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THE
40
BITTEREST
BUST-UPS
& BITCHFESTS

Queen

+ Paul Rodgers

"Freddie would
love this record"

**Black
Crowes**

"We were intense,
crazed people..."

Def Leppard

Roger Waters

Wishbone Ash

Steve Winwood

BUH-BYE!

**"NOW I KNOW
HOW AXL
FEELS..."**
Weiland
weighs in

REVEALED!

**"You're
fired!"**

The truth
behind the Velvet
Revolver split

Plus

Lynyrd Skynyrd

Rolling Stones

The Clash

Iron Maiden

The Doors

Genesis

Jason & The

Scorchers

Extreme

Joy Division

Steve Harley

Rick Wakeman

The Sonics

Van Der Graaf

Quireboys

Joe Satriani

THERE WERE NO THROWN. SOMETIMES THERE HAD BEEN. 'C'MON LET'S JUST FUCKING THROW DOWN!"

How *Classic Rock* went on the road with **VELVET REVOLVER** - in Dubai and the UK - and witnessed the full messy split with Scott Weiland...

WORDS: SCOTT ROWLEY PICTURES: ROSS HALFIN

In a room somewhere in the Sheraton Hotel in Dubai, Slash sits alone. It's 80-odd degrees Fahrenheit outside and Duff McKagan is sprawled across a sun lounger by the pool. Matt Sorum mills around, laughing his cartoonish wheeze of a laugh and talking to photographer Ross Halfin. Dave Kushner - who arrived late the night before and stayed up for hours talking to his pregnant wife via Skype - is asleep. Scott Weiland is... um, actually, where the fuck is Scott Weiland?

Slash, meanwhile, sits alone. He opens a new packet of Gitanes, takes a call from the band's manager, then picks up a Les Paul and peels off some blues licks. But his heart's not in it. Today, Slash is distracted. It's Velvet Revolver's first gig in a month - and the first since Weiland's latest stint in rehab - and Slash has things on his mind. Things he can't talk about.

"When's this article gonna come out?" he asks later. "May?" He smiles. "Things should be very interesting by May."

"20 minutes to go and then Velvet Revolver will rock Dubai!" screams a voice over the PA. It's 7.40pm at the Dubai Desert Rocks festival and it's gone dark. Slash, Duff, Matt and Dave - who all got the bus over at 5.30pm - are sitting under strip lighting in a trailer backstage. Scott Weiland is... y'know, um... like, uh, seriously: where the fuck is Scott Weiland?

"15 minutes to go to Velvet Revolver!" Panic is setting in. People leave VR's trailer, tapping furiously on Blackberries. Mobile phones light up in the dark and their owners disappear between trailers to whisper urgently. The tour manager Pete stands with his arms folded facing the artists' carpark. Where. The fuck. Is he? The sound of Green Day's *Basket Case* pounds out from the stage.

At 7.48pm a silver car pulls up, someone shouts across the backstage area, "It's okay! It's okay!" and Scott Weiland walks from the car - skinny and



bearded, shades on, head down. If it looks like he goes in VR's trailer, then looks are deceiving. Sure, he goes in the same door – but where the rest of his band sit in a room to the right, Weiland turns left into the area which is his alone. Photographer Halfin, who knows both camps personally, is the only person to move between the two dressing rooms. Since landing in the Middle East the night before, none of the four musicians of Velvet Revolver have spoken to their singer.

“When they come out of their dressing room,” says Halfin, “we’ll walk with them to the stage, right?”

At 8.04pm, Matt, Dave, Duff and Slash emerge from the dressing room. There's a bit of awkward loitering and then a very weird sound. Weiland's assistant – known in the camp as Little Scott – comes out of the dressing room holding a ghetto blaster over his shoulder, and Weiland follows. The ghetto blaster is playing voice exercises – ‘Aahh-ah-ah-AH-ah-ah-aaaaah!’ – and Weiland walks, head held high, singing along. We're about a hundred metres from the stage when Halfin stops everyone. “Alright! Everyone stand against the wall!” he shouts, unhooking a camera from his shoulder.

“Ross!” says someone. “They were supposed to be onstage five minutes ago!”

“It’ll just take a second!” barks Halfin. “Scott – you stand there in the middle!”

Weiland does as he's asked. Maybe he already understands the significance.

The picture will be the last group shot ever taken of Velvet Revolver, MK 1.

Breakfast with Mr McKagan

We came to Dubai with nothing: no interviews arranged, no promises made. We ended up riding with the band to and from soundcheck and gig, interviewing Duff and Matt by the pool, having a post-gig drink with Slash (he had water, we had coffee), hanging out with Weiland and witnessing a band crumble before our eyes. The really weird thing? No one seemed that bothered.

A few weeks before we had put in a request for interview time with their UK PR, Duff Battye. Back then the official line was that the band would do this tour, then the members would work on various solo projects – Weiland uniting with Stone Temple Pilots for some summer dates, Duff McKagan hooking up with his buddies in previous side-project Loaded, Matt Sorum working on his Sorum-Noce clothes line and LA store – before getting back together to work on VR's third album. The unofficial word was that the band was coming apart at the seams.

An interview, we said, would be an ideal way for the guys to promote their solo stuff and stress that VR was still an ongoing project. Predictably our request was turned down. We weren't surprised. We would have turned us down too. We went to Dubai anyway.

The Dubai Desert Rocks festival is a rock and metal festival in its fifth year. Day one was full of Metal Hammer-friendly kid-metal. Day two had Marky Ramone, VR and Muse. The organisers helpfully booked us into the same hotel as the band.

On the first day, Halfin bumps into Slash and gets us invited to the soundcheck. At breakfast the next day we meet Duff McKagan. Relaxed, healthy and funny, he sits with us and tells us about how he's been rediscovering Led Zeppelin and been inspired to really master his instrument – to the extent that he's booked lessons from legendary Stax bass player Donald “Duck” Dunn. We explain to Duff that we'd really like to do a feature on the band, and that it could be for a cover. “We'd like to do a shoot,” we tell him. “Maybe out in the desert. What do you think? Just you, Slash and Scott?”

Duff chews on his omelette. “How about just me and Slash?” he says. “Cos we'll definitely be working together in the future.”

He sees our raised eyebrows. “At this point,” he says, “that's just for this table.”

Where's Weiland?

The soundcheck is between 12 and 1pm. Scott Weiland is not on the bus and does not join them later. Singer-less, the four musicians run through the hits, instrumentally and with Matt Sorum adding some vocals. They jam on a tune that isn't familiar – running through the intro (which has a Joy Division-like bass line) several times. “Yeah, that was a new jam,” Duff says later that afternoon. “Every time we sound check or rehearse, we write something new – a riff or something. So there's a lot of forward motion.

“Velvet Revolver will continue in one way or another,” he says. “When we started

people were like, ‘Oh, what are they gonna do? Get a singer and try to be a band? They're nothing without Guns N' Roses!’ We just put the blinders on and just went, ‘Fuck it’. Nothing's going to get in my way at this point.”

“We have been though a fucking shitload of stuff to get to this point,” says Matt Sorum. “We've seen other bands fall apart and we don't want that to happen. Especially the four guys: we've put too much time and energy into this. It's not just something we did to go out and make money – secretly trying to fucking cash in – that's bullshit. If Slash and Duff wanted to cash in they could call that fucking other guy [Axl], go and have lunch, kiss and make up and really cash in. I don't think this is ever about cashing in. We like playing rock'n'roll.”

Backstage at Brixton Academy two weeks later, Dave Kushner stresses how the band are writing, rehearsing and practising. “With all the turmoil that's been going on, the thing to do is the thing that you do innately – which is write and play music. So we've been sound-checking almost everyday and we've just been writing. This is the first tour where I've taken my guitar to my room with me every night and written songs and practised. We've kinda been on a big practice kick for the past few months – taking lessons. I took one from [former Marilyn Manson guitarist and session man] John 5 before we left. He's a great country guitar player and that's what I wanted to learn – chicken-picking and that kinda stuff. It was cool.”

Writing songs. Rehearsing. Practising. Taking lessons. This wasn't a band at the end of its rope – it was a band reinvigorated by the prospect of a new singer.

Feeding the troll

Scott Weiland hears voices. He thought he heard them in Manchester and he knows he heard them in Leeds. He doesn't know where they're coming from, but – each night onstage for the past few gigs – he's heard them. Distinctly.

He stops singing and there it is – another voice singing his vocal part. His vocal part. Somewhere along the line he decides that Matt Sorum – or possibly Matt's drum tech – is undermining him by singing along with his lead vocals. His relationship with Sorum is at an all time low. The drummer, Scott thinks, has some kind of problem with singers – always has, from Ian Astbury in The Cult to Axl in GN'R. He'd picked the wrong guy to fuck with this time.

In Glasgow on March 20, Scott hears someone else singing and turns to see Sorum's drum tech at the back of the stage with a microphone. He flips. Out of sight of the crowd there is a spot of argy-bargy. He gets back to the mic and tells the crowd that they're “watching something special – the last tour by Velvet Revolver” and after *Fall To Pieces*, leaves the stage.

Duff McKagan hadn't even heard Weiland's comment. “I don't wear in-ear monitors,” he says, “so I don't hear a lot of the shit that he says. But I knew something had happened – there was this like, ‘Eeeuuww’ and then boos – but I really didn't know what.”

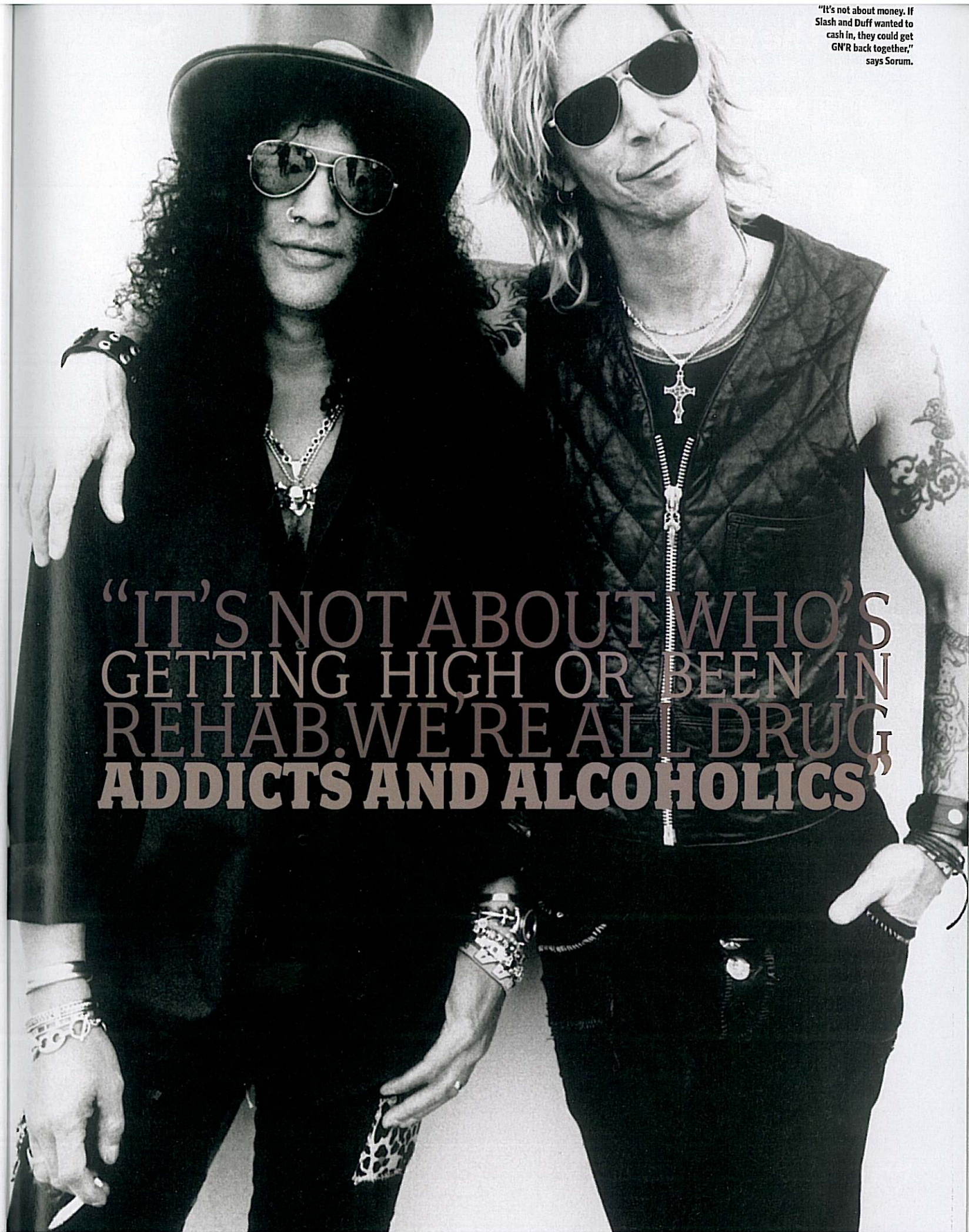
Backstage there is shouting and drama and people explaining to Weiland that, yeah, Matt's drum tech does have a mic – but only so that he can talk to the monitor engineer, standard practice on a tour of this size. No one can explain what Scott is hearing –

whether it's a technical fault, an echo or just his imagination – but it's not Matt or his tech. 15 minutes later, the gig continues.

The next day, Matt decides to do a bit of damage limitation by posting on his blog: “Being in a band is a lot like being in a relationship. Sometimes you just don't get along... Unfortunately, some people in this business don't realise how great of a life they have. Touring the world, meeting great people and fans all over the world. And just playing music for a living. I feel truly blessed. But sometimes the road can be draining for some, being away from home and family does grind on you sometimes, with all the travelling and different beds. Personally, I love this shit and sometimes can't believe I am so lucky to still be doing what I do for a living.

“Everybody could see who was unhappy last night but all I can say is ‘Let's keep the Rock alive, people!’ In this life you just pick up and keep moving. And don't ever let anybody stand in your way.”

In internet geek-speak, Sorum had ‘fed the troll’. Weiland's five year tenure with the band is punctuated by a series of web postings which would have earned him a reputation as a ‘flamer’ or ‘troll’ on any web forum. Back in April 2004 he posted a message to a *Maxim* journalist who'd made *Contraband* Album Of The Month (but compared Weiland to Axl by saying: “Rose was all manic energy and Weiland is more boozy charm”). “Let's meet up face-to-face and see just how ‘boozy’



“It's not about money. If Slash and Duff wanted to cash in, they could get GN'R back together,” says Sorum.

And the next VR singer is...

Potential replacements, with added comments by Duff McKagan.



CHESTER BENNINGTON?

Lenny Kravitz

For: A supermodel magnet; has mainstream appeal.
Against: Is he dangerous enough? Could give the band an 80s vibe.
Duff says: "That would be awesome wouldn't it? That's all I got to say about that."

Gary Cherone

For: Can sing a bit.
Against: Was unpopular with Van Halen; would make the band more of an 80s proposition; is back with Extreme.
Duff says: "Oh, I don't know much about that guy."

Justin Hawkins

For: Can write songs; can play key-tar; looks good on flying pair of gigantic boobies; needs job.
Against: Is too 'comedy rock'.
Duff says: "Oh yeah, I heard about that guy. Uuuh..."

Eric Dover

(former Slash's Snakepit frontman)
For: Familiar to Slash fans. Not a prima-donna.
Against: Not big enough; would be a step back for Slash.
Duff says: "I never really kinda got that guy."

Donovan Leitch

(Camp Freddy/Nancy Boy)
For: Superman good-looks; rock royalty (son of Donovan); cool.
Against: Could seem contrived, fake.
Duff says: "Oh, my good buddy Donovan. He is rock royalty..." Good looking too... "And a hell of a nice guy."

Chester Bennington

(Linkin Park)
For: Knows the band; can sing and

write songs; has that skinny cool thing Weiland had; sang *Paradise City* with Camp Freddy.
Against: Already has a job.
Duff says: "Oh, that'd be great." There's great YouTube footage of you guys doing *Paradise City* with him... "Aw - that was the first time I played that song since Axl, since the early days. God! He got up there and sang that song and I got chills, man!"

Almost anyone who's been in Camp Freddy

For: Camp Freddy's like one big audition for these guys. Front runners would include: Abby Gennet (of Slint - the only woman who could pull it off in our book), Brandon Boyd (Incubus), Brett Scallions (Fuel), Wes Scantlin (Puddle Of Mudd), Gavin Rossdale, J.S. Clayden (Pitchshifter), Perry Farrell, Robbie Williams. They could hire them all and have a travelling carnival.
Against: Robbie Williams is in that list.
Duff on Brett Scallions: "Yeah, he's awesome and he's a good guy. Actually I just talked to him yesterday but he was on his way to South America with the Doors."

Chris Cornell

For: Great voice; cool grunge credentials.
Against: Forging solo career. Just left another 'supergroup', Audioslave - people will question commitment.
Duff says: "Maybe... I... y'know..."

Ian Thornley

(Big Wreck)
For: Looks good, can sing, needs job, was mentioned in passing by Duff McKagan.

Against: Not a big hitter.

Duff says: Actually Duff didn't say anything. This guy is on the list because Duff emailed us later to ask us what we thought of him. We'd never heard of him til then.

Travis Meek

(Days Of The New)
For: Sober; has that grungey-thing; looks the part.
Against: Tried out last time around.
Duff says: "Oh, no, no, dude, that guy... Uh-uh. That dude is a handful. It's kind of like he's the fucking Prince of Brunei. I mean, they had a hit, right? But not like... Wow. No."

Royston Langdon
(formerly of Spacehog)

For: Rock royalty (married to Liv Tyler); has relatively clean sheet (Spacehog were never that successful).
Against: Spacehog were never that successful.
Duff says: "I like Royston." He looks good. "He's a good guy." You played with him before? "Have I? I have. Yeah." A Camp Freddy thing? "I dunno..."

Josh Todd

(Buckcherry)
For: Hot to trot; in the eyes of many,

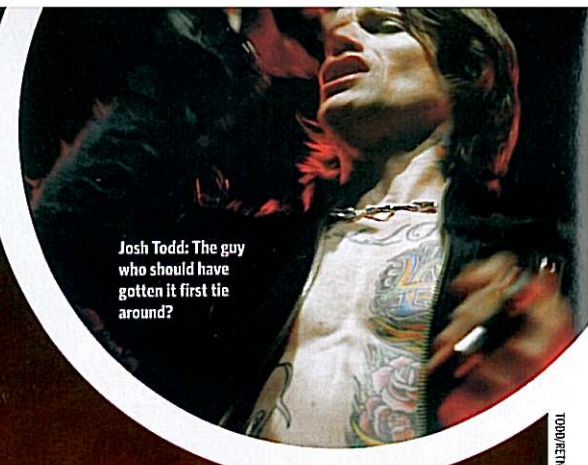
he's the guy who should have gotten it first time around.
Against: He's the guy who should have gotten it first time around, but didn't. Buckcherry have just had a hit album.
Duff says: "He's got a band." He does. A lot of people think that he should have got it first time around. "Yeah... It didn't work out that way."

Shooter Jennings

For: Would bring a gutsy, Southern rock vibe. Bob Seger-ish good-old-boy look. No pretensions.
Against: Girls wouldn't dig it.
Duff says: "Oh, old Shooter, yeah. He's great, actually. That's a good idea." He could give you guys a Southern rock thing? "Well, he does a Southern rock thing, but I've seen do like - his old band was straight up kinda rock. He's a talented guy man, he's pretty awesome. He would be good."

Sebastian Bach

For: Groundswell of good feeling towards him.
Against: Weiland's sarcastic "I think he'd be perfect" comment; could make it a retro 80s thing; good friends with Axl Rose.
Duff says: "It would be a different kind of band..."



Josh Todd: The guy who should have gotten it first time around?

TODD/MENK, LUNN/REXNA, POSTON/REX

ROCK ESSENTIALS

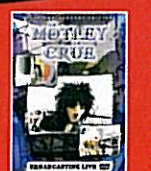


FRAZE GANG

Greg Fraser, former lead guitarist/songwriter of legendary 80s Canadian band Brighton Rock has teamed up with former bassist Stevie Skreebs to carry on where they left off - 80s party metal full of big choruses. Includes 'Jackhammer' mixed by Beau Hill (Ratt, Warrant).

SLAVES TO GRAVITY SCATTER THE CROW

"Chest beatingly huge... Anthem after anthem... If there's any justice, 'Scatter The Crow' will make Slaves To Gravity as big as the noise they create." KKKK - Kerrang!



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Also available: signed copies of BARE, the NEW solo CD by Wayne Hussey



I am in person," he flamed, "when I get 'manic' on your ass, motherfucker!" A month later he posted a message calling a writer from *Revolver* magazine a "fucking kiss-ass pussy sycophant bitch". In March 2006 he called Axl Rose a "fat, botox-faced, wig-wearin' fuck!" *Classic Rock*'s own Geoff Barton was pounced on after Weiland misunderstood a sentence in a feature in November 2004. Several rock stars use the internet as a way of giving fans the inside story - the Velvet Revolver frontman wields it like a big stick.

Scott read Sorum's comments and blew them out of all proportion. "First of all, the state of my family affairs is really none of [Matt's] business," he wrote to metal news site *Blabbermouth* the following day, "since he is too immature to have a real relationship, let alone children. So don't attempt to stand in a man's shoes when you haven't walked his path. Secondly, 'keeping rock 'n' roll alive?' I've made many attempts to remain cordial with the members of VR, but mainly, the likes of you. Funny though - this is your FIRST band, as opposed to being a hired gun. I've been making records (now on my ninth), which have sold over 35 million copies worldwide and have maintained a level of professionalism regardless of how many drugs I've ingested into my system. I have only cancelled one tour during the entire course of my 16-year run and that was the 'make-up' Australia tour. Now, shall I open that can of worms, Matthew? Release the Kraken? Serve... Volley! You cancelled the Aussie tour in the fall because you went to rehab, but I won't say why... We'll just let *Blabbermouth* find out for themselves.

"As for our fans - I will sweat, bruise, and bleed for you. And will continue to do so until the end of this tour. However, you deserve to hear Velvet Revolver

playing... not certain individuals singing along to get a muddled up sound. God forbid - could one imagine if I grabbed a guitar and started soloing along with Slash? That would never happen because I know my place. It's a shame... we were a gang. But ego and jealousy can get the better of anyone. I wish the best and plan to annihilate the stage in the last few shows."

Why he didn't just walk down the hall and shout it at his band-mate is anybody's guess. (Were there any fists thrown? "No," Duff told us a week after the split. "In a way, sometimes I wish there had been. Like, 'OK, c'mon - let's just fucking throwdown!' Cos that's cool too.") But Velvet Revolver are a 21st century rock band and this was a 21st century break-up: no fist-fights, just flame wars.

That they managed to keep it together for the remaining dates was the biggest miracle. On Easter Monday, the day before the first of two London gigs, Weiland met with *Classic Rock*'s Peter Makowski for an interview that showed his state of mind (published here for the first time on p42). The same day, Slash did interviews to promote his new Signature Gibson Les Paul. "In contrast to what Scott says," Slash told *Classic Rock*'s Jerry Ewing, "there will be a Velvet Revolver after this tour."

"With Scott singing?" asked Jerry.

"I have no comment on that," said Slash, chuckling.

At the final gig of the tour on April 1 in Amsterdam, at the exact moment that the band took to the stage they simultaneously released a statement: "Velvet Revolver founding members Slash, Duff McKagan, Matt Sorum and Dave Kushner announced today that they are parting ways with singer Scott Weiland," it said. "This band is all about its fans and its music and Scott Weiland isn't 100%



committed to either," said Slash. "Among other things, his increasingly erratic on-stage behavior and personal problems have forced us to move on."

To complete the bizarre 21st century nature of the split, Scott only found out via email when he got offstage.

It wasn't long until he was posting his side of the story: "After reading the comment by Duff, Matt, Dave and the illustrious 'Guitar Hero,' Saul Hudson, a.k.a. Slash," wrote Weiland the next day, "I find it humorous that the so-called four 'founding members' of Velvet Revolver, better known to themselves as 'The Project' before I officially named the band, would decide to move on without me after I had already claimed the group dead in the water on March 20 in Glasgow.

"In response to Slash's comment regarding my commitment, I have to say it is a blatant and tired excuse to cover up the truth. The truth of the matter is that the band had not gotten along on multiple levels for some time. On a musical level, there were moments of joy, inspiration, fun... at times. But let's not forget the multiple trips to rehab every member of the band had taken (with the exception of one member — no need to mention his name).

"Personally speaking, I choose to look forward to the future and performing with a group of friends I have known my entire life, people who have always had my back... As opposed to a handful of discontents who at one time used to call themselves a gang."

As for their search for a singer he added sarcastically: "Good hunting, lads — I think Sebastian Bach would be a fantastic choice."

The words "I had already claimed the group dead in the water on March 20 in Glasgow" (*ie* "You can't fire me — I quit!") said it all. In fact, his fate had already been decided two months before.

Behind the breakup

"I think the decision was really made back in January when we were doing the US tour," says Duff McKagan. "Things had been coming off the rails since last August, I'd say. Easily. And that's being polite."

It's April. He's been back home for a week. In that time Velvet Revolver have already been in the studio recording. Duff is calling from his home — finally ready and able to talk although keen to avoid getting into tit-for-tat style recriminations. He's been avoiding the internet since the Matt-Scott bust-up, aware that the messageboards will be crackling with name-calling and supposition. ("It's hard for me to read the internet because I know the people who post are, like, 14 years old, man," he says.) But he can guess what's being said.

"It's not about who's getting high or who's been in rehab, because we're all, y'know, alcoholics and drug addicts... So it's not about the drugs. Cos that part I can understand. I know how you think when you're high. Nobody wants to be high — maybe they want to be *high*, but nobody wants to be addicted. It's a horrible, crappy road and we in this band have been down it personally more than once, each person. So we understand that about each other."

It was also something the rest of the band realised and accepted about their singer from the very beginning. "You know what you're getting in to," says Duff. "There were a lot of other things, besides addiction, that played into this too. The addiction on top of it didn't help things. And not taking care of it. We've got each other's back when it comes to someone getting high — if you want help, man, we're there. You'll not find anybody more understanding and non-judgemental about that shit. But for this band to go and be healthy, we had no other choice. It was really a relief for me. I don't have anything personal against Scott."

A lot of people will wonder why you couldn't just talk about it — from what we saw and heard, you've been travelling separately from Scott, separate dressing rooms, not talking to each other... "Well, that didn't start because I decided not to talk to Scott," says Duff. "It just turned into that. Kinda silly. It started turning into that sometime last August. You try to be there for someone for so long and then eventually you go 'Ok, well, that's not gonna happen'. And, dude, I like to help people but if there's not a reciprocal move? I'm not going to do it anymore. That would be insane behaviour if I just kept doing it.

"We've tried everything. Sometimes there's certain people who've just gone too far and you can't fix it. And you've tried and tried and you're like, 'Oh wait. Shit. We can't do anything about this.' And that's when we decided 'We've got no choice here. We've got to move on'. We've got too much to offer to be held down."

In his interview with CR, Weiland mentions that he and Duff had "usually been close". "We've been close before," says Duff. "But that too had been... It was impossible to get close — to be bros with him — at the end. He demanded to travel separately, have his own dressing room, just kinda not be a part of the band..."

Because he sees himself as the star, not just a part of the band? "God, maybe. But you don't need to do that around us," says Duff.

He suggests the band were jealous of the attention he got as the frontman and 'star'. "No. It certainly didn't have anything to do with who's a bigger star," says Duff. "That's never been an issue for me. Shit, man, y'know, I got into music really for the love of music and never even really for getting pussy or any of that stuff. And definitely not for being on the cover of magazines and that kind of stuff — that was something we'd just never talk about: 'Oh, dude, you're getting more press than me!' That's embarrassing for me."

It's Been Emotional...

The highs and lows of Weiland's reign in VR Mk. I

March 11, 2003: Weiland turns up for his first rehearsals with the then-named 'The Project'. "Something happened immediately from the first song we did," enthuses Slash to VH-1 programme makers who filmed the whole process. "I'm a little concerned about his chemical intake," he adds.

March 24, 2003: Scott misses their only day of rehearsals before a showcase of the song *Set Me Free* for the producers of *The Hulk* movie. "We can't start out like this... Can we?" says Matt Sorum.

March 25, 2003: Scott is two and a half hours late for *Hulk* showcase. They still get the gig.

May 1, 2003: Scott tells the band he wants to go into rehab. "The main thing we're looking for is dependability and reliability," says Matt.

May 17, 2003: Weiland is arrested for possession of cocaine and heroin.

August 21, 2003: VR sign with RCA records

Oct 20, 2003: A Californian judge releases Weiland after being impressed by his dedication to staying clean — but warns him that if he tests positive again he may be forced to go into residential treatment.

Oct 27, 2003: On his 36th birthday Weiland crashes his BMW into a parked car, Los Angeles police claim. Though he allegedly tries to flee the scene, he is quickly apprehended by police and booked for suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Oct 30, 2003: Is ordered by the judge to go to detox and then rehab. He is granted permission to leave the residential facility for four hours a day over a 10-day period to finish the Velvet Revolver album

March 5, 2004: Judge refuses to grant Weiland leave from rehab to film video for VR's debut single, *Slither*.

March 12, 2004: Release of *Contraband*, VR's debut album, pushed back to June.

April 29, 2004: Weiland takes exception to the *Maxim* magazine reviewer who makes his advance copy of *Contraband* 'Album of the Month' but describes the singer as 'boozy'. "Let's meet up face-to-face and see just how 'boozy' I am in person — when I get 'manic' on your ass motherfucker!" he writes.

May 10, 2004: Calls a writer from *Revolver* magazine a "fucking kiss-ass pussy sycophant bitch," adding, "No more interviews, you're all a bunch of fucking kiss-ass pussy turncoats".

June, 2004: *Contraband* goes No. 1 on The Billboard 200 chart, selling over 250,000 copies, making it the best-selling debut for a new rock artist in the SoundScan era. It goes on to sell over 2 million copies in the US.

Aug, 2004: Weiland slams MTVnews.com for running a news story saying that a judge has issued a warrant for his arrest. "Are you so bored with my personal happiness that you hover like carrion lying in wait, meditating and

concocting a headline that you only hope will happen? Feed off of your own fat, fuckers!!! This goes for all media whores!!!!" he writes.

Sept 3, 2004: Weiland allegedly freaks out at a signing session at the Piccadilly Virgin Megastore after seeing a sticker on the CD of *Contraband* saying "Featuring members of Guns N' Roses," but no mention of Stone Temple Pilots. *The People* reports that Weiland demanded the sticker be peeled off all stock.

Oct 22, 2004: Weiland totally misconstrues a comment made by *Classic Rock*'s Geoff Barton as an insult and posts response: "Just when I thought it was safe to go back into the shark-infested waters of the once respected world of rock and roll journalism, I meet Jeffy... Where's that fucking fly swatter?"

Dec, 2004: Weiland tells an interviewer that being straight is 'closer to the edge' than being on drugs. "After a while, drugs are just like a big, wet blanket that sort of keeps you from feeling the raw emotion of the music. So in a sense, being clean is actually being closer to the edge."

June 2005: Weiland defends wearing his Nazi military hat by saying, "The Nazi SS hat that I wear in fact symbolizes the loss of democracy and the shift to totalitarianism... One could make an argument that indeed the government of the US is evolving into, or is already, a fascist police state, hiding under the guise of a republic." Phew. For a minute there we thought it was because he thought it looked cool.

July 12, 2005: Court dismisses drug charges against Weiland because of his commitment to rehabilitation.

Dec 12, 2005: No fights, arrests or nuttiness for six months and counting! News writers for Blabbermouth.net are despondent.

Dec 19, 2005: Weiland reveals that new VR 'concept' album will be called *Libertad*.

Feb 2, 2006: Weiland signs publishing deal to write his memoirs.

March 6, 2006: Axl Rose releases statement saying that Slash came to his house and bad-mouthed his VR colleagues, saying — among other things — that "Scott was a fraud".

March 10, 2006: Weiland responds with open letter to Axl: "Get in the ring. Go to the gym, motherfucker, or if you prefer, get a new wig, motherfucker. I think I'll resist the urge to 'stoop' to your level. Oh shit, here it comes, you fat, botox-faced, wig-wearin' fuck! O.K., I feel better now." Velvet Revolver/GN'R fansite messageboards across the world go into gleeful meltdown.

April 1, 2006: Rumours that Slash has left the band, possibly to go back to join GN'R are denied by the VR camp.

April 4, 2006: Stories emerge that VR are working with hip-hop producer Pharrell Williams on *Libertad*. The sound of old school metal fans sucking air through teeth puts the military on Defcon 1.

Weiland: never boring, we'll give him that.

July 25, 2006: News breaks that VR are working with Rick Rubin on new album. Old school metal fans exhale. No one mentions Run-DMC.

Dec, 2006: Sorum reveals that the band have 18 new songs and are now working with producer Brendan O'Brien. Scott says that he hasn't "been this excited about a rock record since 1993".

March 25, 2007: Weiland and wife Mary have domestic, trash hotel room. Hours later, Mary Weiland is arrested after allegedly setting fire to \$10,000 worth of Scott's clothes.

March 27, 2007: Mary releases statement blaming upset on "an imbalance in medications used to treat my bipolar disorder".

July 2007: *Libertad*, released. *Classic Rock*'s Mick Wall gives it 9/10.

Nov 16, 2007: Japanese immigration put the kibosh on VR tour when they realise that some of the band have — *aiiiiieeee!* — criminal records and drug histories. Even though they let the band tour there two years before.

Nov 21, 2007: Weiland arrested for Driving Under the Influence (DUI) after his 2006 Mercedes CLS collided with another car on an LA freeway. According to the Californian Highway Patrol, Weiland "exhibited signs of impairment." "The investigating officer administered a series of field sobriety tests to the driver [Weiland], which he was unable to satisfactorily perform," says the CHP arrest report. Weiland is arrested; declines invite to provide a blood or urine sample.

Nov 29, 2007: Australian tour postponed because of "health issues."

Jan 20, 2008: Weiland misses gig at the Sundance Film Festival. The band go on without him and literally ask the crowd if they want to have a go.

Jan 25, 2008: Slash (!) tells *Billboard* that the Stone Temple Pilots are reuniting.

February, 2008: Weiland checks into rehab.

March 5, 2008: Weiland pleads not guilty to driving under the influence of drugs with a prior conviction. If convicted, the 40-year-old frontman could face year in jail. VR management says that a breathalyzer test will prove his blood-alcohol level was "well within the legal limit."

March 20, 2008: Weiland tells Glasgow audience that they are watching the VR's last tour. Cue interweb nastiness between Matt Sorum and Scott.

March 31, 2008: *Billboard* reveals that STP will play a 50 date tour this summer.

April 1, 2008: VR play last date of tour in Amsterdam and announce that they are to continue without Scott Weiland. It's been emotional.



And there's speculation that he had a problem with Slash's status as guitar icon... "Slash is a hell of an icon, man, I'm telling you. It could be some of that. Ego's a fragile thing in a rock band... But none of us are solo artists – we're a band."

The Last Guitar Hero

Dubai, March 7. CR is in a car with Slash and Duff, headed back to the hotel. At a set of traffic lights near the venue, some kids in the car next to us notice who's in the front seat and start leaning out of their windows, shouting "Slash! Slash!" Our driver starts to roll down his window. Slash stops him: "We don't know them," he explains to the driver. "Keep on driving." The car drives alongside for a while, the kids waving frantically and shouting out of the window, their driver looking more at us than he is at the road. After a few minutes they take a left down a sliproad and into the night. "It's gotten worse recently," says Slash back at the hotel, about the fan worship. "I don't really know why."

He sits with mirrored shades on, his trademark custom-made hat on the table next to him, sucking on a cigarette and looking pretty much as he did 20 years ago. Scott Weiland may make petty remarks about being the face of computer game *Guitar Hero*, but if anyone deserves the title, he does. Over the last few years Slash has become some kind of torch bearer for 'real' rock'n'roll – the Last Guitar Hero – and more iconic than Weiland could ever hope to be.

In Dubai he's tense and it's obvious why. In conversation he despairs over the state of modern music but sees hope in the healthy state of heavy metal. "Heavy metal has been surviving like a fucking crocodile," he says. "It's great. I wish the singing would get better but the fucking bands are amazing. I just can't relate to the 'Rrrrrrrrrragh!' It's just not musical."

"I am a stickler for a good melody, a good song. I think it was Puff Daddy – P-Diddy or whatever he's called these days – who met Ray Charles. I was working with Ray Charles and he was telling me how he met this guy and they were talking about rap music and [Puff] explained to him about the beat and Ray said, 'So where is the melody?' Puff said, 'There is no melody'. And Ray said, 'How can you have music without melody?' That sort of goes to show where music has been going."

It reminds him of another good story: "At the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, I was wandering around backstage looking for a place I could get away with smoking and I met Keith Richards. [Some hip-hop guy was getting an award] and he said he was going upstairs to get a drink. He said: 'I'm here for the rock'n'roll not the hippity hoppity'. It was like sacrilege to him."

To a whole generation, Slash is their Keith Richards. As a huge rock fan himself, it's hard for him to appreciate that for others he's in that league. (Duff too. In Dubai, McKagan talked about coming to the Classic Rock Awards last year: "There was Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Lemmy, Alice Cooper... I was with my wife and we were just like, 'Wow!'" To a lot of people you're an icon just like those guys, commented *Classic Rock*. "Not just like those guys," he said, shaking his head).

"We were joking today about how there's loads of people who have never even been to a concert," says Slash, "and definitely not an Aerosmith concert or a Zeppelin concert or even a GN'R concert for that matter... The average person's knowledge of the history of music only really goes back to around the time that they were born. So the average music fan at the moment, their knowledge only goes back to literally 1993. If you are around 20 years old now, that's about it."

Think about how far away in time *Sgt Pepper* seemed in 1987 when *Appetite For Destruction* came out – there were 20 years between them. We're now 21 years on from *Appetite*: if you're teenager today, it's ancient history, populated with mythical characters. Like Slash.

Backstage at Desert Rocks, Ross Halfin takes Slash and Duff to the edges of the festival to shoot them for this feature. Next to the festival site is a huge building site. The security guards let us in with a smile. Small crowds of Arab workers stop to watch and nod smiling as Slash walks past. The Guitar Hero nods and smiles back. Even backstage in the VIP area he's mobbed by autograph hunters.

How Weiland dealt with that is anyone's guess. Duff McKagan, meanwhile, deals with it by telling us a joke. "So this Chinese woman goes to the bank to change some money," he says. "She gives the bank teller her yen and it works out at \$200. A week later she goes back and gives the guy the same amount of yen, but this time she only gets \$180. So she says to the teller, 'Last week, I get two hundred dollar for yen. Today I get hundred and eighty? Why it change?'"

"The bank teller shrugs: 'Fluctuation!'"

"So the little Chinese woman says, 'Hey – fluc you white people too!'"

Velvet Revolver Mk. II

Scott Weiland thinks you guys have demonised him – made him out to be the bad guy in this, just as you did with Axl. "Hmm. Yeah. Well, he's got a right to think what he thinks," says Duff. "Nobody in this band was demonising anybody – we were just trying to get through these gigs."

"I think Scott's a fucking awesome frontman – he's killer! That guy gets onstage and he's an entity – he's the real deal and at no point would I demonise him. That's pretty heavy. It's unfortunate what's happened to our band. It's unfortunate it had to go here. Nobody want to go through drama – especially me, dude."



Matt Sorum soundchecking in Dubai before it all kicks off.

How big a deal was cancelling the Australian tour? Scott suggests he got the blame for it, but that Matt was as much to blame – that it was originally cancelled cos Sorum had to go to rehab. "Nobody was blaming anything on anybody," says Duff. "At least I wasn't. I mean, both those guys at that point were fucking gone. At least Matt did go into rehab. Matt was ready to go. Matt was like, 'Look – I fucked up. I'm in rehab – I'll bring a guy with me, let's go'. He came up to rehearsal to rehearse. But both those guys were pretty gone. Scott got a DUI right then and if anybody should sit there and blame anybody it could be me going, 'Both you guys fucked up!' But I'm not going to cos I just don't feel that way."

"So we took care of it. We rescheduled with everyone's understanding – we all were part of the conversations about rescheduling. I mean, the fans were already gonna lose out because a lot of them applied from New Zealand and Tasmania, booking hotels and shit, so we were trying to repair some damage."

In January, came the news that Scott was reuniting with Stone Temple Pilots – and that the tour would take up most of 2008. Sorum says Weiland just told him in passing in his dressing room. With the band eager to record the new album, it didn't fit the schedule – and hadn't been discussed. It was the last straw.

Weiland says you should reform GN'R – that 'the pens were ready to sign', the contracts on the table... "I know he was really paranoid about that and we had to allay his fears at one point, when we were writing for *Libertad*," says Duff. "He got wind that our manager at that point had been talking to Axl about bringing Axl over to what was our management company back then. And Scott freaked out that we were getting GN'R back together and we weren't going to make the second record. I don't know where it came from – there was no contract on the table or pens ready to sign... Maybe now he's convinced himself that's what happened."

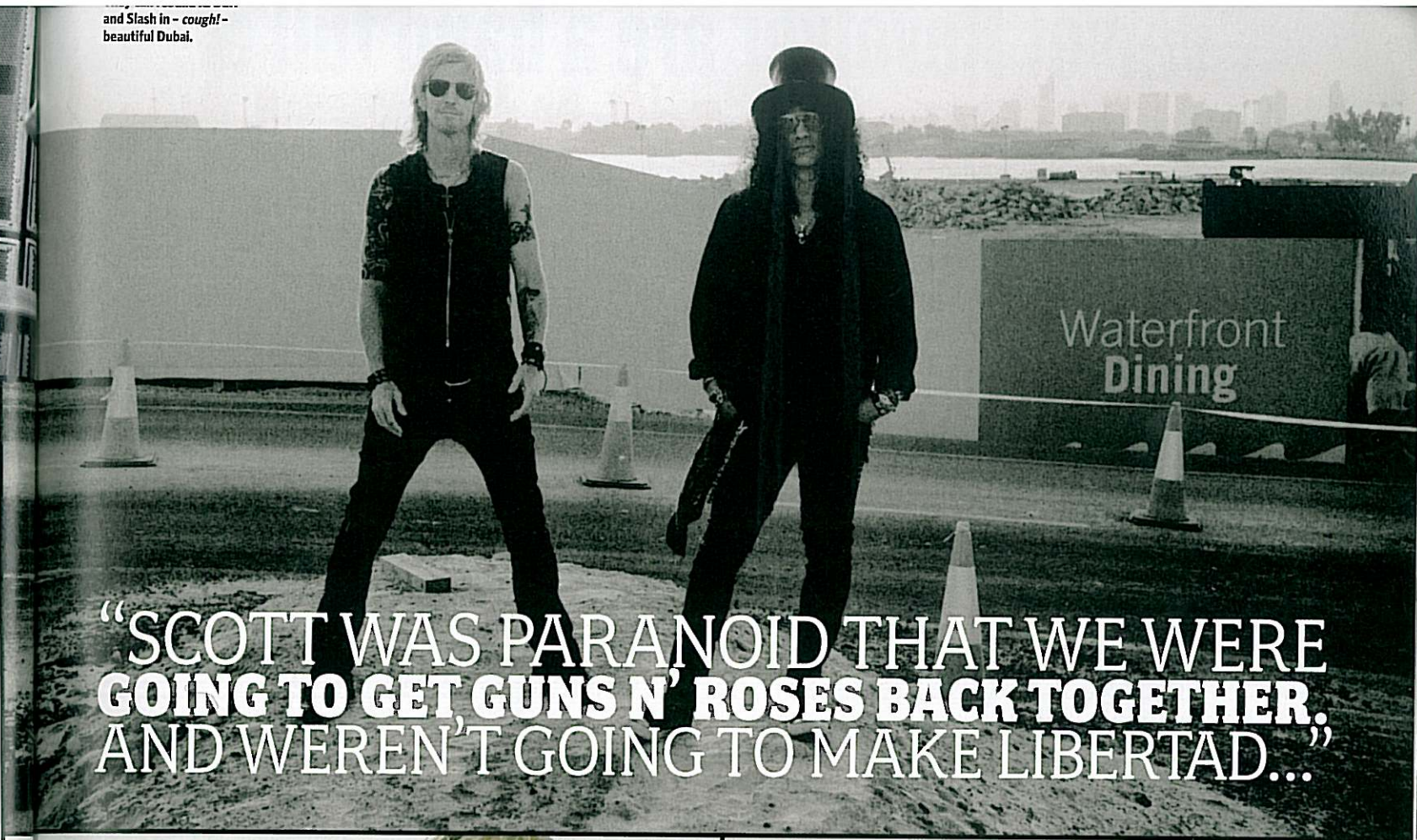
As we're talking, Duff gets a text from an A-list rock star. "He says, 'Hey bro – heard about the Scott thing. Good move! Hope you guys are good – if you ever need anything, don't hesitate to ask.'"

Have you had a lot of that? Was it like when you dump a girlfriend and suddenly your friends say, 'Y'know what? I always hated her?' Duff laughs: "I got some of those, yeah. But a lot of them have been along the way. Peers of ours, people who've been out on the road with us or just been around, have been like, 'What the fuck? You guys don't deserve this shit!'"

"One thing I've learned," he says, "is you can never predict what's gonna happen. What's gonna happen next year? Fucked if I know. But I always try to point myself in the right direction and things always end up in the right place. So we're tracking some new stuff and looking forward to finding a new guy and opening another chapter. Shit – it's not my first time through adversity. It's part of rock'n'roll, I guess. Everybody wishes they were in the Stones where it's the same guys, but that's not the cards I was dealt. So we're on to our next chapter, man, and it's a good chapter and I look forward to you guys being there. ☒"



The scene in the dressing room to the right...



“SCOTT WAS PARANOID THAT WE WERE GOING TO GET GUNS N’ ROSES BACK TOGETHER. AND WEREN’T GOING TO MAKE LIBERTAD...”



Duff: "I got into this for the love of music, not even for pussy or anything like that."



...And in the room to the left.



"Scott's a fucking awesome frontman – he's killer!" says Duff.

Velvet Revolver are a band full of junkies and fucking tramps who are trying to pretend they're fucking St. Francis!"

At least that's what SCOTT WEILAND says. In a world exclusive, the former Velvet Revolver singer gives *Classic Rock* his side of the story, just days before he was sacked from the band.

WORDS: PETER MAKOWSKI PHOTOGRAPHY: ROSS HALFIN

"I guess the problem at the moment is that I have some great things ahead of me and I'm in a band that I'm not getting along with who are junkies and fucking tramps and are trying to pretend they are fucking St. Francis!"

Scott Weiland is, to use an American colloquialism, pissed. It's Easter Monday, the day before Velvet Revolver's first night at London's Brixton Academy, and Weiland's relationship with the band is in meltdown. Right now he's aggrieved because he claims the management have confiscated his passport to prevent him absconding before the end of the tour. But he is also very optimistic about future prospects, including a reunited Stone Temple Pilots tour, a solo double album and a biography – all happening this year.

Wearing a skinny black suit and Wayfarer shades, he looks like a hybrid of Bob Dylan and John Cooper Clarke – the epitome of grunge chic. Still very raw and emotional from a recent and much-publicised stint in rehab, in this interview – a week before his sacking from the band – he speaks openly and uncensored about his grievances with Velvet Revolver, the tragic death of his brother Michael, his ongoing battles with addiction and the re-formation of Stone Temple Pilots.

What's your take on the Velvet Revolver situation?

There's a lot of baggage that comes with the band, and a lot of displaced anger. Y'know, when I first joined Velvet Revolver I already had issues regarding the politics of a rock'n'roll band. When you're the frontman and the person who writes the majority of the music – all the melodies, all the lyrics – the person who comes up with all the creative ideas – video ideas, concepts for covers, that sort of thing – eventually other band members start looking at you.

Initially you're the asset, especially in the first couple of years. You're the one who has to give all the interviews – when times are great and when times are not so great. So suddenly people are saying: "Why is he getting all the attention?" Well, sometimes none of the other guys want the attention. Well, they want the attention but they don't want any of the responsibility that comes with it. Which is one of the issues I brought with me from STP [Stone Temple Pilots]. The problem with STP – which leads into the Velvet Revolver problem – was that we were best friends for a long time. We grew up together as kids. I was 19 when I formed the band with Robert [DeLeo, bass] and I knew him when I was 16. It started out, like every band does, as a gang. And it really never was a case of me trying to jump out and seize the spotlight, because I was really conflicted about the whole thing.

I don't mind doing photo shoots, and I don't mind doing an interview if it's an important interview. Talking to *Classic Rock* – that's an important thing. It's a respected, legendary magazine. I'm not one of those people who are into saturating the media. If you have an important thing to say, then say it.

But along the way with STP our communication broke down. It was this great band with this great chemistry. We were not only great songwriters together, it was

based on camaraderie, experience, the friendship I had with Robert. All this ended up breaking down because of resentment we never spoke about. It ended up with Dean [DeLeo, guitar] and I having fist fights.

So there was this period of time before Velvet Revolver that I really didn't want to play in a rock band again. I was knee-deep in recording my solo record. I was in the process of putting together my record company and I was producing other bands. I co-produced two of the Limp Bizkit records. Not my favourite band by any stretch of the imagination, but it definitely put me on the map as a producer. I also had kids and didn't want to spend the rest of my life on the road.

But those guys [Slash, Duff, Matt Sorum and Dave Kushner] were looking at a bunch of singers and doing a movie. They were sending me CDs of songs, and eventually I heard some stuff that I found intriguing and I started to get to know them a little bit. I felt a kinship with them in the beginning because they had gone through some shit with their previous band.

From the outside you and those guys getting together looked like two people coming out of horrendous divorces: relating to each other's experience, but also having the baggage that comes with that experience.

Definitely. But it was almost like coming together off a rebound. At first it was very exciting and we did jive. We had the same common interests. Duff and I shared a lot of the same musical interests with punk rock. Matt and I shared an interest in experimental music. Dave and I had known each other from back in the days of playing clubs in Hollywood. And then you had Slash and I who were – and I don't want to come over as self-serving – two iconic figures, which the media tried to turn into a Mick/Keef kind of thing. We did have that gang-type camaraderie at first. At the same time, I was in the worst period of my drug addiction I'd ever gone through.

Was Slash messed up too?

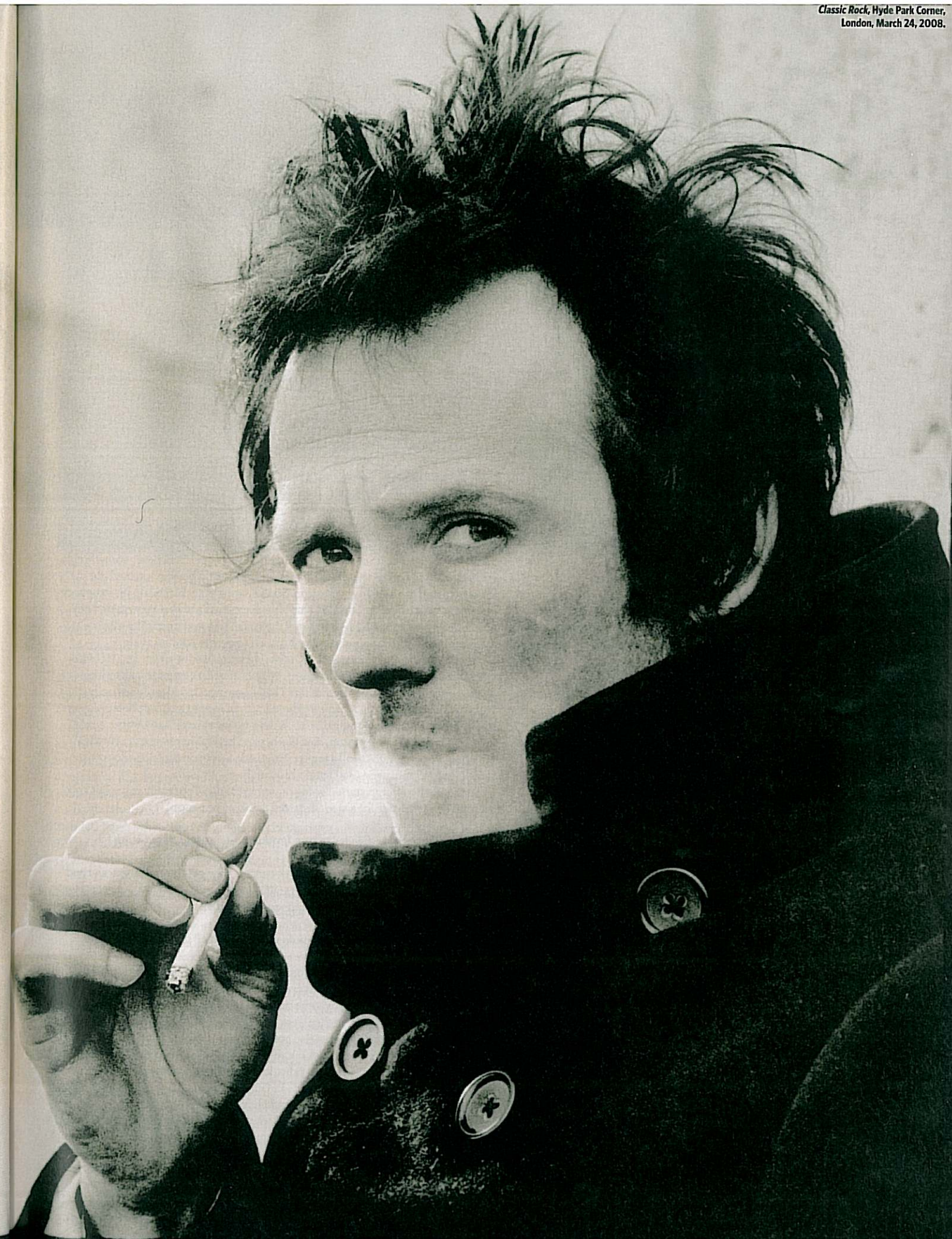
Not at that time. He was just drinking a lot. He hadn't done drugs in a few years. He seemed pretty cool at the time. Duff had been sober for a long time and Matt had been sober for five-and-a-half years. Dave, of course, was as solid as a rock.

So VR was a musical thing that looked like it could be promising but it also looked like it could be a life-raft. These were guys that had walked the same streets that I'd walked and in the same shoes. They were totally supportive and non-judgemental.

In the last couple of years in STP the guys had become very judgemental. And, to sort of jump ahead a little, ironically Dean [DeLeo] ended up getting sober a couple of years later and came to me and said: "Listen, man. I need to make amends to you. I was a horrible hypocrite. I was strung out too."

You told me in our last interview [CR107] that you were getting the brunt of STP's criticism, while Dean was getting wasted at home.

Yeah. There were some tours where we would be smoking crack and





“VR management threatened to arrest me. What is this, a Mormon Tabernacle choir?!”

heroin together. And then the next tour I would say: “Alright, let’s get on with it.” And he’d say: “What are you talking about, man? Get your shit together!” But he made amends to me. And I was shocked because he had gone to rehab and he’s been clean for some time now.

But going back to Velvet Revolver, at the time it seemed like a completely different situation to STP. It felt like the most non-judgemental situation, because the first six months was like a process of me getting clean. The first thing to go was the heroin, then the cocaine and then the pills. Then I got into treatment and I got clean. I was clean and sober for two years and then I started drinking. And that all seemed cool for about a year, but then it started escalating. During that time is when the guys started falling off the wagon. Matt relapsed and went into treatment, then Duff relapsed and went into treatment, and then Slash had his situation. So everybody in the band ended up falling off, except for Dave, of course. At that time I was maintaining my problem in a sane way and I really didn’t fall off intensely until my brother died.

I was going to bring that up. It seemed a too little too current the last time we spoke [CR107], as you had been to his funeral just a week before.

He was a great guy. Very smart, very well read, a great writer. He was very loving, a great dad. He unfortunately didn’t love himself as much as he loved other people.

There were years where he and I were just ripping and roaring together, and then unfortunately we were never clean at

the same time. I was loaded, he was clean; he was loaded, I was clean. We could never be on the same page, on the same schedule, to support each other.

Did you write the song For A Brother, on VR’s Libertad, before or after he died? I wrote it for him when... It’s the most fucked-up story. He had a custody date in court. There was a restraining order against him and he was going to be able to see his kids and have visitation again, which would lead up to partial custody. We’d been getting along the best we had in years; he spent Christmas with me. Two days before the court date he did the same thing he always does: whenever something good is going to happen he shot himself in the foot. And he went out and got loaded and got arrested for possession. So that completely fucked up his situation. He turned up at court and told his wife what happened and that he wouldn’t be able to see his girls for a while and to tell them that he loved them. She told me afterwards that she had a feeling that she wasn’t going to see him again.

I was so angry when I heard about it that I never called him. I felt I had to wait a week before I called him, to let it sink in. So I never had a chance to talk to him again. I got a call when they found him. I had to go over and identify his body. Nobody knows for sure if it was intentional. When I got to his place he was laying on his bed with his sheets pulled up to his chest. There weren’t any works nearby. I feel that he just sort of gave up, died of a broken heart. There were drugs in his system but not enough to kill a junkie. There was a note on his fridge door that said: ‘Live for Sophia and Claudette’ – his daughters.

So that’s when things started going downhill for me. The family came out and we kind of had a wake for a week. I started drinking non-stop.

It’s strange that you responded to your brother’s relapse and tragic death by relapsing yourself.

Exactly! It was a bad year. My mother got cancer. They got the cancer but she had to go through radiation therapy. My grandfather got really sick with heart disease and emphysema. A lot of bad stuff happened that year.

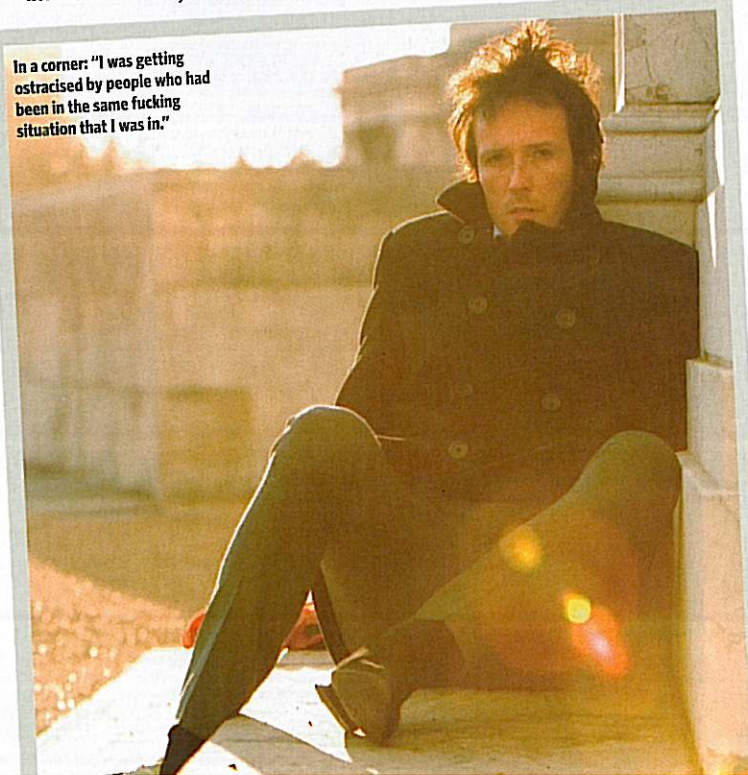
You also split up with your wife. How do you deal with all that? Where does all the stress go?

How did I deal with it? It was even more confusing. Because in the band I was playing with, until then we were covering each other’s backs and then suddenly it all started evaporating. Suddenly these guys who had all fallen apart themselves became extremely judgemental. When they went through their shit I was the last person that would be judgemental after what I had gone through in my life.

The relationship I had with Matt became horrendous. He and I had come close to fist-fights so many times that it’s ridiculous. He has an attitude with lead singers. It’s a problem he had before Revolver – in Guns N’ Roses and The Cult. And, who knows, maybe even before that. Slash and I have always been able to maintain, except on a few occasions, a professional relationship. Duff and I have usually been close. Then everything started to erode. I couldn’t believe I was in this situation where I was getting ostracised by people who had been in the same fucking situation that I was in.

So while all this was going on I had been talking to the guys in STP and we said: “Let’s get back together. This story’s not over.” I feel like we have the best shit ahead of us. I definitely didn’t want to put Velvet Revolver to bed. I also don’t believe in overstaying your welcome when you are touring a dead album.

In a corner: “I was getting ostracised by people who had been in the same fucking situation that I was in.”



almost happened. I’d pay to see that.”

We toured our first record [Contraband, 2004] for a long time because it sold three-and-a-half million copies. But when you have an album that didn’t do that well, you don’t tour it for over a year. You take a break; you wait for the songs to happen. Like Keith Richards said: “You don’t fucking labour over songs.”

So the whole thing with STP doing a tour and some festivals was a perfect window of opportunity, while the rest of the band could have been taking some time off, working on some song ideas of their own. And then when I was done Velvet Revolver could get back together.

Right now it’s like a relationship that’s dead in the water, where you need space to figure out if it’s important enough to last. The band need time out to sit back and let the creative juices flow, and also time away to realise what everyone’s part is in why things have gotten to the point that they’re at. Now, I’m not saying that I’m innocent in this, but everybody’s at this place where the fucking finger is getting pointed and they’re all pointing the finger at me. When you think about it, isn’t it ironic that the band is regurgitating the same story that they did with Axl Rose in their last band, where the lead singer was being demonised? Originally I thought: “What a troll he must have been. What an evil man.” But you know what? I have to say that I have an entirely different opinion of him today.

That’s a turnaround. Last year you verbally laid into him in a very public manner.

But y’know what? That was a long time ago and I’d heard a lot of stories. But there are two sides to every story, and having been in this band I actually feel for the guy and understand him a whole lot more.

Is it true that VR’s Australian tour was cancelled because you relapsed and the band and management insisted you went back into rehab before going on the road?

Oh, that’s a bunch of bullshit! There’s absolutely zero truth in that. The band had nothing to do with me going into rehab at all. I never even had a conversation with them about it. I wasn’t even speaking to them at the time. As a matter of fact they didn’t even know that I was going until the night of the show.

Did you do that impulsively?

I was talking to my manager – who is not their manager – and was trying to get a bed at this place. The only person who had an idea that I was going was Matt, cos he went to the same place when the original tour got cancelled. What happened then was I went to dry out for three days at a place my shrink has, because I was drinking a lot. We were supposed to leave for Australia, but Matt came to rehearsals and was so fucked up that the band sent him back to rehab. That’s the reason the first tour of Australia got cancelled. A tour gets cancelled, and regardless of what Matt’s offences were no one pays attention to that because, to be quite honest, no one really gives a shit.

A couple of months later I was saying to my manager: “I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I think I want to go back into rehab again.” I was looking for a place by my house but the prices had changed from five years ago. So Matt directed me to a place in Orange County. It’s fucking ironic that the band says they asked me to go, because I tried to stop the tour earlier and go. So eventually I said: “Fuck it! Book me a bed and after the gig I’m going.” So I packed a bag, did the gig and split off without them even knowing. So the last couple of shows [in the US] we didn’t do. But y’know what? It was more important that I went, because I was in a miserable place. It was the first time in years that I went to a rehab place because I wanted to.

Coming out rehab this time and going straight on tour must have been quite a shock to the system. You must be in quite a raw and vulnerable place.

Yeah, but it’s not like the first time I’ve done it. It’s what my life is, really. But it has changed my philosophy to the concept of what Velvet Revolver is about. With this band everything is about touring. I think by this time we should have made three albums. But we’ve spent nearly the entire life of this band on the road and I’ve missed a lot of things in my children’s life because of it. At this point I prefer recording. At least it gives you something a little more thrilling to do while you are touring. Something more challenging than playing *It’s So Easy/Sex Type Thing* every night.

I think the emotional let-down was that we achieved something special. We pushed the envelope and created something unique and then blew it. The initial goal was to tour our albums and not fall back on our old catalogue from our respective past. What ended up happening was exactly the opposite. We ended up falling back on the old material because there’s not enough confidence in what this band is about. It seemed to be more important to play the old rock stuff than build up a legacy with the new band. And it just became not fun. I think I have a lot more to say musically.

There have been rumours on the net that during the last shows you’re going to destroy the stage or just split prematurely.

Oh, I can’t do that, because the management have threatened to arrest me. How do you figure that one? What is this, a fucking Mormon Tabernacle Choir?!

Wouldn’t an alternative to this heated situation be that you all cool off, do your separate projects and then regroup and see how the land lies?

I think they should get Guns N’ Roses back together, to tell you the truth. I think that would be the greatest thing that they could do. I think the world would be very happy. If they could stop talking trash about Axl in the press. It almost happened. The pens were ready to sign. With the *Greatest Hits* there was a possibility but there was too much stuff being said. But it was a close call. I would love to see that happen, as a Guns N’ Roses fan. I’d pay to see it. X