

# ★ CLASSIC ★ ROCK

HIGH VOLTAGE ⚡ ROCK'N'ROLL



## SLASH & FRIENDS

AMERICAN IDOL. FERGIE.  
ROCK'N'F\*\*KIN'ROLL.





His mother died. His band split. He was called a 'sell-out' and 'a cancer'. And through it all he emerged with the decade's first great rock album...

# WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS ➔

WORDS: SCOTT ROWLEY ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS: PETER MAKOWSKI PORTRAITS: ROSS HALFIN

## R&F'N'R

**R**&F'N'R. Apart from his name, they're the only other letters on the cover of Slash's debut solo album. R&F'N'R. Rock'n'fuck'n'roll. In a hundred years' time, when scientists slice him open to find out what unique set of genetics conspired to give us Saul Hudson, as they wash off blood thick with the tar of a million Marlboros, laced with the remnants of thousands of pints of Guinness and Jack Daniel's, next to bone marrow made from the finest black Moroccan hashish, they'll see those letters imprinted through his bones like a stick of rock: R&F'N'R.

Even when compared to his friends Keith Richards and Lemmy Kilmister, Slash's rock'n'roll credentials are solid. He's been called The Last Guitar Hero – and thanks to a video game called *Guitar Hero* became the guitar-playing icon of a whole new generation. He wears denim and leather, a top hat and mirrored

sunglasses (indoors), has piercings and tattoos and a well-chronicled history of hellraising, drug-abusing, bourbon-chugging and skirt-chasing. He's friends with Ronnie and Keef, Lemmy and Iggy. He likes Jimi Hendrix, AC/DC, Led Zeppelin and Aerosmith... So why, Slash, do people always seem worried that you're going to 'sell out'? Because of those collaborations with non-rock artists like Michael Jackson, Chic and Stevie Wonder?

"I'm a musician first and foremost," says Slash with a shrug, "and I have a huge respect for other players and artists. When I was in Guns N' Roses it was nice to break out for a second – Guns didn't work enough. Towards the end, anyway. So I started playing with all these different cats and it was really good for me cos it's made me a lot better player. I don't want to be pigeon-holed as a guy that can only play one kind of rock'n'roll."

But maybe that's it: people like you as a rock'n'roll guy and they're worried that your new album might not be rock'n'roll at all – that with guests like Fergie from Black Eyed Peas and Pussycat Doll Nicole Scherzinger it might be R'n'B, hip-hop or pop... "That's good," he smiles. "Keep 'em guessing. It's actually a very raw rock'n'roll record. And the Fergie song will blow people's minds cos it's a rock'n'roll song, it's not a pop song."

Carlos Santana's *Supernatural* had guest singers and musicians from the world of rock and R'n'B and it went to No.1 in the UK and 15 times platinum in the USA. "Yeah," he grins. "This record's NOTHING like that though!"





**A**nyone worried that the new, eponymously titled, album from Slash (and an enormous cast of musicians including rock royalty, pop divas, GN'R alumni and some of the hottest names in rock right now) could sacrifice some of the man's rock'n'roll spirit for the bland mainstream sheen of Santana's comeback album, needn't worry. This is, after all, Mr R&F'N'R.

*Slash*, the album, first became a part of *Classic Rock's* world when the magazine's publisher Chris Ingham heard rough mixes of tracks last summer and came into our office raving about a Cypress Hill/Fergie take on *Paradise City* and a Zeppelin-esque epic recorded with Andrew Stockdale of Wolfmother. He was so convinced by what he heard he immediately set about seeing if *Classic Rock* could help release the record – the result is a unique deal that sees CR release a special edition of the album on April 7,

a month before its traditional release on Roadrunner on May 10, complete with two bonus tracks, 132-page magazine, poster, patch – plus exclusive Slash goodies depending on where you buy it.

It's a gamble to get into bed with an artist when you've only heard two songs. But it looks to have paid off. Yeah, we're biased, but *Slash*, as you'll find out, is the first great rock record of the decade – a swaggering mix of classic songwriting, rock'n'roll attitude, heavy metal thunder, punk sneer and bluesy raunch that is set to dominate the playlists of Planet Rock ➤

**“Slash is one of the last real guitar gunslingers – in the same tradition as a Jimmy Page or Jeff Beck. There are very few in his generation.”** – Alice Cooper



## TRACK BY TRACK

**Ozzy Osbourne on *Crucify The Dead***

Ozzy: “I helped write the lyrics and melody for the song with my producer. It's kind of about what I think happened to Guns N' Roses. I often say to Slash, ‘Y'know what? One day you guys are going to wake up and go, ‘What the fuck did we have and why did we blow it?’ The song's what I'd be singing to Axl if I was Slash, y'know: ‘They can't crucify you when you're dead.’”





and Rock Radio over the next few months – and, if there's any justice, enliven the playlists of Radio 1 and 2 as well.

Don't just take our word for it. "I think Slash is one of the last real guitar gunslingers," says Alice Cooper, "in the same tradition as Jimmy Page or Jeff Beck. There are very few in this generation. There's Steve Vai, Satriani, Slash and Joe Perry. And Slash is one of those guys that never lets his image down. He rocks it every time he gets up and plays. He plays it like he means it."

Ozzy Osbourne has seen the guitarist go through some changes over time. "I met him when I was on a tour fucking years ago," says Ozzy, "and he came down with the old drummer from Guns N' Roses – cos they were still with Guns then – and they were both fucked out of their faces! But he's changed. I don't drink, he doesn't drink, we don't do drugs any more. And I like him a lot: he's a good guy. A very good guy."

To Chris Cornelli, if Slash has changed, he's at least remained consistent. "I met Slash in 1992," he says, "when GN'R took Soundgarden on tour. He was extremely gracious and always very supportive. Often when you tour with a band that are that successful they treat you like shit. Slash was always a very consistent and amiable person and he is now."

"And I will say this – and I don't mean this as a sleight to him, it's actually a compliment – Slash is the most drunk guitarist I have ever seen play well on stage. I was never able to be that trashed and that good at the same time. That's a part of his consistency: he doesn't drink now and he's still great. That dedication to music is what drives his character."

The idea for a solo album with guest singers came to the guitarist somewhere on the road – on a tour Velvet Revolver did with Alice In Chains in August 2007. "I don't think I really focussed on the whole singer project,"

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**"I mean this as a compliment: Slash is the most drunk guitarist I have ever seen play well. I was never able to be that trashed and that good at the same time..."** – Chris Cornelli

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Slash shot exclusively for *Classic Rock*, LA, late 2009.



NEIL ZLOTOWER



## TRACK BY TRACK

Alice Cooper on *Baby Can't Drive*

Alice: "We wanted to do this as a duet and I once said that I was surprised when I heard Nicole sing the national anthem. So Slash said 'What about Nicole?' Some of those bands are manufactured but that girl became the rock chick of all time on this song. The diva game is so over: everybody hates the divas but everybody loves a rock chick."

he says, "but I know I had it in the back of my mind cos I mentioned it in the book [his autobiography] and I wrote that back when we were on tour with Alice In Chains. When Scott [Weiland] first started to go off the rails..."

Were any of the songs on the album originally intended for VR? "Two of the songs I actually wrote in the early Velvet Revolver days," he says. "The main riff for *We're All Gonna Die*, the Iggy Pop song, and also the riff for *Ghost*, the Ian Astbury song. Those were the two songs I got blown off in Velvet Revolver by Scott or Matt but I thought, 'Those are great songs'. Usually I let old stuff go but those two I kept in my pocket."

"The Andrew Stockdale song was a riff that I started writing when I was in the UK with Velvet Revolver [on their last tour, March 2008]. And

the song with Myles Kennedy I wrote about that same time. There were two or three riffs that started around then."

Did this burst of writing come because he felt liberated by the fact that VR was coming to an end? Because he was sober? "I just knew I needed to do something that I was in control of. I don't necessarily know if being sober had anything to do with it, but I couldn't have done this any time sooner – it might have been a good idea two or three years ago, but it just never would have happened. Whether it has anything to do with being sober I don't know – but I needed a release. I needed to do something without having to argue with a bunch of people. And it started out just as a fun project, and then it started

really coming together and became something more serious."

What he was putting together was nothing less than some of the most notorious names in rock on one record: Lemmy, Flea and Duff on bass, Dave Grohl and Steven Adler on drums, Iggy, Ozzy and Alice on vocals...

"I got everything done really fast, you'd be amazed," he enthuses. "The first track I did was with Iggy Pop – it set the tone for the whole record – and by July 2009 I had everything on the record done except for a few songs. And then everything just went to a crawl to get these few songs done, just because of schedules and what not. I had to wait for Duff and Dave Grohl until they came back from wherever they were. And then I needed a girl voice for this Alice Cooper song, and I had this idea to turn the lyric into something tongue-in-cheek, and Nicole [Scherzinger]'s name came up – and so I had to wait for her to come in. And then people heard I was working with Nicole and started tripping out..."

There he was, in the midst of putting together an album featuring Lemmy, Ian Astbury, Izzy Stradlin and Flea, and suddenly the web was buzzing with stories about Slash's 'pop' album, about him "pissing on his legacy", echoing an attack by Axl Rose in February 2009, in which he had called his former bandmate "a whore for the limelight" among other things.

Slash, in typical 'like-I-could-give-a-fuck' fashion, responded by appearing as a mentor on *American Idol*. (I s'pose it would have been more rock'n'roll to stay home Pro-Tooling guitar tracks for 14 years, yeah?)

Slash: "At some point, someone said, 'You've got to check out this guy who's on *American Idol*'. So I casually watched it – my wife TiVo's it – and this guy Adam [Lambert] and this girl Allison [Iraheta] were the first people that I'd ever seen on *American Idol* that I thought were inspirational."

He called a friend who worked on the show to bag some tickets and found

himself being offered a 'mentor' post. "I said, 'Nah, I can't do that.' But they really were persistent... So I took the hit on the chin. And the only reason I did it was so that I could see Adam Lambert sing in person. He's amazing."

People flipped – just like they did later in the season when Kiss appeared on the show. We never saw Slash, but Kiss were easily the most exciting thing ever seen on any of these talent shows: all that insincere emoting broken by some real rock'n'roll theatre – and seen by millions. Surely a good thing?

"The thing is to try and break the mould," agrees Slash. "Cos you've got to understand: it's the biggest watched show in the US. So I was like, 'We've got to try and make it so that cooler kind of styles become a part of that'. Because it's not going anywhere."

"A lot of people gave me flak for doing it, y'know, 'conforming to the fucking corporate, commercial' whatever – but I think it was an okay call because it kind of changed the dynamic of what people expect of *American Idol*."

**T**hen there was the re-recording of *Paradise City* with Cypress Hill and Fergie. Deliberately downplayed – it was the b-side of a Japan-only single and will only be officially available in the UK as a bonus track on the *Classic Rock* version of the album – it nevertheless sent the self-appointed online High Court of Heavy Metal (you know: all those big brave forum philosophers with names like *Wankstain666* and *CrispyKumSack2112*) into meltdown. Here, they argued, was a GN'R classic, one of the sacred texts of LA glam metal, being – shock, horror! – messed with by a (gasp!) non-Aryan rap group and (ulp!) a girl! (Yeah, a girl! A real live one! With, like, tits and everything!)

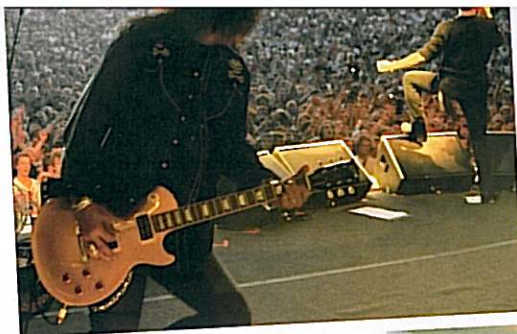
"I've been playing *Paradise City* with Cypress Hill around LA at various gigs since 2004," says Slash. "Actually when Velvet Revolver first got together – when it was the guys from Buckcherry, Duff, Matt and myself – we did this fundraiser for Randy Castillo and that was the first time we did *Paradise City* with Cypress Hill. I always said one of these days we should record it. So there was no way doing this record that I wasn't going to do it – but I still wasn't sure who was going to do the chorus. I'd already done an original song with Fergie but she's just got one of the best rock'n'roll voices, better than most guys. She's awesome. So I had her come up and do it and my friend Franky [Perez] sing backing vocals and it just worked out great. Simple as that. It's my favourite Guns N' Roses song and I just wanted to do a version where it was sort of slowed down the way I originally wrote it. Guns N' Roses had a way of taking any kind of funky rhythmic kind of riff and speeding it up..."

"But the hardcore? Their biggest problem is with girls in general. A lot of die-hard rockers hate girls. I'm like, 'Dude, you better wake up – half of these girls are more talented than half the people you're listening to, if not more'..."

So while the High Court of Heavy Metal sniped and fretted ("Dude! If Slash is working with girls, man, does that mean we'll have to, like, talk to girls one day too?!"), Slash was quietly getting on with the business of recording with some of their heroes.

The Lemmy track is a gloriously defiant burst of Motörhead-style *sturm und drang* called *Dr Alibi* in which everyone's favourite badass recounts a recent trip to his GP: 'I went to see the doctor/He said, "You're really sick/You've got some real bad habits/You better stop right quick"'. Lemmy's response? 'Doctor – I ain't gonna die, just write me an alibi...'.

"That's one of my favourite songs on the record," says Slash, "because his ➔



## TRACK BY TRACK

Chris Cornell on *Promise*

Chris: "It's a song that you would write to either a young friend or one of your children, giving them advice of 'don't let the world get you down because it's going to try'. It's the nature of youth to have a rosy outlook and feel like you're going to be able to charge through life with a machete and make your own way. But the reality is that a lot of unexpected things are going to crash on you and the song deals with that."

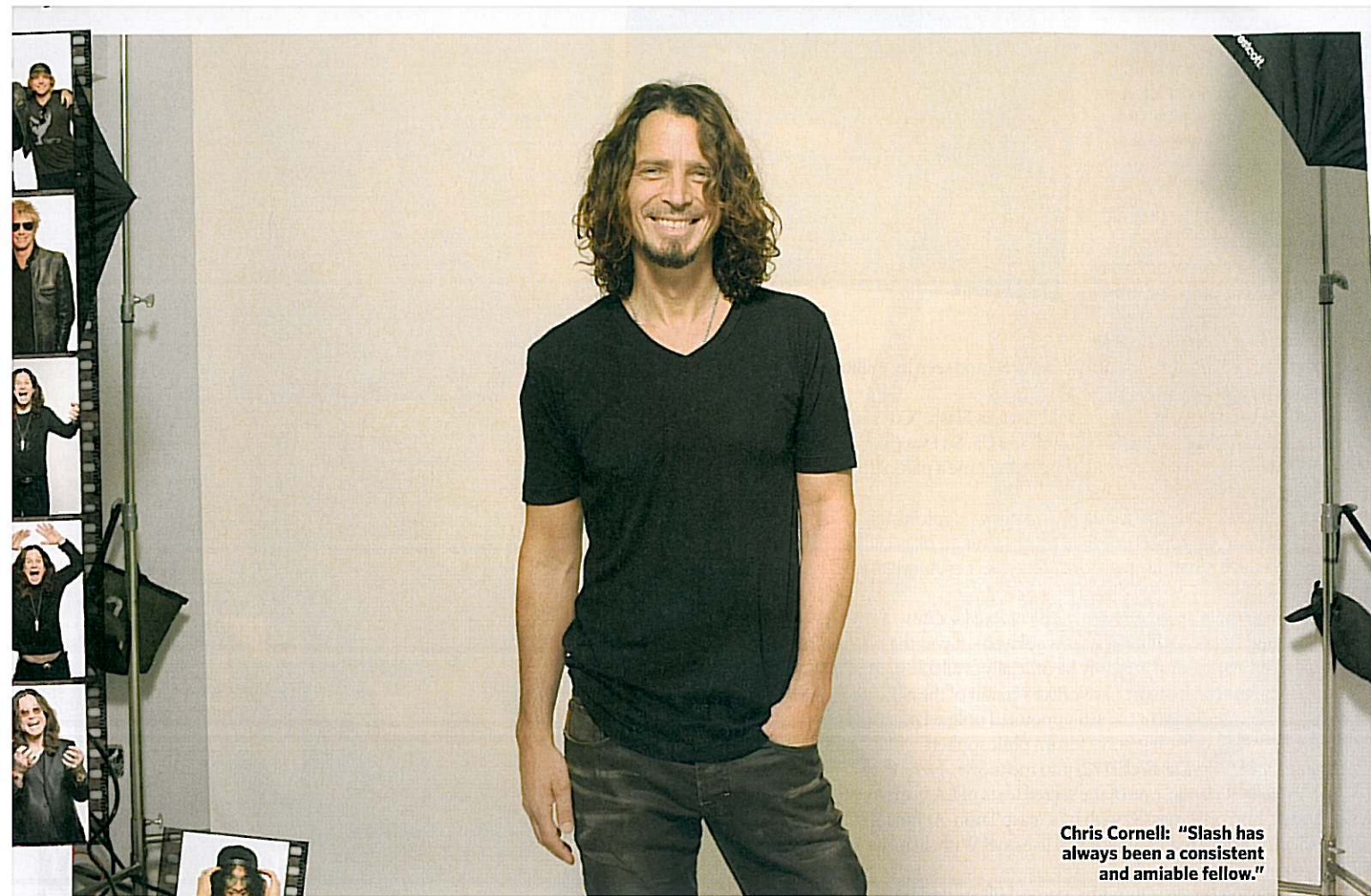


From top: Slash & Friends play Norway's Quatt festival last summer, with singer Franky Perez, and guests Ronnie Wood and Fergie.

Below, left: Chris Cornell in L.A., late 2009.

**"A lot of die-hard rockers hate girls... But Fergie has just got one of the best rock'n'roll voices. Better than most guys." – Slash**





Chris Cornell: "Slash has always been a consistent and amiable fellow."



attitude on that song is the same attitude I carried with me when I almost died. And that's what Lemmy's been going through – doctors telling him this, telling him that. So I loved the spirit of it.

"I got to that point where the doctor said, 'You're gonna die'. In Lemmy's version he gets away with it because another doctor says 'You're gonna be OK'. My doctor said: 'You're going to be dead in six weeks'. That was it."

You're sober, he's not: does that cause problems? "No. For the most part I surround myself with the same environment that I always have. I feel very uncomfortable in a straight environment. I can't deal with it. So my wife drinks and all my friends drink and smoke and I'm around that and I'm fine."

It's not a temptation? "Well, I have triggers. I'm reading this book where these two guys smoke constantly and it makes me want to smoke. The big thing for me is that I'm such a major addict but I'm at a point in my life where I don't want to be a slave to anything. It bothers me. I always had a problem being hooked on heroin because you're so at the mercy of this material thing – and it's pathetic."

"With the cigarettes, my mom was dying in hospital [from lung cancer] and I'd go in and see her and then every ten minutes I'd go outside and have a cigarette."

So I'm not a flag waver for sobriety. I could start up again at any time."

A lot of people won't even let themselves say those words... "Yeah. Well, it could happen. I don't think it's going to and I'd hate to see myself get to the point where I was weak enough for some stupid reason to allow myself to go there. Cigarettes – we'll see how long that lasts!" He chuckles ruefully. "But the other stuff I think I just burned out. I have this subconscious trigger where every time I get this urge to have a cocktail or even have a smoke it just takes me back to the fact that I have to smoke a cigarette every five seconds and when I drink I have to drink ludicrous amounts all day long. I can't just have a civil drink or a cigarette and move on..."

How much did you smoke? "Just a couple of packs [a day]. Maybe more sometimes, but that was the average. But it seemed like I constantly had a cigarette in my mouth. So I love that Lemmy song because it just represents everything about that lifestyle."

On the Iggy Pop track, the lyrics are 'We're all gonna die so let's get high' – again it seems like a defiant statement from someone who's famously sober.

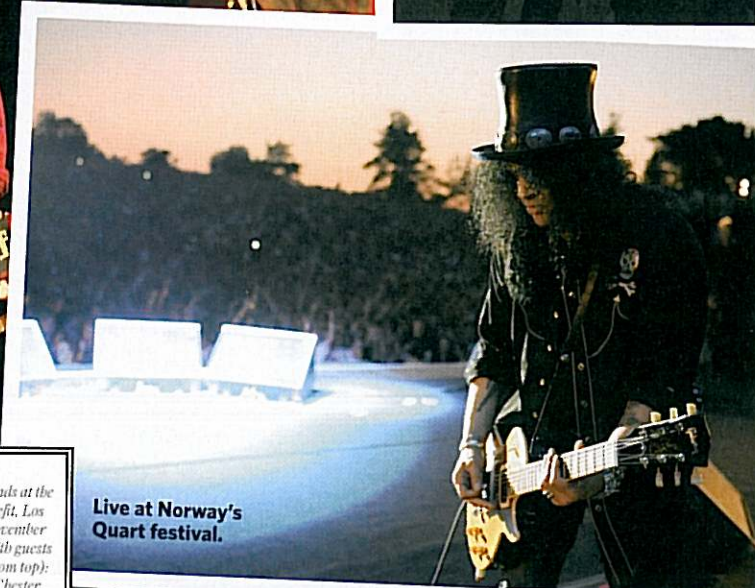
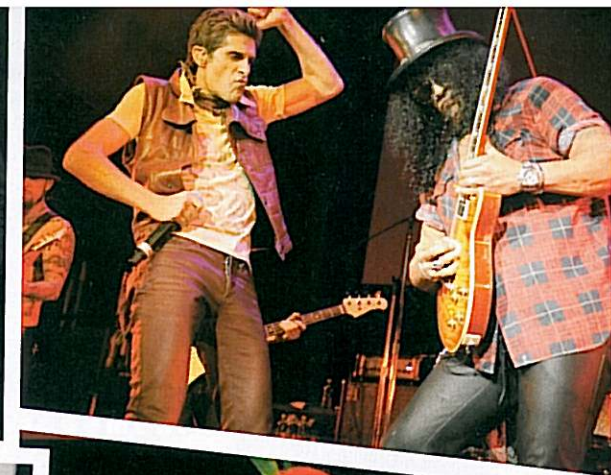
Slash just about splutters coffee across the room.

"I'm not 'famously sober!'" he says.

You are. Well... You were the poster boy for overindulgence for such a long time that... "But I don't see myself as 'famously sober'," he says. "This is one of the only times it's actually been brought up. I don't think anybody really



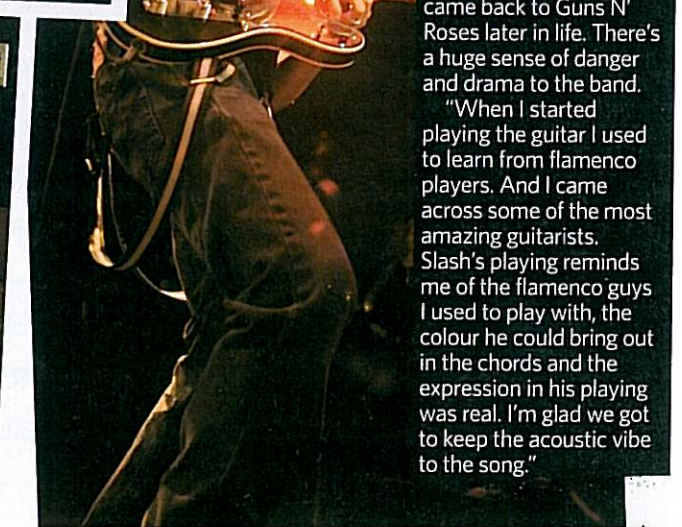
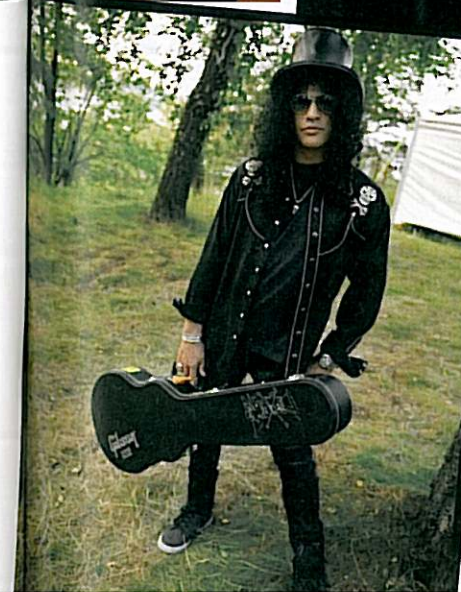
Slash & Friends at the L.A. YFN Benefit, Los Angeles, November 22, 2009, with guests (clockwise from top): Billy Idol, Chester Bennington, Perry Farrell, Steven Adler, Tom Morello and Andrew Stockdale.



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## TRACK BY TRACK

### Andrew Stockdale on *By The Sword*

Andrew: "I remember seeing a photo of Guns N' Roses when I was a kid, Axl Rose was wearing a red jock strap and white tights – it freaked me out at the time. I thought, 'These guys look pretty damn tough'. These days I have a slightly different perspective on those photos! [Laughs] Most of the time at school I was trying to avoid dudes with Guns N' Roses t-shirts or Poison t-shirts. Generally those dudes wanted to kick my arse. So I sort of came back to Guns N' Roses later in life. There's a huge sense of danger and drama to the band."

"When I started playing the guitar I used to learn from flamenco players. And I came across some of the most amazing guitarists. Slash's playing reminds me of the flamenco guys I used to play with, the colour he could bring out in the chords and the expression in his playing was real. I'm glad we got to keep the acoustic vibe to the song."

**"In Lemmy's song one doctor says he's going to die and another says 'You're gonna be OK'. My doctor said, 'You're going to be dead in six weeks...' That was it." – Slash**



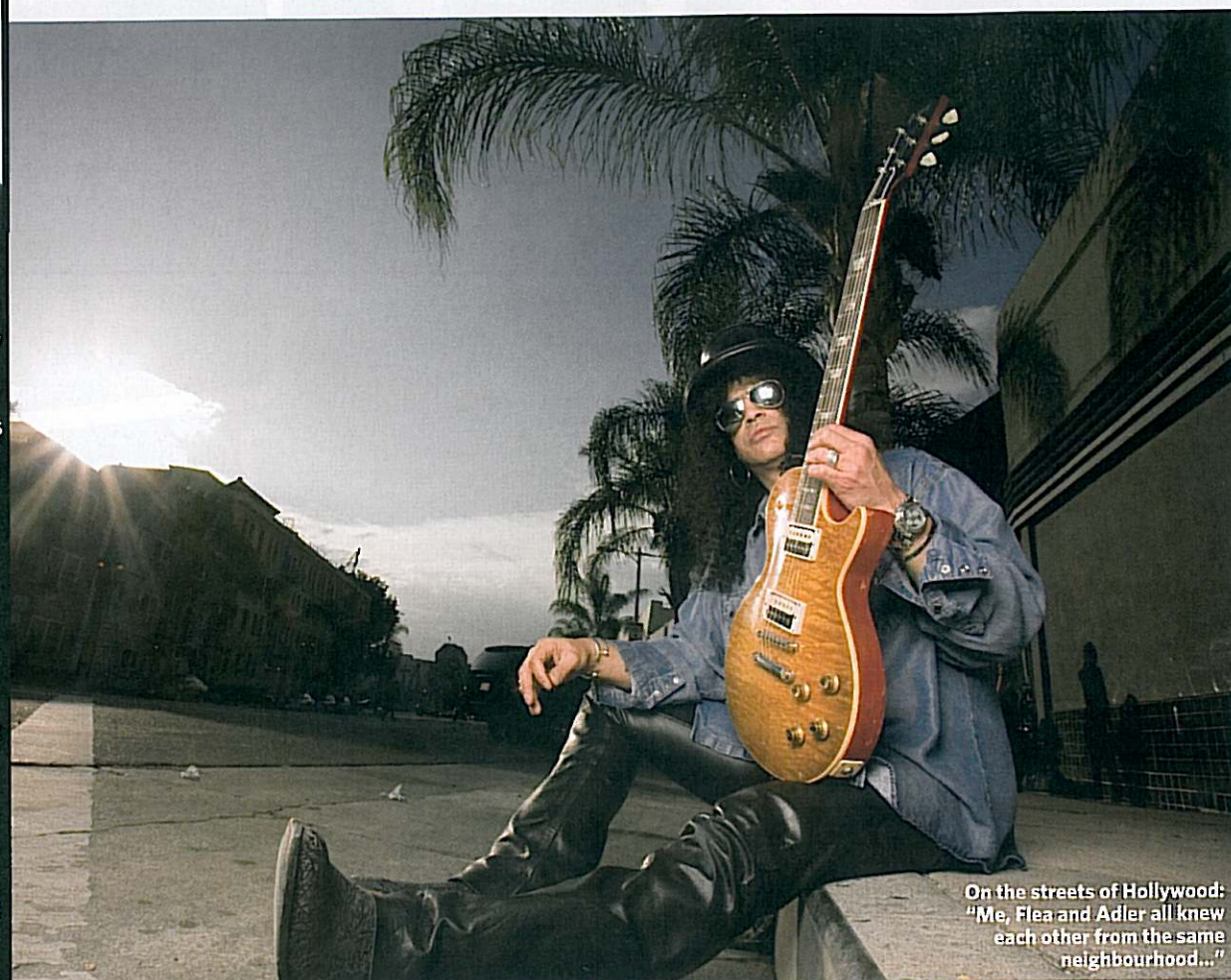


## TRACK BY TRACK

Slash & Myles Kennedy on *Starlight*

**Slash:** "I thought maybe Jack White could sing this and it later got blown out of proportion that Jack White wouldn't sing on my record. Two guys wouldn't sing but they both offered to play: Jack and Dave Grohl. I think that Jack thought that I wanted him to sing my lyrics... So later I was introduced to Myles Kennedy. When Scott left VR Matt Sorum said 'We've got to get the guy from Alter Bridge'. He very politely turned us down because he didn't want to put his band in the lurch, which I thought was commendable - he's a very loyal guy."

**Myles:** "I've always wondered what the rest of the universe might think if it were somehow observing the chaos we manage to create on Earth. It might assume that we are pretty self-destructive. *Starlight* is basically a plea that eventually we will get our act together on this little blue planet. It's a pretty optimistic track."



On the streets of Hollywood: "Me, Flea and Adler all knew each other from the same neighbourhood..."

pays that much attention to it. And I don't talk about it that much. But I'm definitely not one of the sober brigade - I don't believe in any of that stuff."

If we are overstating it, maybe it's just because it's something we've gotten used to on CR. Every year, in the weeks before the *Classic Rock* awards, we have people who demand they sit on a 'dry table', who want to know if so-and-so is drinking before they allow themselves to sit on a certain table. All reasonable stuff, but...

"...I'm not like that," says Slash. "I had a friend, who'll remain nameless, take me into the bathroom the other day and do a bunch of blow in front of me. I was like, 'It's cool'. 'You want some?' 'Nah, I'm awright.' And I don't want to do any blow - I remember what it feels like and that's the main thing - I'm just really so tired of that shit. I don't do that stuff anymore because I just seem to have burned out on it, but I like to be around people who do what they want to do."

**G**iven Slash's last year or so - he gave up drinking and smoking, his mum died, his band split - some people might have expected this to be a serious, introspective album, and *Slash* does have its intense moments: both the Myles Kennedy (Alter Bridge) track, *Starlight*, and the Adam Levine (Maroon 5) song, *Gotten*, are big and beautiful new ballads, while the track with LA unknown Rocco De Luca is a shimmeringly pretty acoustic track.

"I'm not a real emotional person, so anything to do with continued on page 114 ➔

## "IT'S PUTTING THE 'WOW FACTOR' BACK INTO RECORD BUYING..."

Why *Classic Rock* is helping release *Slash*.

"Remember when you used to buy a new album," says *Classic Rock* Publisher Chris Ingham, "and you'd take it home and open it up and there'd be a gatefold sleeve, cool inner sleeves, or maybe separate inserts that would fall out, with lyrics and sleeve notes you could pore over? That feeling of discovery, that 'wow factor' has been totally lost in the CD age, and especially now with downloads. The *CR* Slashpack is an attempt to bring that back - you don't just get an album, you get a limited edition with collectable art, and a magazine that's like the ultimate sleeve notes to read while you soak in the record."

"And with the closures of record shops, and the big record stores prioritising DVDs, it's something you can pick up and see in your local shop or supermarket - not something you have to order blind from a website. It's an event, just like a new release used to be."

"*Classic Rock* is the coolest magazine to do it with," says Slash. "My dad and I both get it. Well, you guys send it to me, my dad still buys it. It's a really awesome idea. It's something different - everybody's trying to latch on something exciting to do with music, now that the business is at its lowest ebb."



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**"Axl's been spewing out all this vehement stuff against me, and he picked on a couple of other people and... It's just sad." - Slash**

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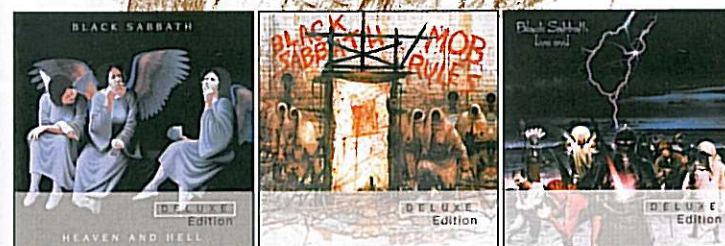
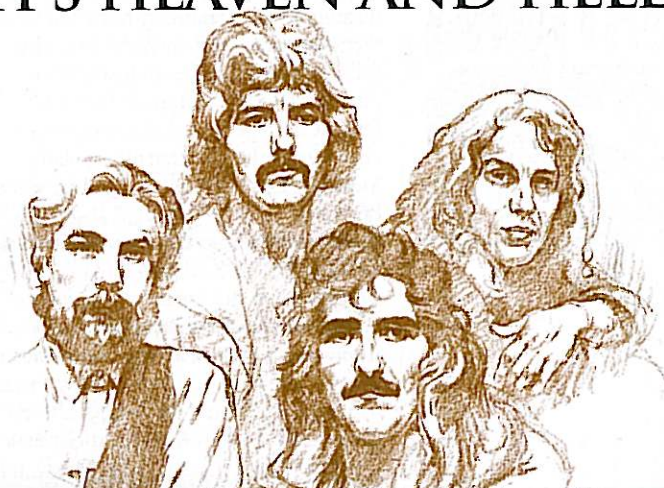
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Continued from page 56

all the shit that I might be harbouring, I get release in playing, but it doesn't mean that I have to take a musical direction where everything has to be foreboding or about where I'm at emotionally. I can have that cathartic kind of thing just by going and jamming in a club. That's why I jam so much. Cos it's my best way of expressing emotion – cos I'm definitely not verbal about it. But the album wasn't about trying to get dark and 'come over to my world'."

'Dark' it's not. While the ballads give the album depth, they're tempered by some blazing rock'n'roll. Iggy Pop's track opens with the line 'Gee, I really like your tits' and degenerates from there, Ozzy and M. Shadows of Avenged Sevenfold bring the metal, and Velvet Revolver bandmate Duff McKagan and Dave Grohl join Slash on an instrumental that may be the heaviest thing any of them have recorded. Not that it was always intended to be an instrumental.

"I wrote it and I wanted Dave to play drums on it but I wanted him to sing it too," says Slash. "But he refuses to sing on anybody else's stuff – he has a thing about it, says he did it one time and it came out disastrous [presumably *Goodbye Lament*, from Tony Iommi's collaboration album *Iommi* from 2000 – Ed]. So to get him to play drums on it, I decided to just make an instrumental out of it. And I'm glad I did, because that's one of the most spontaneous, live-in-the-studio performances – I think I did two passes. I was in a hurry to go somewhere and I was in a fight with somebody and pissed off so we just ran through that a couple of times. It ended up giving it a very spontaneous vibe."

McKagan, of course, was a Seattle native who moved to LA to join GN'R. "I never met up with Grohl in Seattle," says Duff. "I'd already moved to Los Angeles when Nirvana formed. Doing the instrumental was pretty powerful – pretty meaty and cool. Me more than anybody else knows how long Slash has been working on this record. This is the record he wanted to make in 1994 but didn't have the faculties to do it."

McKagan is the only Velvet Revolver member on the album, which raises the question of what's happening with VR... "It's still there," says Slash. "Matt [Sorum]'s trying to come up with new ways to find different singers online. He's really into the whole online world, so he's coming up with different ways to audition singers and all that kind of stuff."

We heard that you'd fixed on a singer and then it had gone wrong for some reason. "Whoever it's gonna be is a tough decision and we really need to buckle down as a group and really figure it out," says Slash, getting a little bit cryptic. "And, whatever we've done, not every guy in the band was comfortable enough to make that decision. Let's just leave it at that."

Another album highlight is *Ghost*, co-written and sung by The Cult's Ian Astbury and featuring Izzy Stradlin on guitar. "I remember when *Electric* came out and all the girls I wanted to fuck were listening to The Cult," says Slash. "And then when we finally got our first tour we were opening for The Cult. We were like a bunch of heathens."

"You don't really realise what fucking street urchins you are, and what lack of couth and experience you have, until you go out with different people who have been doing it for a while and you start to learn from experience. The Cult guys took us under their wing a little bit. We'd go and pass out in their hotel rooms – they always had nicer hotels. Me and Ian almost got arrested one time. We had to hide in one of the bays in one of the equipment trucks cos they wanted to arrest us for using profanity onstage at this place in Texas. We had some great experiences with those guys and I love Ian to death. And it was great having Izzy come in. Me and Izzy together just make a certain sort of sound."

Do you keep in touch? "We see each other once in a blue moon. For this particular thing he came in a couple of times. It's always great to see him – he's always very down to earth and it always reminds me just how simple almost all of it [GN'R] was," he laughs.

The Alice Cooper/Nicole Scherzinger track, meanwhile, features the drumming talents of one Steven Adler. "He actually hadn't been in a recording studio in 10 years," says Slash. "But he did a great job. Steven was always underrated in Guns N' Roses because of the obvious. But he provided a type of groove and a type of energy to GN'R, and the *Appetite* record particularly, that is half of its fuckin' charm. A lot of people don't even recognise that. So when he came in and played on this track it was like – that feel and that sound was

**"Steven Adler was always underrated in GN'R but he gave *Appetite* its groove..." – Slash**

instantly there. It was a trip to see because I hadn't played with him in so long.

"He was funny though: we had to have the producer come out and play conductor because he couldn't remember the song all the way through. He'd get it going, he'd get so energetic and then it'd be like, 'Dude – that's where the bridge is'. 'Oh.' And he'd go back and do it again. It was great.

"Me, Flea and Steven all knew each other from the same neighbourhood. When I first started playing, and Steven was playing, and Michael [Flea's real name is Michael Peter Balzary] was playing trumpet, we used to hang out in this one area in West Hollywood where this elementary school was, cos it had banks that you could do on your skateboard and shit. So we all knew each other from there and to have us all in this studio all these years later jamming this song..."

So you've got three ex-members of Guns N' Roses on the album. There's only one guy missing...

Slash laughs. "Yeeaaaah..."

...And that guy made some comments last year – calling you "a cancer and better removed" – that seemed pretty unforgivable. (Did Axl know that

Slash's mother was dying or lung cancer during that same period? I guess we have to give him the benefit of the doubt...) It seemed, finally, to put any possibility of a reunion out of the question.

"It's never been a question," says Slash. "It's never been a possible thing. It's not just a question of 'Oh, can't you just put aside your differences?' Nobody gets it. And I can understand that – why would it be so hard to get a bunch of guys together and make tons of money and get them to play some fucking songs? What's the big deal? Well, it's a bigger deal for him than it is for me. But at the same time, it's not possible. It just won't happen."

"Under different circumstances I'd be the first one to do it. But if that were the case I'd never have quit [GN'R] in the first place. Axl's been spewing out all this vehement stuff against me, and he picked on a couple of other people and shit, and it's just like... It's just sad."

So with the album done, all that's left to worry about is making the whole thing come to life onstage. At Norway's Quart festival Slash and Friends stole the show with guests like Ozzy, Fergie, and Ronnie Wood. At the LA benefit show for the Los Angeles Youth Network (where many of the photographs accompanying this feature were taken), they were joined by Blink 182 drummer Travis Barker, Linkin Park frontman Chester Bennington and Billy Idol. Taking such a coterie of stars on the road would be impossible – having a 'house band' joined by local guests around the world would seem the obvious solution.

Alter Bridge singer Myles Kennedy – the man who in 2008 rehearsed with Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones and Jason Bonham as part of some undefined 'new Led Zeppelin' – has been confirmed as vocalist for the touring band.

How many other songs on the album has he heard?

"I haven't even heard any!" laughs the singer on the phone from Florida where he's putting the finishing touches to the latest Alter Bridge album. "Actually I think the only song I heard was when I was in LA recording, Slash picked me

up in his car and he had the Fergie track playing. And it sounded huge! She's such a great singer."

Kennedy grew up a teenage GN'R fan. "I consider *Appetite For Destruction* to be one of the greatest albums ever made, if not the greatest," he says. "I remember when I was about 16 seeing *Welcome To The Jungle* for the first time on MTV, and being like 'What is this? It was just so dangerous yet so catchy... For me, that record is timeless.'"

So how does he find it working with Slash? Sometimes working with someone you grew up admiring can be difficult.

"The thing about Slash is that he is so laid back and cool, which made the entire process very easy. At one point he did something that I thought was quite endearing. He smiled, looked over at me and asked something to the effect of 'So... what was it like getting to jam with Led Zeppelin?'"

He laughs. "I thought that was cool. At the end of the day, we're all just fans." ■

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