. Everything I'd worked my whole life for had been taken away from me. And it was the people I'd worked with that had ☒

ROSS HARTN / JACOBS



The icing on the cake: Backstage in '87, Slash celebrates

turned on me. I didn't know what to do. From having hundreds of friends, to getting kicked out of the band by my best friend – and a guy who I was doing the drugs with! – it left me with no-one to turn to. I was very sad and lonely. My wife left me, and I didn't blame her. It's hard to watch someone you love trying to kill themselves. That's what I was doing."

★ **The last that most of us Brits last heard of you was in a short-lived band called Road Crew, with ex-Vain singer Davy Vain.**
"That was great while it lasted, but unfortunately I was still getting high at the time and I blew it. That's the truth of that situation."

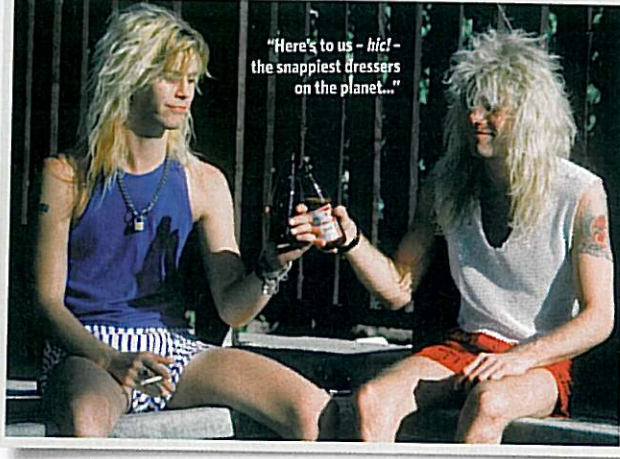
★ **What actually happened?**
"We made a record, and a record company loved it and was going to sign us. I forget which label it was; it began with 'a', maybe Atlantic or Arista? They came to a rehearsal and afterwards came back to my house to talk some more, but at the same time so did this girl who I was getting my drugs from. It was crazy – I hadn't even called her, but she just happened to turn up. She was standing there at the gate, and handed me a cigarette box full of drugs. I accepted it... right in front of the band, the label people, everyone. The label wouldn't even come into the house, the band all told me to forget it. My phone didn't ring for years. Not unless it was a drug dealer calling me back. It was a very bad time. But I made it through the other side, and that's all that matters."

★ **Is Adler's Appetite a long-term proposition, or just a bit of fun?**
"I take my life very seriously now, my music really helps me to keep on the rails. And now that we've got some songs of our own, that can only be a good thing. We'd like to have an album out by the summer, so we can do more touring. It's dangerous for me to be stuck at home."

★ **One of the first comeback road trips you did in the States was the so-called Bad Boys Of Metal tour.**
"Yeah. Myself, Kevin DuBrow [of Quiet Riot], Jani Lane [ex-of Warrant] and Joe LeSté [Bang Tango/Beautiful Creatures] with a house band. We'd go on and play half a dozen songs each with them. It was 27 shows in 31 days, which was pretty insane."

★ **In an interview, DuBrow later called the tour among the most "untogether and unpleasant" he'd ever experienced, slamming you for "buffoonery", drunkenness and even the cancellation of one particular show.**
"I wasn't fucked up. I know what really annoyed Kevin. At first, he was headlining. I was happy with that; I wanted to go on second or third anyway. But after I was done, pretty much everybody would leave. He'd end up singing for bartenders and waitresses and a handful of fans. After the third show, he wanted me to go on last and I refused. I've got nothing bad to say about Kevin, who's a very nice guy."

★ **For the record, are you now clean and sober?**
"No, I am not. I never claimed to be. But I'm not shooting heroin or doing cocaine. I'll have a beer or a shot of Jager[-meister], or I'll smoke a joint. It's all in control if I stick to that. But heroin and cocaine makes me useless."



★ **How do you now look back at the GN'R years?**
"It was the greatest time of my life, but one of the guys – I don't need to name him – made it so difficult for us all. Quite often he made the best and most exciting times I'll ever experience feel like a complete pain in the ass. Besides the loneliness and sadness I felt when I was excluded, the worst thing was to play in front of 20,000 people and have the guy storm offstage in the middle of the first song. With no warning, he'd throw the microphone to the floor, then leave. And not come back. Quite rightly, the audience would boo, and it was an awful feeling to know there was nothing that the rest of the band could do about the situation."

★ **Did you sometimes try?**
"Of course. You'd go backstage and get in a fight

"Good luck to him. I still love Axl. It was over a decade ago. I'm over it."

with the guy. He'd say, 'Fuck you' and get on a plane and you'd have to cancel a lot of other shows. It's all coming back to him now because he's the one who looks bad. But at the time it reflected badly on all of us."

★ **Do you feel like you've been needlessly written out of the band's story?**
"Oh yeah. But Axl's written everybody out. If he didn't like ya – and he didn't like any of us – or even if any of us didn't like him, then you were gone. No argument. It's a shame. At least in this band we all like each other and want to do the same thing."

★ **But do you also take responsibility for your own behaviour back then?**
"Of course. Nobody forced me to do those stupid things. It was all a part of growing up, and they didn't have shows like *Behind The Music* in those days. I'd read interviews with all my favourite rock stars and just wanted to be like the guys I idolised. You never read in *Hit Parade* what it was like to throw up blood, or to wake up in hospital. When GN'R toured with Aerosmith back in the day, Slash and I had looked up to Joe Perry and Steven Tyler, but we weren't even allowed to have beer in their company. Then again, nobody tells you how sick you can get. I was very naïve to the dangers of

heroin. The first times I did it were two years apart. It made me so sick. Then the third time I did it, it didn't affect me that way. So I did it every day for a month."

★ **You weren't alone in that behaviour, right?**
"No. Slash and I both lived in Laurel Canyon. We'd call each other up and ask if the other had any money. For a month I'd get out \$300 a day, then give Slash \$200 of it. He'd give me a piece of heroin that was the size of a little pebble. He'd have a piece the size of a [significantly larger] 50-cent piece – I was so naïve. After about a month, this one day came along when I didn't do heroin and I was sick as a dog. I couldn't understand it, so I called the manager [Doug Goldstein], who took me to a doctor that gave me an opiate blocker. I didn't know that you couldn't take opiate blockers with opiates in your system. It only made me worse. I literally had to crawl to the bathroom."

★ **It's a supreme irony that you were thrown out of the band while on anti-drug medication.**
"Yeah. Slash called me to say we had to go into the studio to record *Civil War*. I was so sick, I just couldn't do it. He said it was booked and we couldn't afford to waste the money. I told him we both knew of somebody who'd wasted way more cash than one day in the studio. Anyway, I went in there and tried to play the song 20, maybe 30 times. But I was so weak, my timing was like a rollercoaster. Every time we played it back they'd all shout at me, 'You're fucked up'. Then every two seconds they would go off to the bathroom and do coke."

★ **What are your recollections of the sacking?**
"Doug Goldstein called me into the office about two weeks later. He wanted me to sign some contracts. I was told that every time I did heroin, the band would fine me \$2,000. There was a whole stack of papers, with coloured paper clips everywhere for my signatures. What these contracts actually said was that the band were paying me \$2,000 to leave. They were taking my royalties, all my writing credits. They didn't like me anymore and just wanted me gone. That's why I filed the lawsuit – to get all those things back."

★ **It was reported that you eventually received \$3 million compensation, but considering the group had been such a brotherhood at the start, it must've been a very sour experience?**
"They were such bastards to me. Do you know the most touching thing? At the end of the trial, all the jurors hugged me and said, 'Good luck and take care'. They hated [the other members of Guns N' Roses]. When they were on the stand they'd be asked, 'How many times have you overdosed?', and the reply would be 20 or 30 times each. And there they were, throwing out this nice boy who was getting treatment? It made them look bigger assholes than they were. And that's what prevented me from putting another band together till now. I didn't want to get that hurt again. I got my money [from them], I just wanted to die. But God wouldn't take me. And after about 10 years of waking up in hospitals, I had to get my life in order. And music was all I knew."

★ **Have you had any feedback on Adler's Appetite from**



★ **your ex-GN'R colleagues?**
"One cool thing was that Slash and Izzy came to play with us at the Key Club [in Hollywood]. And Izzy now wants to come to South America with us. We're due to play some shows there in a few months, and he says he'd like to come with us. I'd love Slash to come along too, if he's not busy with Velvet Revolver. He called on my birthday, on January 22, which was nice."

★ **Speaking of Velvet Revolver, have you been to see them live?**
"Yeah, at the Hard Rock Café in Las Vegas. I love Slash and Duff. They've got such a presence. Scott [Weiland, singer], the snake boy, is a great performer as well. I don't know Matt Sorum. He didn't fire me, so I don't hate him. I don't even know him. Until he screws me over he's fine with me!"

★ **Have you seen or heard the current GN'R line-up?**
"Is there one? You tell me. I'm pretty sure what they're doing now won't sound like the Guns N' Roses I knew. But despite all the sadness and heartache that Axl put me through, good luck to him. I still love him. It was all a decade ago, I'm over it."

★ **You once said you wouldn't consider rejoining the Gunners for a billion dollars.**
"What I actually said was that I wouldn't do it unless it was the classic five-piece line-up. No keyboard players, no back-up singers. Axl could call up and ask, but if Duff, Slash and Izzy weren't doing it, then I'd definitely say no – even for a billion dollars."

★ **So... W Axl Rose: genius or just misunderstood?**
"He's probably a misunderstood genius. I don't

know. Axl doesn't think far ahead enough [to be a visionary]. Like, 'If I do this, so and so will happen'. He's definitely a great lyricist. But the thing people forget is that Slash, Duff, Izzy and I wrote the music – sometimes Axl wasn't even at rehearsal and we just gave him a tape. For the longest time I had no clue what he was singing on our first EP [1985's *Live!/*@ Like A Suicide*]."

★ **Given the name of your band is Adler's Appetite, has anyone tried to stop you?**
"Why would they? Axl's just one original member of Guns N' Roses who's now playing with a whole bunch of new people. I'm doing exactly the same thing. At first we called this thing Suki Jones, but Adler's Appetite is a much stronger name. This band is nothing to do with ripping off *Appetite For Destruction*, it's about my own appetite – for getting out there and playing music again." ❌