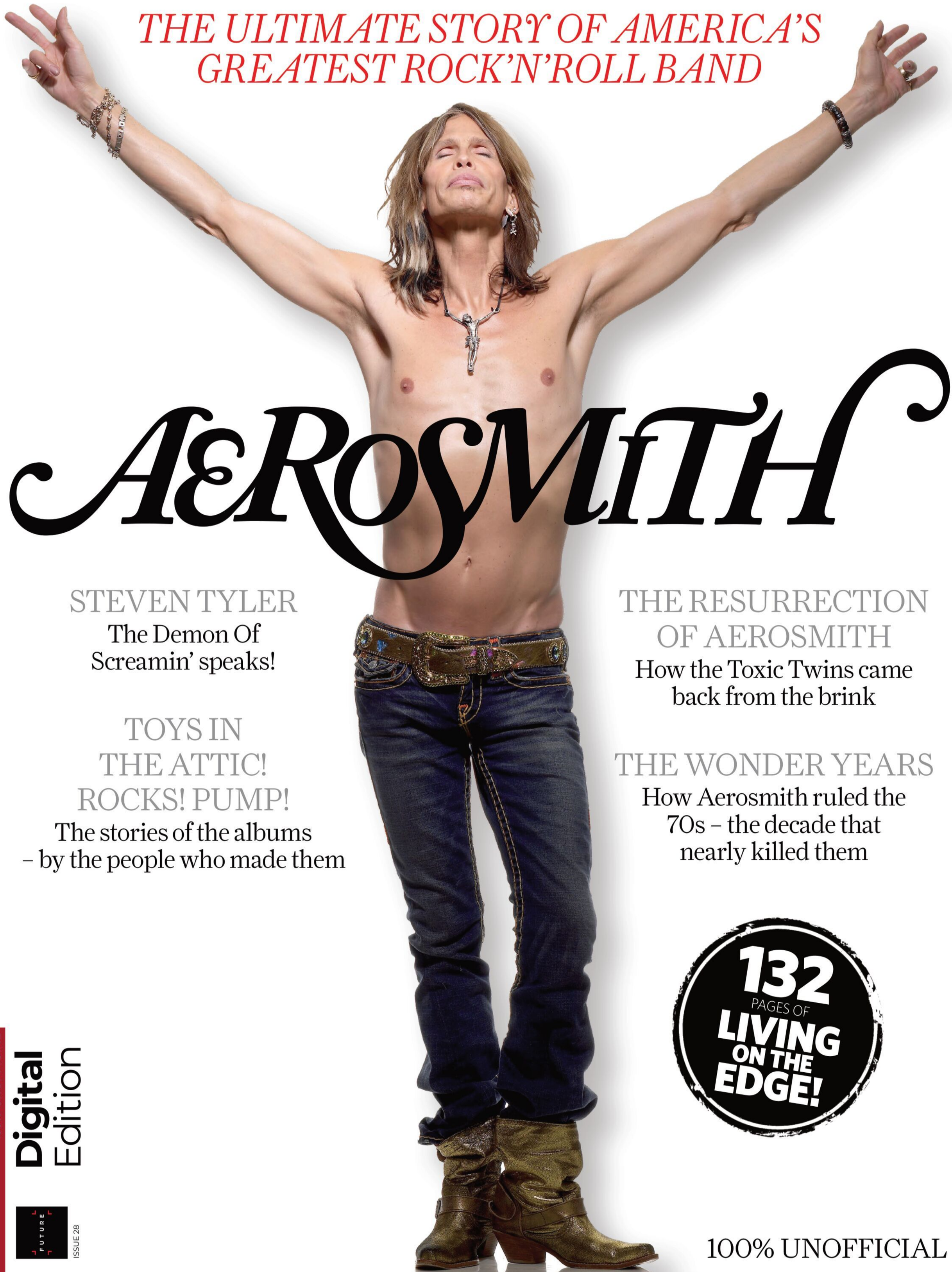
Classic Rock Platinum Series

THE ULTIMATE STORY OF AMERICA'S GREATEST ROCK'N'ROLL BAND



AEROSMITH

STEVEN TYLER
The Demon Of Screamin' speaks!

TOYS IN THE ATTIC! ROCKS! PUMP!
The stories of the albums – by the people who made them

THE RESURRECTION OF AEROSMITH
How the Toxic Twins came back from the brink

THE WONDER YEARS
How Aerosmith ruled the 70s – the decade that nearly killed them

132 PAGES OF **LIVING ON THE EDGE!**

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AEROSMITH

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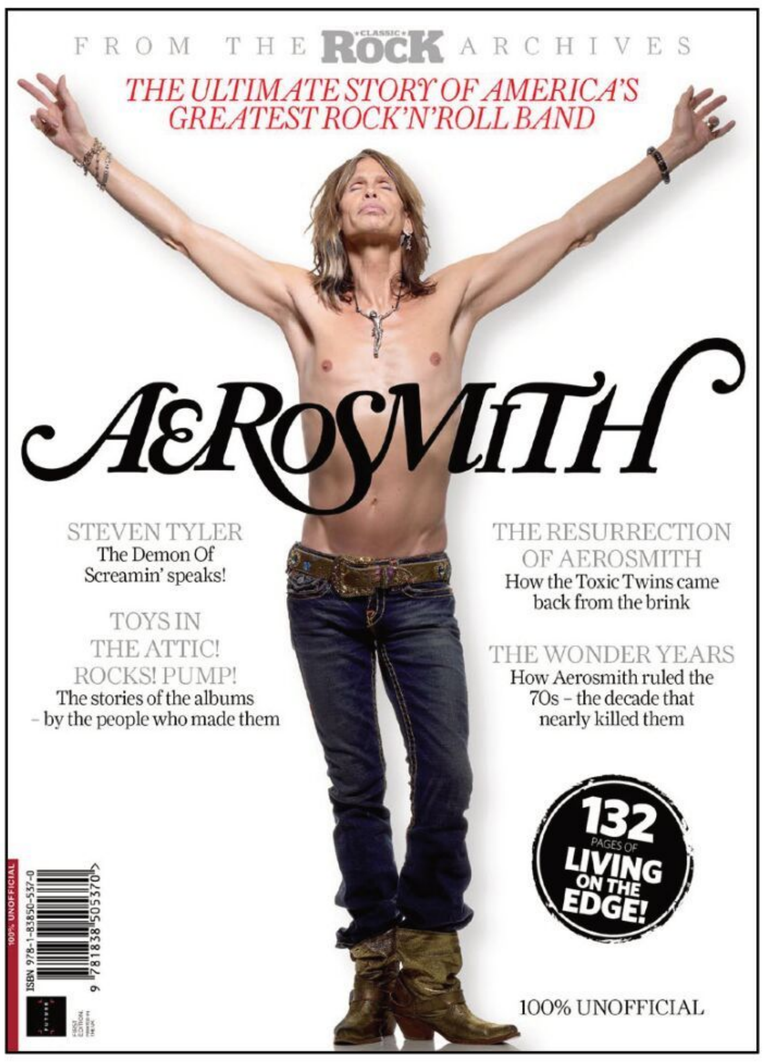

Name the greatest American rock'n'roll band of them all, and there are plenty of contenders, from The Byrds, The Beach Boys and Creedence Clearwater Revival in the 60s to Kiss, ZZ Top and Van Halen in the 70s, right up to such latterday icons as Guns N' Roses, Nirvana and Foo Fighters.

But when push comes to shove, there's only one winner: Aerosmith The music they've been making for nearly 50 years speaks for itself – I'm cranking up 1976's genius-level Rocks as I write this, and it sounds like the whole of the 1970s condensed into 34 glorious drug-fuelled minutes. Next up, is the equally magnificent Pump – proof that there are second acts in rock'n'roll.

The 'Smiths were always an R&B band in hard rock clothing – where other bands chugged, they swung… and thrusted and back-flipped. Just listen to the original Walk This Way and Sweet Emotion, two of the funkiest rock songs ever laid down.

But plenty of bands had great songs. What Aerosmith possessed that set them apart was charisma to burn. Their entire career has been fuelled by the push-pull between the flamboyant charisma of gob-on-legs Steven Tyler and the effortless rock'n'roll fundamentalism of silent-but-deadly guitarist Joe Perry. That has sometimes spilled over into a soap opera. But like everything Aerosmith have done, even their soap operas are better than those of other bands.

You find all of that – the songs, the albums, the people, the bust-ups, the reconciliations – in this epic 132-page celebration of America's greatest rock'n'roll band, featuring exclusive interviews and in-depth articles taken from the pages of Classic Rock magazine. We've spoken to all the main participants – not least Messrs Tyler and Perry – about the ups and downs of their magnificent career, and gone behind the scenes with the classic albums they've made (and seen some things we'd prefer to forget).

As a bunch of wise men from Boston once said, let the music do the talking…

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In 1970, five outlaws emerged from the backwaters of Boston, Massachusetts dead set on becoming the greatest rock'n'roll band America had ever seen.This is the story of the birth of **Aerosmith**...

Words: **Dave Everley**

A few years ago, Aerosmith frontman Steven Tyler was asked about his band's aspirations when they got together in the wilds of Massachusetts all those years ago.

"We weren't too ambitious when we started out," came his reply. "We just wanted to be the biggest band on the planet."

It was typical Tyler: funny but honest, and brimming with bulletproof confidence. Most bands would have said the same, and those who didn't were lying. But the difference was that Aerosmith delivered on that promise. Eventually.

The band's stellar history is well documented. The commercial, artistic and chemical highs of the 70s; their against-the-odds resurrection in the 80s; the ongoing five-way soap opera that sporadically simmers, boils over then calms down again.

But their early years were a different matter. They might have wanted to be the biggest band on the planet, but they weren't going to get there without a fight. There were obstacles and setbacks, failures and fights. And there were drugs. Lots of drugs.

Aerosmith made it, of course. But that bulletproof confidence would be tested to the limit.

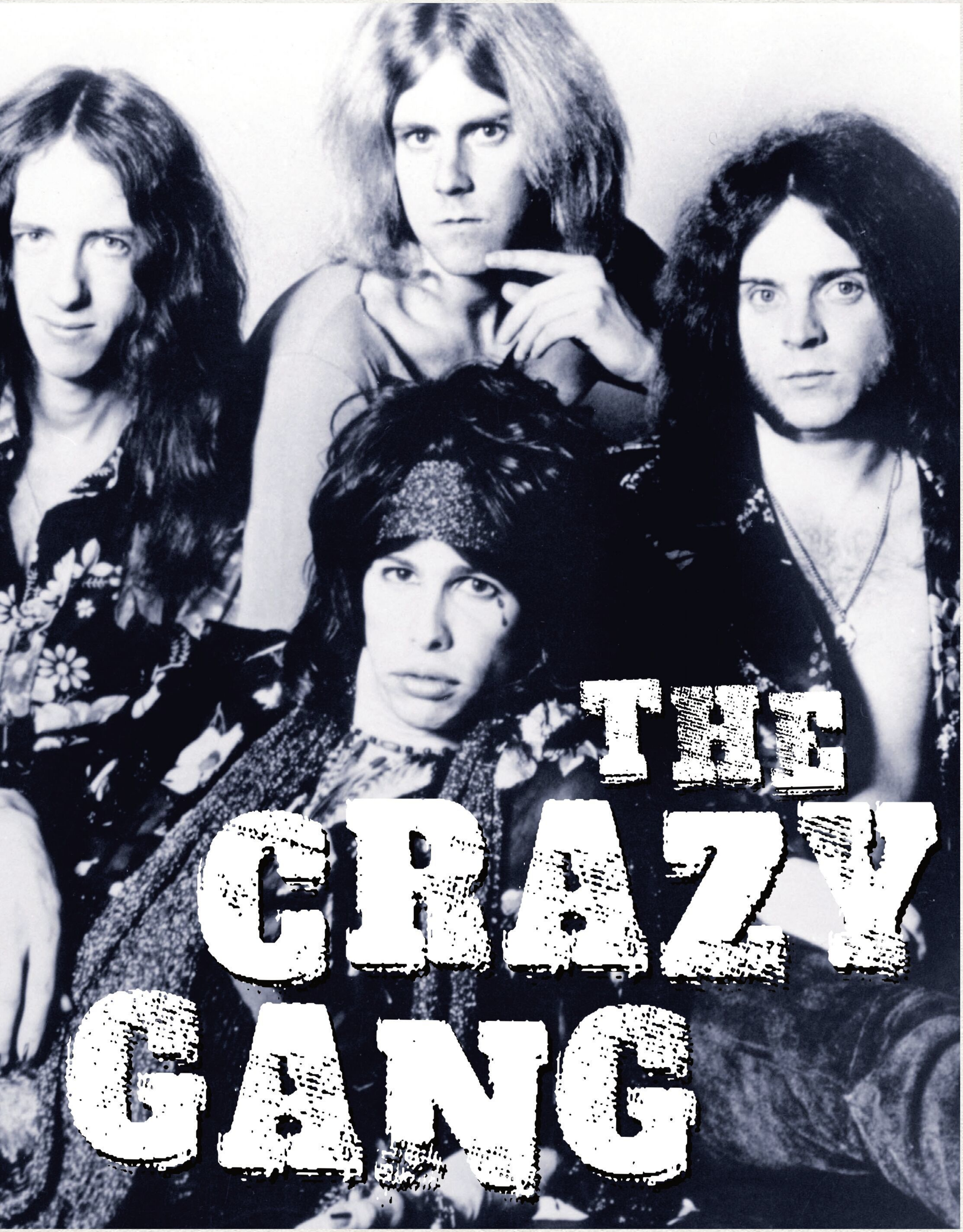
They might be the ultimate Boston band, but three of Aerosmith's founding members were New York born and bred. Steven Tyler grew up in the Big Apple with original guitarist Ray Tabano, where they both ran with the same teenage gang. Tyler and drummer Joey Kramer were in different years at the same school in Yonkers, though it was pure coincidence that they ended up in the same band 200 miles up the coast a few years later.

Tyler came from a musical family. His Italian grandfather, Giovanni Tallarico, had been a classical cellist, and his father Victor was a Julliard-educated pianist. The young Steven cut his teeth playing drums with his dad at social events. "Girls would come in, look at the band and go, 'Ugh,'" he recalled. "I'd try to look over at them and go, 'No, look, I'm cool, check it out, don't leave.'"

The polite world of classical music and natural born wild-child Tyler were always going to be a bad fit for each other. He began listening to The Beatles, the Stones and The Yardbirds, dropping acid, smoking pot and taking speed while he did it. The social events fell by the wayside. "In my mind I was always a rock star," he recalled.

It wouldn't be long before he was making that dream a reality. Or trying to. An early band, the Yardbirds-inspired The Chain Reaction, had released a couple of singles, but it hadn't led anywhere. The fame Tyler craved remained tantalisingly out of reach.

All that changed in the summer of 1969. Tyler's family owned a holiday lodge in the small Massachusetts town of Sunapee, and he split his time ➔



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Perry and Tyler: it ain't easy, livin' like a gypsy...

between there and New York. It was in Sunapee that Tyler was invited to watch a covers trio with the unpromising name The Jam Band playing a gig at a local club, The Barn.

Tyler grudgingly accepted the invitation. The Jam Band featured a lanky blond bassist called Tom Hamilton and a singer/guitarist with a mop of thick black hair and a jaw that could crack concrete by the name of Joe Perry.

"They were horrible, but the way they did [Fleetwood Mac's] *Rattlesnake Shake* was something else. Joe was really into [Ten Years After frontman] Alvin Lee," Tyler remembered. "And I went, if I can get this groove with this guy and start writing songs…'"

Perry and Hamilton knew who Tyler was. He would regularly come up to Sunapee to stay at his parents' lodge and make like he owned the place. Sometimes he'd be with whatever band he was in at the time. Joe Perry worked at a local diner, and he'd sigh whenever Tyler and his crew came in.

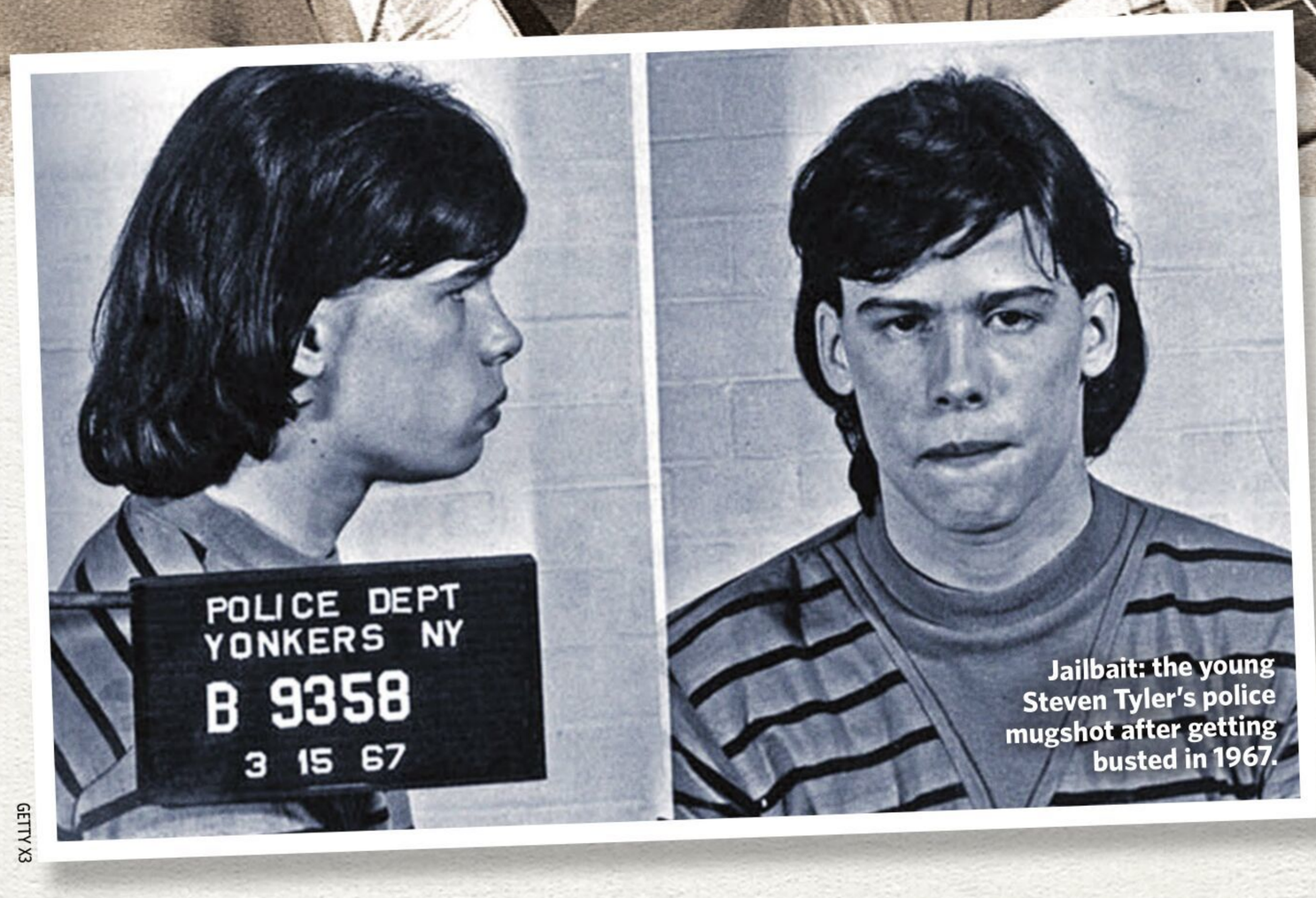
"They'd be wearing clothes from Carnaby Street and real long hair," said Perry. "They were loud and obnoxious, behaving like rock stars are supposed to behave – especially when they're in a little town and nobody knows how not-so-big they really are. They'd come in and throw food and shit, and I'd have to clean up after them."

When this fast-talking brat approached Perry about getting a band together, the guitarist was understandably reticent, but some underlying ESP stopped him from telling Tyler to go screw himself. For starters, they were drinking from the same musical well: the British invasion bands, American R&B singers, blues rock pioneers like The Yardbirds and The Animals. It didn't hurt that Perry and Hamilton shared the same burgeoning chemical proclivities as Tyler – the bassist had even been arrested as a teenage for dealing acid.

Perry and Hamilton didn't take a lot of persuading. Within a few months, they had moved with Tyler down to Boston, then the centre of a burgeoning rock'n'roll movement headed up by local heroes the J. Geils Band. The trio were joined by Tyler's old buddy Ray Tabano on second guitar. Not long after that, the singer's former schoolmate Joey Kramer – who had moved to Boston to study at the Berklee College Of Music – had agreed to play drums. They had a band, and, in a shared apartment at 1325 Commonwealth Avenue, a base.

What they didn't have was a name. At one point they considered calling themselves The Hookers. Another time, they talked about calling themselves Spike Jones, after the 50s comedian and bandleader. The words 'spike' and 'jones' both had drug connotations – whether that was coincidental or not isn't clear, though it did dovetail neatly with the band's growing pharmaceutical activities (Tyler and Tabano had graduated to injecting cocaine, though they would ultimately prove to be early adopters rather than outliers within the group).

In the end, it was Kramer who gifted the band their name. He was a fan of Harry Nilsson's 1968 album *Aerial Ballet*, and loved the sound of the word



Jailbait: the young Steven Tyler's police mugshot after getting busted in 1967.

GETTY X3

“Our best friends were drug dealers. We identified with them because we felt like outcasts, outlaws, menaces to society.”

Joe Perry

‘Aero’. An old band of his back in Yonkers had called themselves Aerosmith, but they’d split up a few years ago. Why waste it? It didn’t mean much, but it was still better than The Hookers.

Aerosmith made their live debut at the Nipmuc Regional High School in Upton, Massachusetts in late 1970. They didn’t bother hiding their influences: the set consisted of Stones and Yardbirds covers, including their version of the latter’s take on the old blues number *Train Kept A-Rollin’*. During the gig, Tyler and Perry got into a ruck over the volume of the guitars. “So began an Aerosmith tradition,” a wry Tom Hamilton later said.

That tension would fuel Aerosmith from the start. Tyler was older and gobbier; Perry quieter and more stubborn. They frequently butted heads, but both knew it was for the greater good of the band. The same couldn’t be said of Ray Tabano. The guitarist was lagging behind his bandmates musically, but that didn’t stop him making a play for control of Aerosmith in the summer of 1971. “Ray gives the band this Looney Tunes ultimatum that he was taking over,” said Tom Hamilton. “He said, ‘Either you line up behind him [Tyler] or you line up behind me.’ From that moment on, Ray was gone.”

Tabano’s replacement was 19-year-old guitarist Brad Whitford, a friend of a friend from Reading, Massachusetts who was playing with a band named Justin Thyme. They didn’t know it, but the classic Aerosmith line-up was in place.

There were few places in Boston that let groups play original material, and Aerosmith had too much ambition to play sets full of covers for too long. They hit the frat parties and high school dances instead. Occasionally they headed down the Eastern seaboard to New York to check out the competition.

“When we started I imagined that these people like Rick Derringer were like Lord High Doodledums who sat in the corner with servants pickin’ their toes,” scoffed Tyler. “But we played Max’s Kansas City with some of those guys and I knew we had more than they had.”

Aerosmith had picked up a manager along the way. Frank Connally was a Boston promoter with some shady friends. Joey Kramer recalled walking into a run-down greeting card shop run by associates of ‘Father Frank’. “It took me a while to realise it was actually a bookie joint and that they were basically gangsters,” said Kramer. “I think they loaned Frank money to finance our management.”

It wasn’t just mobsters that Aerosmith were mixing with. “Our best friends were drug dealers,” said Perry. “We identified with them because we felt like outcasts, outlaws, menaces to society.”

The dealers liked Aerosmith too, mainly because they were such good customers. But the music industry was taking longer to warm to them. Labels came to check out Aerosmith, only to pass on them, deciding that they weren’t ready or, worse, that they sailed too close to the Rolling Stones.

But their perseverance eventually paid off. In 1972, they finally bagged a deal with Columbia Records after label boss Clive Davis caught a show in New York. Davis was the music industry power-player who had turned Janis Joplin and Santana into stars, and a good man to have in their corner. The $125,000 the band received for signing didn’t hurt either.

“God, I know we stayed up all night,” remembered Hamilton, “but we weren’t looking down the road. I don’t think anybody thought that everything was

The Toxic Triplets: (l-r) Tom Hamilton, Steven Tyler and Brad Whitford.

Elegantly wasted: Tyler chills out alone (below) and gets fired up with Tom Hamilton (right).

GETTY X3

going to be fine from now on, and that we were going to have a thirty-year career just because Clive Davis said so. We still had to get up the next day and get to the next gig."

Joe Perry would describe Aerosmith's self-titled debut album as "the stuff we had been playing in the clubs. We just left out the Yardbirds songs."

The fluid songwriting partnerships that would help turn them into one of rock'n'roll's biggest draws were yet to be established. Instead, Tyler was responsible the lion's share of the songs, taking sole credit for five of the eight tracks that would eventually appear on the album. Among them were *Mama Kin*, written on a warped acoustic guitar Joey Kramer fished out of a garbage can, and *Make It*, a song that found Aerosmith wearing their ambitions on their voluminous sleeves.

But best of all was a showstopping slowie titled *Dream On* that Tyler had written in his parents' living room in the lodge at Sunapee. He knew it was promising, but it was only when he brought it to Perry and Whitford that he realised how special it was. "Sitting there working it out on guitar and piano, I got a little melodramatic," he said. "The song was so good it brought a tear to my eye."

Aerosmith were a razor sharp live band, but they would quickly find out there was a big difference between the stage and the studio. The five men who stepped into Boston's Intermedia Studios in October 1973 to record their debut album were greenhorns in that situation.

"The band was very uptight," remembered Tyler. "We were so nervous that when the red recording light came on we froze. We were scared shitless."

Matters weren't helped by tensions with producer Adrian Barber. The Yorkshire-born Barber had been the in-house engineer at Hamburg's Star Club when The Beatles played there in the early 60s, before going on to work with the likes of Cream and The Allman Brothers Band. But he was oscillating on a different wavelength to these wired Yanks.

"Our producer was practically useless," Perry later claimed. "When I heard the playback, I kept thinking, 'We're better than this. We should sound better than this.'"

Tyler: "It was like being with a retarded child in there, and I'm not sure if it was because he was so high, or because we all were."

The singer wasn't afraid to take matters into his own hands, albeit with a little chemical assistance. "I put the string section on *Dream On* sitting at this Mellotron while a friend of mine kept laying out lines of crystal THC that I was snorting while I was playing," he admitted.

The finished album was a promising start, if not a great one. The bones of the band they would become are in place, but the muscle was missing. Much of this is down to the sluggish mix that irked Perry so much: *One Way Street* and the choogling *Write Me A Letter* are decent songs that sound like they're dragging great bags of wet laundry behind them.

Weirder still is Tyler's voice. The future Demon Of Screamin' decided at the last minute to rework his singing style, swapping out his jive-talking rasp for a mangled attempt at old-beyond-his-years authenticity. "I changed my voice into Kermit the Frog, to sound more like a blues singer," he later rued.

For all that, *Aerosmith* was far from disastrous. *Make It* and *Someday* were cocksure enough to paper over any cracks, while their cover of Rufus Thomas' *Walkin' The Dog* was a textbook example of early 70s white-boy R&B. And it possessed two out-of-the-gate classics in *Mama Kin* and *Dream On*. Ironically, Perry was initially unimpressed by the latter – a song which would eventually become one of the band's signature numbers and draw up the template for the modern power ballad.

"To me, rock'n'roll's about energy and putting on a show," said the guitarist. "I didn't really appreciate the musicality of it until later, but I did know it was a great song, so we put it in our set. We also knew that if you played straight rock'n'roll you didn't get played on the radio and, if you wanted a Top 40 hit, the ballad was the way to go."

At least that was the idea. Aerosmith was released in January 1972, and *Dream On* came out as single that July. Both were greeted with deafening silence by radio DJs and the public alike. The album shuffled embarrassedly to No.166 in the US charts.

"There was no nothing at all: no press, no radio, no airplay, no reviews, no interviews, no party," said

“We were America’s band – the garage band that made it real big, the ultimate party band.”

Joe Perry

The sky’s the limit: Aerosmith circa 1974, preparing for stardom.

Perry. “Instead the album got ignored and there was a lot of anger and flipping out.”

The band had no choice but to hit the road. They toured with everyone from Mott The Hoople to jazz-rock pioneers Mahavishnu Orchestra. “[Mahavishnu leader] John McLaughlin and the band would meditate before they started playing,” remembered Tom Hamilton. “And as you might imagine, we weren’t really into meditating. We’d already found our own ways to meditate, chemically.”

The album hadn’t gone completely unnoticed. In the mid-west, future Guns N’ Roses guitarist Izzy Stradlin’ had fallen hard for it.

“Growing up in Indiana, I loved fucking Aerosmith, man,” said Stradlin’, whose vagabond imageand Olympian dru g intake owed a debt to Joe Perry. “Smoke a joint, listen to the first record.”

Aerosmith might not have flown out of the traps at the first time of asking, but at least they were doing something right.

It was Bob Ezrin who hooked Aerosmith up with the man who would help turn them into the superstars they wanted to be. Ezrin was the wunderkind Canadian producer who had helped mould Alice Cooper into America’s favourite bogeyman, and Columbia wanted him to work his magic on Aerosmith. Ezrin declined the offer, but suggested his friend Jack Douglas was the ideal man for the job.

“Bob said, ‘They’re two years away from being anything, they’re too raw, they’re just too much work for me, I can’t do it,’” Douglas later said. “But I like to get in on the ground floor with a group, and I’m an old Yardbirds fan.”

The first time Douglas saw Aerosmith play was at a high school dance outside of Boston. He was instantly sold. “It was full of sweaty kids going crazy,” he said.

The failure of their debut album had lit a rocket under the band’s collective backside. The biggest change was that Tyler and Perry had begun writing together. The first fruits of their labour would become the album’s opening song, the strutting *Same Old Song And Dance*, written in one drug-fuelled night in the front room of the apartment they were sharing.

Most of the groundwork for *Get Your Wings* was laid in an unlikely environment. “The preproduction work started in the back of a restaurant that was like a Mob hangout in the North End [of Boston]. They started to play me the songs they had for their new album. My attitude was: ‘What can I do to make them sound like themselves?’”

The band put in the hours in the studio, fuelled by whatever substances were available. “We had some hassles because we had some people there that shouldn’t have been there,” according to Douglas.

The band’s extra-curricular activities impacted on the recording process. Perry was otherwise indisposed when it came to recording the cover of The Yardbirds’ *Train Kept A-Rollin’*, so Douglas enlisted session musicians Steve Hunter and Dick Wagner to play on it instead.

“For some reason Joe wasn’t there to do it and I never really questioned it,” Hunter later said. “Jack called me up at like ten o’clock in the evening and I went in and did it and that was it.”

Studio stiffness and the occasional unavailability of some of its chief participants aside, *Get Your Wings* was more confident and recognisable as an Aerosmith record than its predecessor. *Same Old Song Dance*, *Lord Of The Thighs* and *Pandora’s Box* ramped up the grooves and, in the case of the latter, the not-so-subtle innuendo that would become a ’Smith’s hallmark. *Seasons Of Wither* was another killer ballad, though the uplifting optimism Of *Dream On* was replaced by an altogether darker vibe – something that presaged the deep narcotic hole the band would soon find themselves in. And despite not featuring Perry, *Train Kept A-Rollin’* remains a cornerstone of their set more than 45 years on.

Tellingly, *Get Your Wings* found Tyler reverted to his natural singing style. “On the second album, the songs found my voice,” he said. “I realized that it’s not about having a beautiful voice and hitting all the notes; it’s about attitude.”

But that attitude still wasn’t enough. To their annoyance neither the songs nor the attitude supplied Aerosmith with the hits theywanted and needed. “We were angry as fuck at radio stations who weren’t playing Aerosmith,” said Tyler. The media had started to notice them, but most of the write-ups drew unfavourable comparisons with their idols the Rolling Stones, only compounding their frustrations. “I got pissed,” admitted Tyler. “I was using drugs at the time, so I was in denial.”

There was a silver lining, and that was that Aerosmith were becoming a popular live draw beyond the East Coast. Audiences were getting bigger and louder, and the band were only too happy to head to any town with a venue and a drug dealer or two.

“We were the guys you could actually see,” says Joe Perry. “It wasn’t like Zeppelin was out there on the road in America all the time. The Stones weren’t always coming to your town. We were America’s band – the garage band that made it real big, the ultimate party band.”

The guitarist was getting ahead of himself. It would be another few months before Aerosmith became “America’s band”. But they were well on their way. And once they got there, there would be no stopping them.

SEX, SONGS, DRUGS, DANGER & AEROSMITH

More than 40 years and many hard knocks after it was released, America's longest-surviving rock band look back at the making of *Toys In The Attic*, the landmark album that catapulted **Aerosmith** from underdogs to overlords.

Words: **Bill DeMain** Lead Picture: **James Fortune/Rex Features**

Midtown Manhattan, January 1975. In the early hours, five skinny, hirsute young men are hustling along the yellow line in the middle of 8th Avenue near West 44th Street, huffing out against the frigid air, laughing nervously and keeping an eye peeled for muggers. They're right to be wary. New York in the 70s is a dangerous place. In 1975 alone, there will be 1,645 murders and 83,190 robberies. But despite the grit, grime and near bankruptcy of the city, it is still the greatest place on earth and, more importantly, the ultimate proving ground for a rock band on the rise like Aerosmith. "I can remember walking back to the Ramada Inn from the Record Plant, literally in the middle of the street," Joe Perry tells *Classic Rock*, with a laugh. "I only had a couple guitars back then, and I always carried my favourite one with me, a fifty-nine Les Paul. We would walk down the middle of the street at four or five in the morning, because it was the safest place. We didn't want to get too close to the dark alleys."

The music business had its own dark alleys and statistical casualties, and the band adopted a similar strategy of sticking together on the road. After their 1973 self-titled debut fell short of label expectations, selling only 30,000 copies, ↦

Lord of the thighs: Steven Tyler onstage in Rhode Island, July 1975.

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

Kramer and Hamilton: "So, how about we walk *this* way..."

NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

they lived in limbo, wondering if Columbia Records would drop them. But for Perry, Steven Tyler, Joey Kramer, Tom Hamilton and Brad Whitford failure was never an option. "The thought that we might not make it never occurred to us," Tyler wrote in his autobiography. "Everybody was totally committed."

They toured relentlessly, like "gypsies possessed", as Tyler put it. They got tighter. Their songs got better. Along the way they won fans while putting the fear into – and often upstaging – headliners such as Mott The Hoople, Kiss, Black Sabbath and Slade. "We were very competitive," bassist Tom Hamilton says today. "There's a lot of bands I like and respect now, but back then all I did was think of them as the people we wanted to blow off the stage."

Before Aerosmith's second album, when producer Bob Ezrin famously pronounced them "not ready", the band doubled down with even more we'll-show-'em bravado. *Get Your Wings*, produced by Jack Douglas and powered by FM rock tracks *Same Old Song And Dance* and *Train Kept A-Rollin'*, scored well enough to get them back in favour with Columbia. Expectations were high for the third record.

Forty years on, that third, *Toys In The Attic*, stands out as a milestone, the album that lifted the group from scrappy openers to headlining superstars. With more than eight million copies sold, and classic rock hits *Walk This Way* and *Sweet Emotion* still sounding amazingly vital, *Toys* is the perfect distillation of Aerosmith's edgy guitar riffage, lewd humour and high-energy strut, and one of the first albums to proudly hoist the American flag in the rock pantheon alongside those by their Brit heroes The Who, the Stones and Led Zeppelin. "*Toys* has some of the most important songs we ever wrote," says Perry. "It set the precedent for how the band worked over the years to come, reshaped our sound and gave us a huge amount of confidence."

The confidence that had been building on the road carried over into the studio. "We were playing bigger venues before bigger crowds," says Perry. "Detroit, Cincinnati, Cleveland. We felt like if we could win the heart of America, the rest of the country would follow. And through constant touring we learned what kinds of songs and grooves went over best. As a songwriter you start thinking in terms of: 'If I was sitting in the audience, what would I want to hear?' That gave new focus to the songs that ended up on *Toys*."

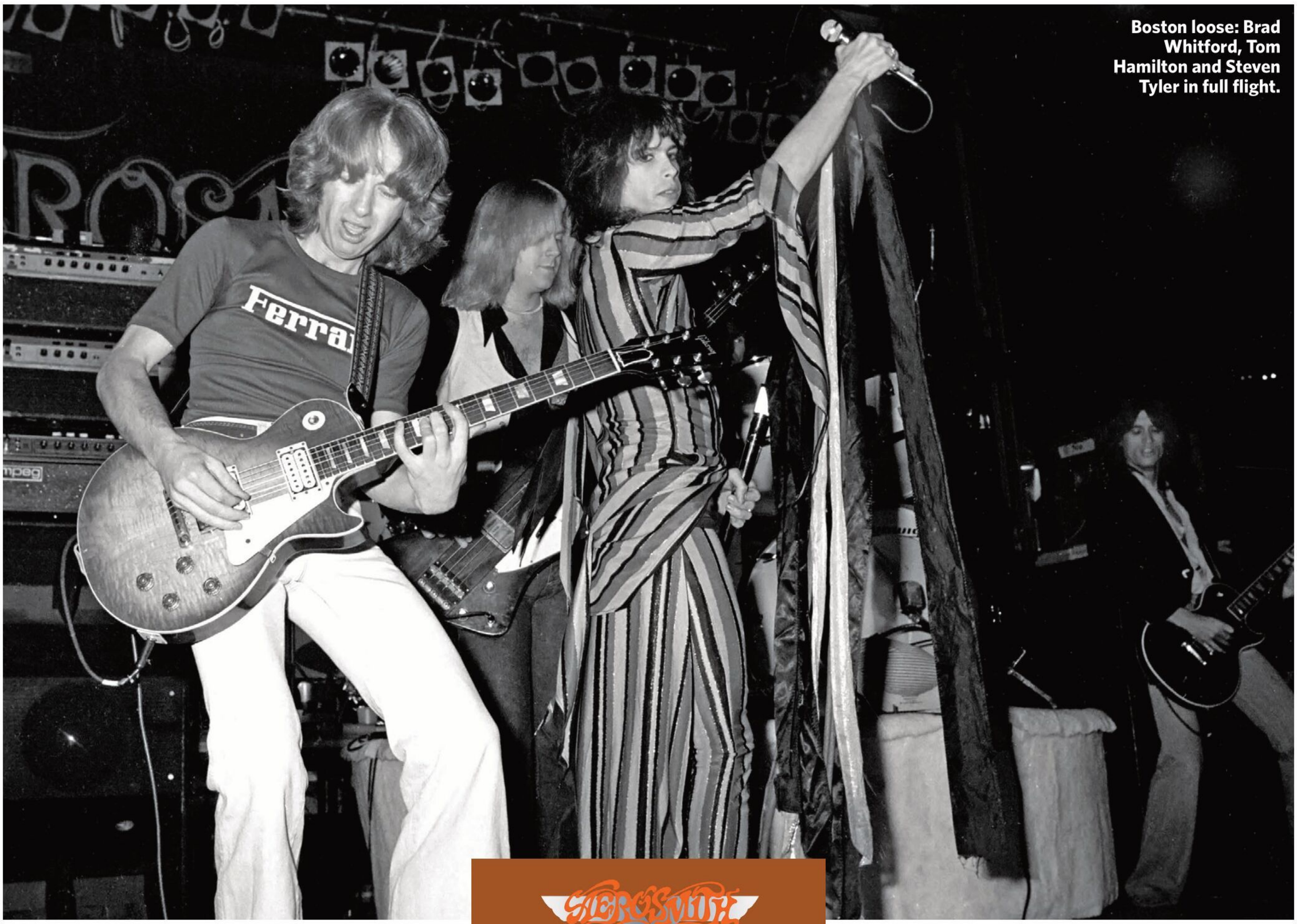
The final tour dates in December '74 were three sold-out headlining shows in their home town of Boston. After a holiday break, the band spent a week with producer Jack Douglas in a converted barn in Ashland, Massachusetts, jamming and sorting through song ideas. "Jack was like the sixth member of the band," Perry says. "He had great ears and was really encouraging."

"He knew how to have authority, how to really tell us what he thought and get us to try to new stuff," Hamilton adds. "He challenged us to get better. At the same time, he had this insane sense of humour, so it was a really fun process. We'd take the raw ideas that Steven and Joe brought in and rehearse the living shit out of them. There was a lot of camaraderie and laughter."

> ***"We would walk down the middle of the street at four or five in the morning, because it was the safest place."***
>
> **Joe Perry**

Arriving in NYC in the middle of what Steven Tyler called "a spine-chilling, ball-freezing winter", Aerosmith started tracking *Toys* at the Record Plant during the second week of January, 1975. In the world outside, the Weather Underground bombed the US State Department's office in DC, Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of the Conservative Party in Britain and Space Mountain opened at Disney World. But inside the studio it was all about reaching for the greatness of their heroes.

"The Record Plant was like hallowed ground," ➔



Boston loose: Brad Whitford, Tom Hamilton and Steven Tyler in full flight.

RICHARD E. AARON/GETTY

says Perry. "It was the first stop for anybody who was anybody. It was the place you went for rock. It was up there with Muscle Shoals and Sun Studio. In the preceding years you could pick out the four seats in front of the board and go: "Mick sat there, Jimi sat there, Janis sat there."

"You also had the Jimi Hendrix bathroom, with mirrors on the floor, ceiling and walls," Hamilton adds with a chuckle. "He wanted it that way because he would go in there and do acid. And then you had the giant John Lennon acoustic guitar. Someone must've challenged the guitar maker to see how big he could make a guitar. So you have this eight-foot high acoustic. Unplayable, but fun to look at it."

"The Record Plant was like the coolest nightclub you've ever seen," engineer Jay Messina recalls. "Plush carpeting, dim lights. I remember walking into Studio A for the first time, and The Who were doing vocals. The vibe of the place was totally electric.
I knew that's where I wanted to work."

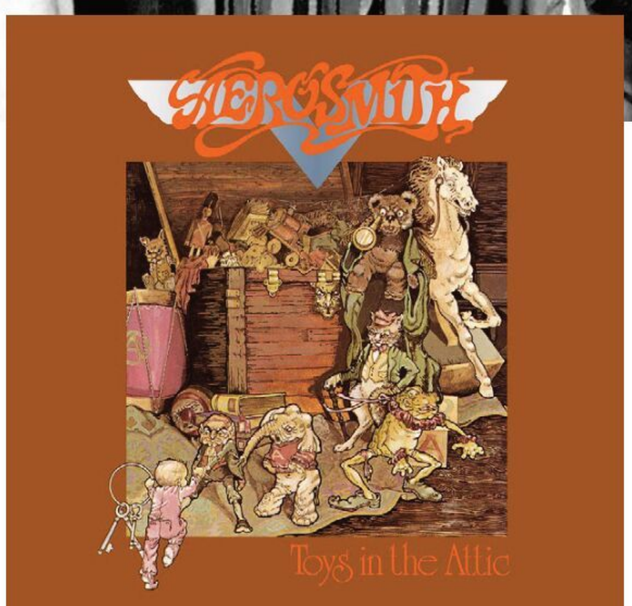
With Douglas out on the floor with the band, Messina manned the board and 16-track tape machine in the control room. "My basic approach was to capture the energy of Aerosmith," says Messina. "Getting the right moment on tape is far more important than any recording techniques. And with Steven's vocals it was always easy. He always had that edge that was just naturally there, so you wouldn't have to do anything extra to help him. His voice cut through. He had attitude, great phrasing and pitch. We would record a few takes, then he and Jack would comp the best lines and bounce it to one track. But all the takes were usually great. You know that joke today, where the singer does a take and asks the engineer: 'How was that?' And the engineer says: 'It sucked. Come on in.' There are so many things you can do now to fix a vocal, but it ends up sounding sterile or auto-tuned. Back then, without that safety net, the singers had to be on their game. And Steven was."

And then there were those monster guitar sounds. Messina laughingly recalls an experiment where "Jack and I set up thirteen amps, mic'd them all, then fed one guitar into all of them, just to see if it would sound thirteen times better than one amp. The answer was no. If you had one good amp, that was better."

And the Record Plant had that amp. "It was a fifty-watt Fender Twin from the 1950s," says Perry. "Every guitar player who came through the Record Plant played through it. It had an amazing sound. Of course, it's not about the amp or guitar as much as who's playing it. So I could play through that amp and it would've sounded totally different than Pete Townshend, Lowell George or Alex Lifeson. Funny thing: a friend of mine was helping me build my studio, and when the Record Plant closed down, he was able to buy that amp, and he's lent it to me over the years. To have that in my house is a really special thing. I played the guitar parts on *Walk This Way* and *Same Old Song And Dance* through that amp."

Like the amp, the Aerosmith guys were workhorses. Fuelled by pastries from Pozzo's Italian Bakery and sirloins from Downey's Steakhouse, they worked 16 hour days, six days a week, through the end of February. Songs went to tape, every one with its own distinct flavour: the hard-nosed raunch of *Adam's Apple*; the delta blues of *Uncle Salty*; the horn-fuelled swinging cover of the old Bull Moose Jackson tune *Big Ten Inch Record*; and the two swaggering tunes that would help make Aerosmith's career.

What New York Dolls singer David Johansen once



Animal Magic

The story behind the sleeve.

"When we were talking about the graphic design for the album," Tom Hamilton recalls, "we told the label: 'Get Ernie Cefalu.'"

Cefalu, along with design partner Craig Braun, ran Pacific Eye & Ear. They had also done already iconic sleeves for Alice Cooper's *Billion Dollar Babies* and Black Sabbath's *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*.

Cefalu met with Aerosmith in Hollywood to discuss ideas for the already titled album. Steven Tyler told *Circus* in 1975: "The original concept was that all the toys were standing around looking at this teddy bear sitting in the middle with his wrist slit and stuffing all over the floor. That was getting a little off-the-wall even for Humpty Dumpty. So we decided to take the other route, where it's a kind of a fantasy where the toys are up in the attic wondering when the kids who used to play with them would come back."

This prototype for *Toy Story 3* was put in the creative hands of Ingrid Haenke, a freelance illustrator who shared office space with Pacific Eye. "We had a lot of input on the graphics," says Hamilton, "but she did a beautiful illustration, and one that is instantly recognised."

called "the nastiest song I've ever heard on the radio" began with a dose of inspiration from New Orleans and ended with another from Mel Brooks.

"I was very into funk like The Meters and Sly And The Family Stone at the time," Perry says of *Walk This Way*. "So I felt inspired listening to this Meters song *Hey Pocky A-Way*, and thought maybe it's time for us to come up with something of our own in this groove. I wrote the riff and chords in Hawaii before a show. The guys heard it, found their parts, and it evolved from there. Joey had played in R&B bands, so that groove was his meat and potatoes. When we got into the studio we recorded the track, but it was missing the lyric hook. Steven had the melody. He was about ninety per cent there.

"One evening, we felt like we needed a break, so the guys went off to see *Young Frankenstein*. I'd already seen it. When they came back they were all laughing, and Jack was doing an imitation of Marty Feldman as Igor, saying: 'Walk this way.' Someone said: 'Hey, that would be a great title for the song!' Steven heard that, grabbed a pad and a pen, ran off and came back two hours later with the lyric."

Tyler remembers it differently. "I'd actually finished the song the night before our session and kept it in a bag that had all the other lyrics I'd written for the LP. Arriving that day at the studio at four pm, I got out of the cab and realised that I'd left the bag in the car! Gone. Two hours later I went upstairs. I sat down on the steps with my pen and wrote the words to *Walk This Way* on the wall. As I rewrote each line, the words all came back to me. Never saw the bag again."

Curiously for such an acknowledged classic, the song failed to chart in its first run, in 1975, but on re-release a year later, climbed to No.10 in the US. It's proto-rap delivery would boomerang around 10 years later for an even bigger impact, when their collaboration with Run DMC took the song into the Top 5 and introduced Aerosmith to a new generation.

One of the hallmarks of a classic song is that you can recognise it from the opening bars, and what Steven Tyler calls "Tom Hamilton's slippery, slimy, melodically delicious" intro on *Sweet Emotion* is up there with the great bass riffs of all time.

"I remember going out on the roof of my house, smoking a bit of weed, then picking up the bass," Hamilton says, "and this intro popped out. Then I started getting some guitar ideas for it. But I was shy about bringing my ideas into rehearsals. In New York, we had finished the basic tracks and had an extra day in the studio, and Jack says: "Does anybody have any ideas that we haven't tried yet?" I raised my hand and we started working on it. We cut the song the same day, and everybody was saying: "Nice one, man!" After we ↦

"I was angry at Elyssa because she stole my boyfriend, my significant other, my partner in crime. It was like losing a brother."

Steven Tyler

Joe Perry: the man in black.

JEFFREY MAYER/GETTY

"Toys In The Attic was where I knew we'd made it. It's a statement of longevity: the album will be played after you're dead."

Steven Tyler

finished the basic tracks, because of the budget Joey, Brad and I went back to Boston, and Steven and Joe stayed to do overdubs. A month later the album was finished. When I heard the final version of *Sweet Emotion* it blew my mind. I never knew it would become one of our most popular songs. What a great feeling. Something I can cling to. I can put that on my name tag: Sweet Emotion Guy!"

Despite the title, the lyric found Tyler in attack mode. When they weren't on the road in the early 70s, Joe and Steven were roommates. Then Joe moved out to be with his girlfriend, Elyssa. "I was angry at Elyssa because she stole my boyfriend, my significant other, my partner in crime," Tyler recalled. "It was like losing a brother. So now there was jealousy, this dark undercurrent humming along. And I put it into *Sweet Emotion*, which I pointed at Elyssa directly." *'You talk about things that nobody cares/You're wearing out things that nobody wears/Calling my name but I gotta make clear/I can't tell ya honey where I'll be in a year.'*

Of course, by now there was an even darker undercurrent starting to move through the band. Cocaine and pot were part of most 70s rock bands' daily regimen, but Aerosmith were becoming, as Kramer put it, "the single biggest market for drugs in New England". And the band had regular "production meetings" in the studio whenever they needed extra inspiration.

Hamilton reflects: "I don't want to sound pro-drug or anything, but there is something about being high that makes you look at things differently. But that period for some people can be relatively short, where the weed is helping you get into a different state of mind. But the cocaine was different. I've never been diagnosed as ADD [attention deficit disorder], but the more I've thought about it I must be. I'm so distractable. But the cocaine that I was doing was almost acting like an underground version of Ritalin [a stimulant used to treat ADD]. I think it gave us all energy and concentration. It was beneficial for a while during this time. But in a few years it became so destructive. It was just so awful. We worked hard to be able to play with feelings and be really tight, and then after *Rocks* it fell apart. We started making a lot of money, and that was the beginning of the end."

Brad Whitford: perfecting the *Attic* attack.

NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

Toys In The Attic was released on April 8, 1975. In the year of *Physical Graffiti*, Elton John's *Captain Fantastic* and Bowie's *Young Americans* it held its ground as a major contender. Three weeks after finishing up the album, the band were already into another run of touring – this time as headliners – that would take them through the end of the year. Fittingly, they ended in New York. Your correspondent, then at the tender age of 11, was at their triumphant Madison Square Garden show.

"It was just as exciting for us as it probably was for you," Perry tells me with a laugh. "The first time we headlined the Garden was huge. Like the old song says, once you make it there you can make it anywhere."

The rest of the band's saga lay ahead – the unravelling amid drugs and breakups; the 80s reinvention; the sobriety; the survival; and, this year, *Aerosmith Rocks Donington*, a full-length concert film ("It was a particularly strong show," says Perry). But without *Toys* there might not have been any saga worth recounting.

"We were pretty wet behind the ears on the first two albums, but *Toys* is where we got deep," says Hamilton. "When I listen to it, it reminds me of what it was like to be with the band and Jack in New York in the Record Plant, and having that great comradeship as you set out on the adventure of making a big album. That's as much as why it's my favourite as the actual songs."

"*Toys In The Attic* was where I knew we'd made it," said Tyler. "[With that title] I was the kid who put my initials in the rock 'cos I wanted the aliens to know I was there. It's a statement of longevity; the record will be played long after you're dead. Our records would be up there in the attic, too, with the things that you loved and never wanted to forget. And to me, Aerosmith was becoming that. I knew how The Beatles, The Animals and The Kinks did it – with lyrics and titles. I saw reason and rhyme in all the lunacy that we were concocting."

"It arrived at the moment when I think rock'n'roll albums were becoming an important part of people's lives," says Perry. "It was an important ritual, waiting for a record to come out, going to the record store the day it was released, buying it, taking it home, cracking the plastic, dropping the needle, sitting down in front of the stereo and listening to every song while you stared at the cover and read the liner notes. The experience was bigger than the record itself. And that's part of why *Toys* has endured."

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Breaking Bad

It was the album that sealed **Aerosmith**'s legend as the greatest US rock'n'roll band of the 70s. But their drug-addled masterpiece *Rocks* was also the point where things started to get *really* messy...

Words: **Neil Jeffries** Image: **Fin Costello/Getty**

Their third album, *Toys In The Attic*, had changed everything for Aerosmith in 1975, going Gold and rising to No. 11 in the Billboard chart. In 1976, with the follow-up, *Rocks*, the band would take things to yet another level.

While the *Toys* album has subsequently outsold it two to one, notching up eight million sales thanks in a large part to it containing *Sweet Emotion* and *Walk This Way*, *Rocks* actually charted higher, peaking at No.3, and highlighted a year when the band had five hit singles.

With hindsight, the albums used the same template and play like twins. *Rocks*, though, is the lyrically darker and musically heavier. Its songs chronicle the band's growing stature as a touring act as well as an unhealthy level of drug abuse.

After years when critics regularly lambasted the Boston five-piece as the poor man's Rolling Stones, influential US music magazines *Rolling Stone* and *Creem* finally began showering Aerosmith with compliments. The audiences (dubbed The Blue Army by the band due to the prevalence of denim in the arenas they were playing) grew exponentially and started behaving almost as outrageously as their heroes – boozing, popping pills and throwing firecrackers.

Aerosmith had always liked but to drink but, during the nine-month, 99-date *Toys In The Attic* tour (which never left the North American continent), cocaine was everywhere – thanks often to a crew who were as keen on it as the band.

"We drank a lot because of the blow and we got blown a lot because we drank a lot," shrugged singer Steve Tyler. The backstage term "production meeting" was slang for going somewhere to do a load of lines. Come the sessions for *Rocks*, as their buddies The Faces had observed a year earlier, what were once vices were now habits.

London calling: the Toxic Twins at Hammersmith Odeon in October 1976.

"We drank a lot because of the blow and we got blown a lot because we drank a lot."

Steven Tyler

Guitarist Joe Perry told me in 2014: "The main influence that the drugs will have had was that we were partying too much and didn't notice the kind of money we were spending or take care of the decisions we were making – I don't think we could have spent that much on drugs…"

They didn't, of course, as Perry's fellow guitarist Brad Whitford recalled.

"My back account started to grow and I felt very wealthy all of a sudden," Whitford later recalled of the sudden upswing in the band's income. "I wasn't, but $10,000 felt like a million. I was 22. I thought, 'Man, I can buy the kind of car I've always dreamed about. That's when I got my first Porsche. I think that's when we all got our first Porsches."

On December 30, 1975, after the third of three shows at the 14,000-capacity San Diego Sports Arena, Aerosmith finally drew breath. At the suggestion of co-manager David Krebs of the band's management company Leber-Krebs Inc, Columbia had re-released *Dream On*, the power ballad from their self-titled 1973 debut that had always been a hit with audiences on tour. Three years earlier it peaked at No.59 on the Billboard chart. This time, it sailed to No.6 following its release in January 1976.

Basking in this glory Aerosmith took January off and investigated their new "clubhouse", purchased for them in the autumn of '75 while they pinballed around North America. It was sourced for them by Ray Tabano, the guitarist who co-founded the band with Tyler and Perry before being replaced by Whitford in 1971. Since then, Tabano had run the fan club and done anything else management asked of him.

One such task was identifying premises that could serve the band as a lock-up, offices and rehearsal space. Up a cul-de-sac on an unassuming residential street in Waltham – a city suburb about 10 miles east of the band's apartment in Beacon Street in the centre of Boston – Tabano found it.

Krebs checked over the empty corrugated-iron clad warehouse, designated 55 Pond Street, and agreed a $40,000 deal. That investment saw the upstairs space converted into a lounge and offices, from where Tabano ran the lucrative merchandising business, installation of some state-of-the-art wiring and the construction of a stage.

The band christened the building, big enough

Tom Hamilton: the blond bomber.

RIght in the nuts: Tyler greets his public.

GETTY X3

for them to park their flash new cars in, the Wherehouse. They hung drapes from the high ceiling to improve acoustics and ambience, and adorned the walls with heroes – a huge montage of Mick'n'Keef images, alongside Chuck Berry, Rod Stewart and more. When Aerosmith weren't in residence, fellow Leber-Krebs outfits Ted Nugent and Mahogany Rush would also use the space. It also provided a launchpad for up-and-coming local band Boston – the future AOR superstars played a showcase there that got them their deal.

"We were partying too much and we didn't notice the kind of money we were spending or the decisions we were making."

Joe Perry

In February, the Record Plant's mobile unit backed into the Wherehouse and when the door closed behind it, work on *Rocks* began in earnest. Jack Douglas – who had co-produced Aerosmith's second album *Get Your Wings* and was at the helm for *Toys In The Attic* – unsurprisingly got the job again, although this time the band took a co-production credit.

Whitford explained why their working relationship with Douglas proved so fruitful. "The thing about Jack was he was *there* living with us in Boston, working, playing drums, a little pot/blow/beer," said the guitarist "He'd try anything, and it inspired us. He was a mad genius but so solid."

Douglas was also a joker, as drummer Joey Kramer recalled: "Jack convinced me that if ate nothing but greens for two weeks I'd smell like a freshly cut lawn. This went great until I got really constipated, then Jack had me drink a quart of prune juice to push it all through. He hid a prototype sound-activated tape recorder in the bathroom. When he rewound the tape there was a full day of horrible gas and flushing toilets…"

Whitford: "When you're in the studio with Jack you laugh, roar, do silly shit – it's loose. I'd throw ideas back and forth with him and leave it up to Steven to come up with a great lick and a vocal."

On *Rocks* the lyrics, almost exclusively written by Tyler, came last and usually infuriatingly late. All the band knew, though, that the singer made Aerosmith unique and that came at price. Bassist Tom Hamilton told me of his respect for the singer's wide range of input.

Steven, musically, has so much knowledge," said Hamilton. "Not schoolbook knowledge just built-in knowledge from growing up with his father being a classical pianist…"

Douglas, meanwhile, saw the strengths of the others and encouraged them to write. On *Toys In The Attic* that encouragement prompted Tom Hamilton to deliver *Sweet Emotion* and *Uncle Salty*, while Whitford chipped in with *Round And Round*. For *Rocks* the pair stepped up to the plate again.

In the Wherehouse, as the band tracked through February and into March, the character of the two guitarists was highlighted on their respective songs. Jack Douglas has subsequently described Joe Perry as a great improvisor; Whitford more a technician, methodical and dedicated – recording take after take if needed.

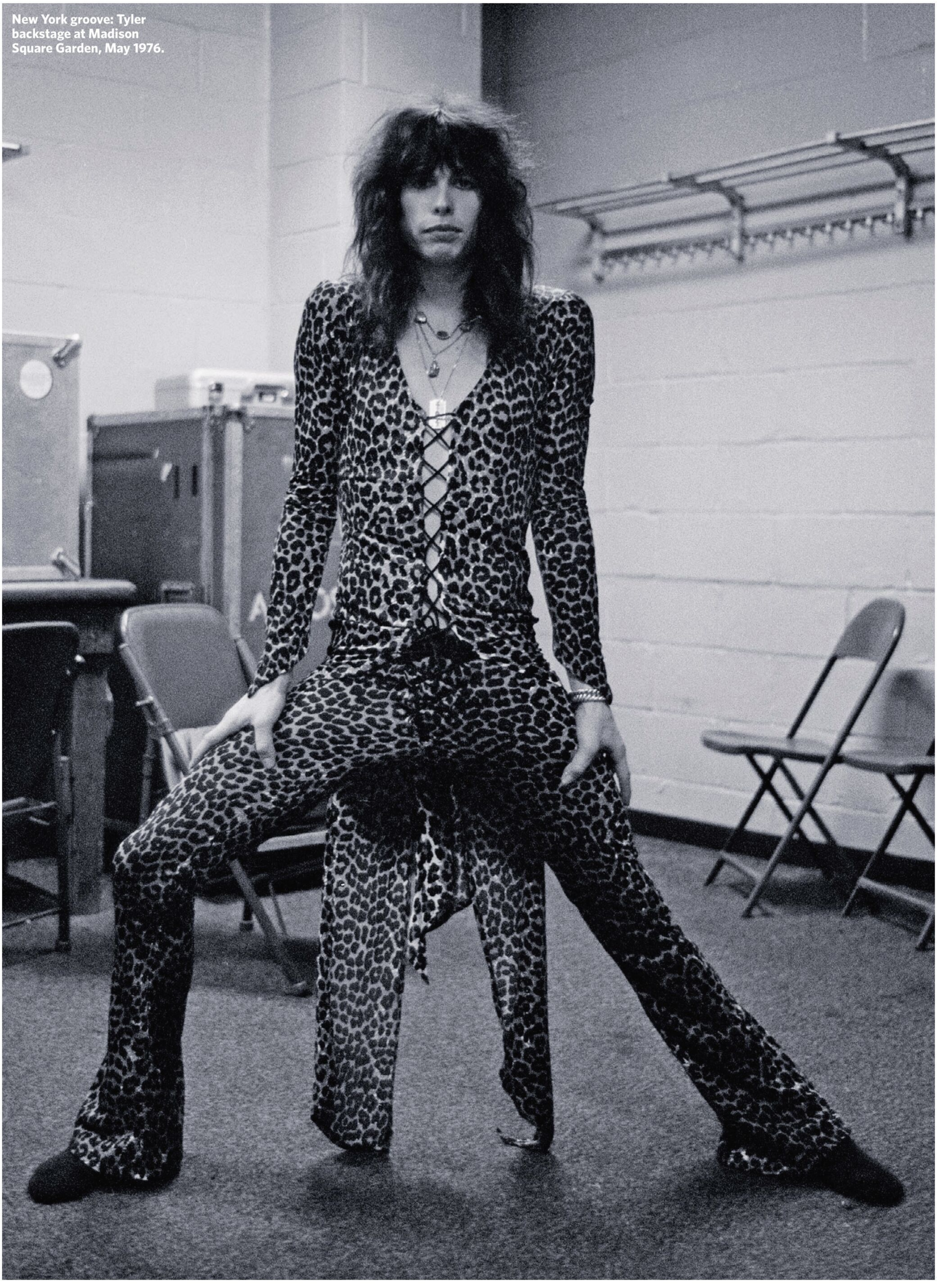
On *Rocks* the pair of them got to shine, although predictably, Perry's contributions were the flashier. Joe conceived *Rats In The Cellar* as a counterpart to *Toys In The Attic*'s title-track, as he would later quip: "We were getting lower down and dirty. So the cellar seemed like a good place to go."

Tyler's lyrics were clearly about the influx and impact of drugs on Aerosmith: *"Things were coming apart, sanity was scurrying south…"* When he sang about *"losing my connection"* in the third line of the song he was referring to a dealer who supplied top-purity heroin to Perry – until the dealer was killed in nefarious circumstances.

In his 2014 autobiography *Rocks: My Life In And Out Of Aerosmith*, Perry paid the dealer some kind of complement when he recalled the genesis of *Back In The Saddle*.

"I was in my bedroom, flat on my back, fucked up on heroin, playing my six-string bass," he recalled. "The music flew out of me – all the parts, all the riffs. It came in one special-delivery package. I was still in the stage when drugs were opening doors to my imagination…"

Two of Perry's other songs – *Lick And A Promise* (about the band's efforts at winning an audience) and *Get The Lead Out* (Tyler's exhortation for them to get up and dance) – were both brutal and fast-paced, the products of a restless mind as well as his habit. "In some sense all these songs were about movement," the guitarist later reflected. ➢



New York groove: Tyler backstage at Madison Square Garden, May 1976.

GETTY X2

Diamond geezers: Aerosmith celebrate the success of *Rocks*, May 1976.

His fifth, *Combination*, written alone, nails the band's health and wealth in the lines: *"Walkin' on Gucci, wearin' Yves Saint-Laurent, Barely stay on 'cause I'm so Goddamn gaunt."*

Whitford, meanwhile, conceived the funky *Last Child* – the album's first and biggest selling single, complete with folk musician Paul Prestopino on banjo – and *Nobody's Fault*. The latter starts with the sound of Perry and Whitford's guitars playing odd chords loud and in-synch – Tyler's idea as the song didn't have an intro. Seventeen seconds in the vocal mic picks up the noise of a door opened by the union "engineer" Columbia Records insisted was present at all sessions – Tyler's idea to leave it in as he doubted he'd better his take. That kind of loose flexibility was common.

Perry recalled Tom Hamilton writing *Sick As A Dog* on guitar, "so when we recorded it he played it on guitar with Brad. I'm in the control room playing bass listening to what I was doing. Then it needed a solo so I gave the bass to Steven and went back into the studio to play guitar. So the end is three guitars and Steven playing bass…"

Long before he ever wrote a finished lyric, Tyler's fingerprints were over every song. Eventually they had an album almost complete, but relocated to Manhattan's Record Plant studios to finish. There – as he had done on the previous three albums – Tyler came up with a piano-led power ballad, this one called *Home Tonight*. Better loved, though, was opener *Back In The Saddle*, the singer's "nostalgic harkening to every Spaghetti Western I ever saw".

It was a big production number full of sound effects: coconut shells as horses hooves; a whip effect produced by Tyler whirling a guitar chord overhead close to strategically placed mics; and multi-tracked foot-stomps for which he wore an old pair of boots he'd had in high school boosted by a tambourine gaffer-taped to them by David Johansen, who dropped by, the New York Dolls having befriended Aerosmith earlier in the year.

> **"In the 70s, *Rocks* was the peak, when we were firing on all cylinders. Everybody was in that creative space."**
>
> Joe Perry

Rocks – a title Perry had originally proposed for *Toys in The Attic* – was released on May 14, 1979, after the band had already been touring the US for a month. Its black sleeve featured a band logo and five diamonds perched on a mirror, representing both the five members and the cocaine slang of the title. It pretty much set the tone for hedonism that would follow.

Tyler: "The stadiums we played were getting bigger. Backstage set-ups became more elaborate. When we performed at the Cow Palace in San Francisco, there were pinball machines and ridiculously slammin' naked mannequins that lined the hallways from the stage to our dressing rooms…"

Back at the hotels, Tyler's room was party central. "We threw the TVs out of the window into the pool," he wrote in his autobiography, Does The Noise In My Head Bother You? "If you kept the extension chords on the TVs, when they hit the water they exploded like depth charges."

The singer was arrested more times than he can remember. He was incarcerated in Memphis after "repeated profanities" on stage, in Lincoln, Nebraska for setting off firecrackers in a Holiday Inn, and in Germany with new girlfriend Bebe Buell for blowing hash in the face of a customs officer at the airport.

The whole touring party's reliance on drugs made crossing international borders a high-risk enterprise. For *Rocks*, in addition to 74 dates in the States – including their first big outdoor headliner to 80,000 at Michigan's Pontiac Stadium in June – they played 14 shows in Europe (four of those in the UK) and seven in Japan. But brushes with the law like the one in Germany meant that apart from two dates in 1977, including the Reading Festival, Aerosmith wouldn't need a passport again until touring *Pump* in 1989. The album though, knew no barriers.

The last word goes to Joe Perry. "I have a theory that with any kind of art you go through phases, periods of creativity – then periods where you have to work at it," he said. "Sometimes you just wake up and explode, others you have to make yourself do it. There's an ebb and a flow – especially in a band where not everyone is going to be in the same place at the same time.

"In the '70s, when we were learning how to be recording artists, Rocks was arguably the peak, when everybody was firing on all cylinders. We were in a really creative space and everybody was in that space at the same time. That's why it worked."

Q&A

Joe Perry

He quit Aerosmith once, nearly joined Alice Cooper's band, and, no, he didn't spend millions on drugs. Speaking to *Classic Rock* in 2010, these are the confessions of one half of the Toxic Twins.

Words: **Peter Makowski** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

In 2010, Anthony Joseph Perry may just be the man who carries on the Aerosmith name. A little over 30 years ago, however, it was a different story when Perry quit the group. And what goes around comes around, since it was when he left the first time around that he formed the Joe Perry Project…

Why did you leave Aerosmith in 1979?
A lot of things. First of all, after everything we had done in the 70s and all the places we had played, we had a financial meeting and the managers said that we all owed money for room charges and things like that. We were like: "What are you talking about? We've made millions of dollars and filled out RFK Stadium [in Washington, DC] many times." None of us had, like, four houses and 20 cars or any of that stuff.

I mean, we had spent our share of money on drugs but certainly not millions of dollars. And they said: "Joe, you could do a solo record and that would help knock down the debt." I said I'd think about it. At the same time the band was going through its bullshit and upheavals. And after the famous spilt milk incident I thought: "Okay, I'll put a band together, go on the road, have fun and I won't have to put up with any of the bullshit." That was it. If we were saner at the time, we would have taken a break and then sued our managers.

Is there any truth to the rumour you nearly joined the Alice Cooper Band when you left?
Yeah, I did. In fact I owe Alice a call, because he called me the other day. I was in the process of writing some songs with Alice anyway.

These days, you guys are older. You have children and personal relationships. Does it get harder to focus on the music?
You have to get a balance. As far as I'm concerned family comes first, no matter what. If you don't have a good solid base then you're kind of useless out there.

How different was it in the early days?
Well, then I didn't really havea family, so to speak. But I was never out there chasing groupies or that kind of thing. I mean, I loved to party but I always had a girlfriend. I was always a one-girl guy… I mean, y'know, generally [laughs]. But I think that set up the paradigm for how I feel today; it's really important to have that. I've been married for 24 years and I haven't been married long enough yet. It still feels fresh and great and I couldn't be doing what I'm doing now if [wife] Billie wasn't there to help me to do the best I can do.

"I was never out there chasing groupies. I was a one-girl guy. Y'know, generally..." – Joe Perry

Recently it's been reported that you said Aerosmith have only a few more years and a couple of albums left in them. Is this something that's been discussed as a band, or is it how you feel personally?
Nah, it's kind of looking at our ages and that kind of thing. Y'know, surmising… We're basically whacking our way through the jungle trying to figure how it will work; I don't think there's a set plan. I can remember talking to one groupie in Boston and she said that she spent a lot of time with the English bands. She said that most of them figured they'd have a couple of hot years and then that's it. And that was the kind of thinking; no one thought that it could be a career.I grew up when music was a social statement: us against them, don't trust anybody over 30, et cetera. And that has obviously changed [laughs].

Thinking about drugs and the rock'n'roll lifestyle you led, do you have regrets? Or do you think you wouldn't be where you are now with those experiences?
Yeah, we wouldn't be where we are now… wherever that is. If it wasn't for going through everything we've been through; the experience, so-called paying the dues, surviving that era. I mean, we certainly weren't the only band getting fucked up. It was a way of life for everybody, especially in the late 60s, but still – we survived it, we were predisposed to that. So we've had to deal with it over the years. That's one thing that never leaves you; you've always got to deal with it in one form or another.

In your second incarnation Aerosmith became poster children for recovery. Was that your intention, or was it foisted on you? And how do you feel about it now?
We really had to prove to the industry that we were back, and that we were accountable.I mean, we couldn't get bookings because we cancelled so many gigs, or had to stop playing in the middle of the show because we were so screwed up. In fact when the band got back together Columbia wouldn't release an Aerosmith record and we had to pay them $300,000 to get out of the contract so we could find a record label that would believe in us.

We really took a chance going straight because we were known as the party band; we thought maybe our fans won't like us anymore now that we're straight. But then we decided that the bottom line is we're not making good music, but we *can* make great music if we get straight. I think our fans would rather hear us play straight than play shitty knowing that we're drinking a bunch of Jack Daniel's. So we just made the choice. Making it public was about proving to people that we were back, and also because we were one of the first bands to come out and say:"We burnt out but now we're back – and we're back for the music." In the beginning we didn't realise what a powerful example we were providing for people that needed help.

How do you mean?
Well, it's always out there. There's always liquor around, there's always the temptation, but you learn to live without it. You're far better off without it, far more creative and you don't have hangovers.

HIGH TIMES

After the world-beating one-two of *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks*, **Aerosmith** were soaring. But as they started work on the budget-busting *Draw The Line*, drugs and dysfunction would send them into a tailspin that would take a decade to pull out of...

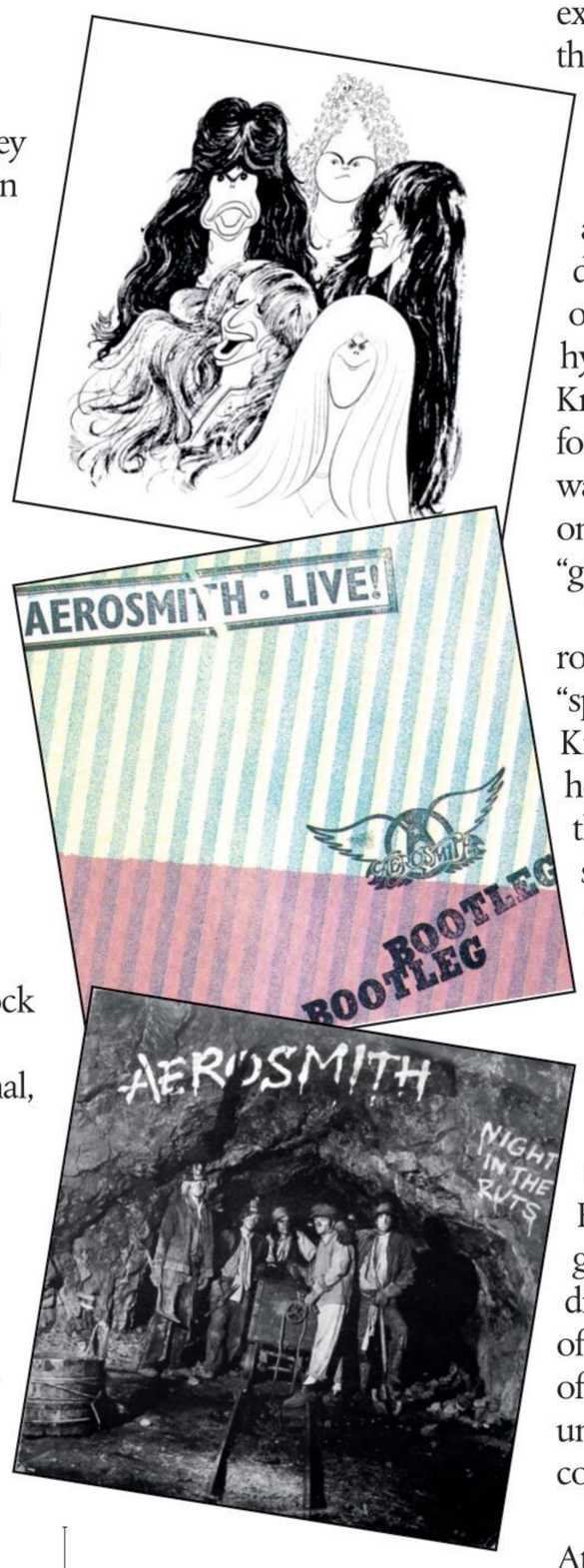
Words: **Paul Elliott** Lead Picture: **Ian Dickson/Getty**

As 1977 rolled in, Aerosmith were flying high. In January, the band's latest single *Walk This Way*, belatedly extracted from 1975 album *Toys In The Attic*, hit No.10 in the US. And in February, when they toured in Japan for the first time, they experienced a level of hysteria akin to Beatlemania.

There was no rock band on Earth bigger than Led Zeppelin, but Aerosmith were rising fast. As their producer Jack Douglas said: "Kiss was their only competition, at least among American rock bands."

And yet, in the early summer of '77, when Douglas started work on Aerosmith's fifth album, *Draw The Line*, the problems within the group were plain to see. Hard drugs had taken a hold on the band's two leading figures, singer Steven Tyler and guitarist Joe Perry. As the latter would put it: "The Beatles recorded The White Album, right? Well, *Draw The Line* was our Blackout Album."

It was an album created out of chaos, and it marked a turning point in the life of America's greatest rock'n'roll band. In its wake came two years of insanity – near-fatal car crashes, on-stage meltdowns, drug mania and fights between their wives and girlfriends, culminating in the shock exit of Joe Perry in 1979. And strangest of all, it was during these wild years, when the band was at its most dysfunctional, that some of Aerosmith's greatest music was made.



The scene for the recording of Draw The Line was the Cenacle, a vast mansion set in 100 acres in a remote part of New York State near the village of Armonk. In 1977 the owner of the Cenacle was a psychiatrist who planned to turn the old place into a residential home for troubled adolescents. "Instead," joked Aerosmith's bassist Tom Hamilton, "he got us."

By the time the band members arrived in June, Jack Douglas and his team had set up a mobile recording studio on the ground floor, with heavy cables running from room to room. For added natural ambience, Joey Kramer's drums were recorded in the chapel, and Joe Perry's rig was installed in a walk-in fireplace. The difficulty for Douglas was in getting the band into a working routine. As Perry later admitted, "We were drug addicts dabbling in music, rather than musicians dabbling in drugs." Their hazardous recreational habits also extended to racing their sports cars, Ferraris and Porches, on the surrounding country lanes, and messing around with firearms, Perry having recently added to his private arsenal a semiautomatic Thompson machine gun.

The days and nights passed in a blur. "We were *out there* at the Cenacle," said Tyler, whose erratic mood swings were dictated by whatever he was on – snorting fat lines of cocaine one moment, then gulping downers, in particular the sedative-hypnotic Tuinal. During one dusk-till-dawn bender, he and Kramer set out at 5am to shoot beer cans with .22 rifles, only for Tyler to pass out with the gun in his hands before a shot was fired. Perry, meanwhile, was using heroin, breakfasting on White Russian cocktails, and wandering around the place "glassy-eyed", as Douglas recalled.

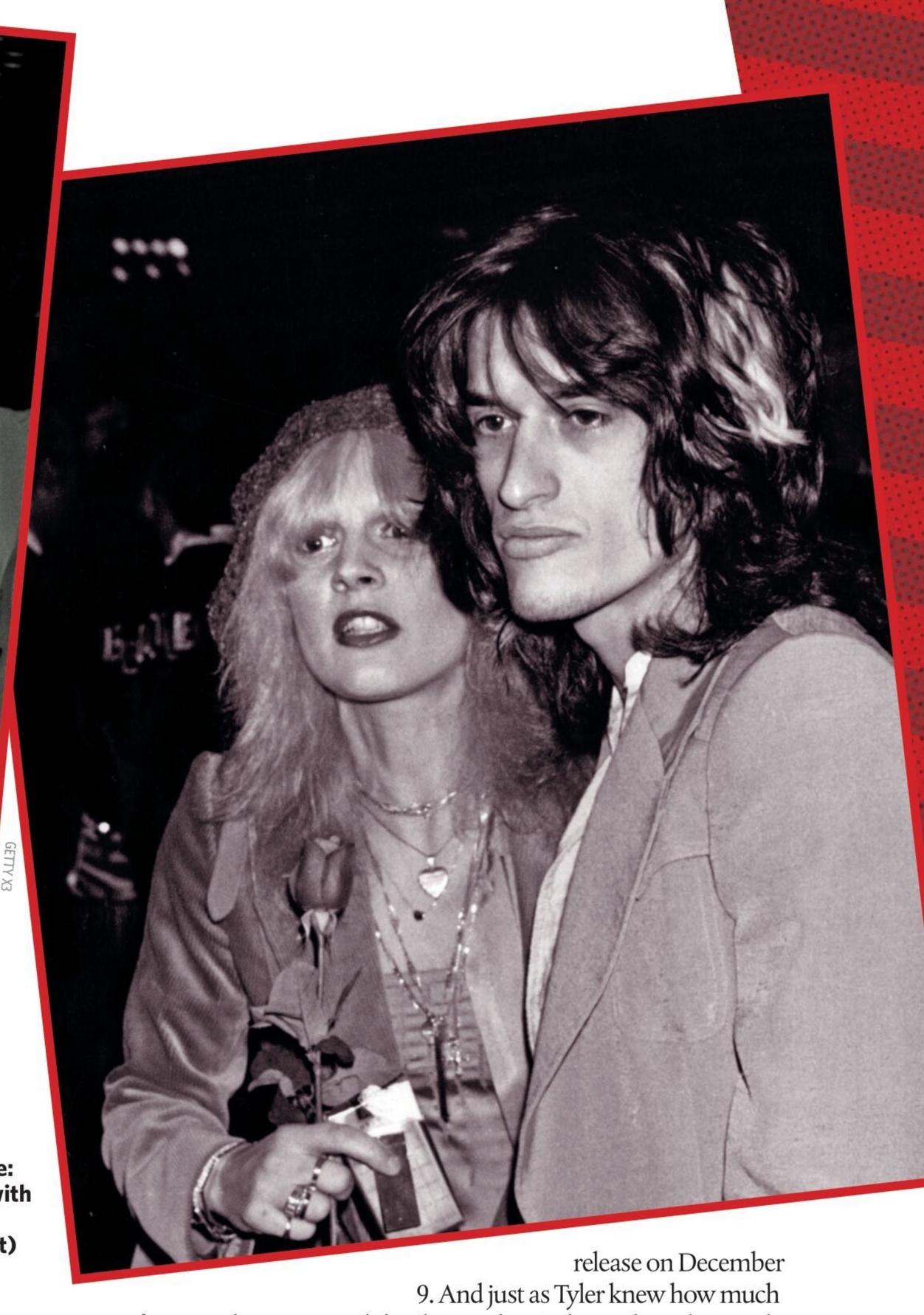
With Tyler and Perry zonked, shut away in their second-floor rooms for days at a time, the band was, in Hamilton's words, "split in two". Most evenings, it was just the trio of Hamilton, Kramer and guitarist Brad Whitford working on tracks. Tyler, holed up in his room, was struggling to write lyrics, and on the rare occasions when Perry did show, he was barely able to string a few notes together – in Douglas' estimation, "totally wrecked". Perry never denied it. By this stage, he said, "Steven and I had stopped giving a fuck."

After six weeks at the Cenacle, with the album still unfinished and tour dates looming, the band headed home to Boston. But in the condition these guys were in, minds frazzled, two of them were lucky to make it back alive. Kramer reckoned he was doing over 130mph in his Ferrari when he fell asleep at the wheel and crashed into a guardrail. He was hospitalized with a head injury but quickly discharged with seven stitches. The $19,000 Ferrari was a write-off. Perry was also driving at high speed when he lost control of his Corvette and hit an unmarked police car. He emerged unscathed, and as he later noted, with some amusement, the cop kindly took him to a nearby Dunkin' Donuts.

Others might have seen this as a wake-up call, but not Perry. At home during a brief period of downtime, he got loaded on opium, rolled into a ball and swallowed whole, drank vintage wine like it was water, and rode his luck time and again in what he described as "a series of car accidents". The madness continued unabated on tour, for which the road crew packed a chainsaw for Perry to dismantle hotel furniture.

What was officially named The Aerosmith Express Tour – but known among the band's long-suffering crew as The ➔

"We were drug addicts dabbling in music, rather than musicians dabbling in drugs." Joe Perry



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Lick The Boots That Kick You Tour – ran from June to October, beginning and ending in the US, with European dates in between. Throughout this period, Jack Douglas was kept busy: taping shows for a live album and, during breaks in the tour, conducting the final sessions for *Draw The Line* at The Record Plant studios in New York City, where Tyler applied what little discipline he had to finishing his lyrics and vocals.

In Europe in August, a performance at the Lorelei Festival in Germany was cut short when Tyler collapsed after just three songs, but at the Reading Festival, the band turned it on, winning over a rain-soaked audience mired in mud. And it was during their time in the UK that Perry recorded his solos for the new album's title track at AIR Studio in London, owned by The Beatles' producer George Martin. On that occasion, Perry played with genuine conviction as his new friend, Queen guitarist Brian May, watched on.

In October, back on home turf, there was another close call during a show at the Philadelphia Spectrum. With 17,000 fans in rowdy mood, an M-80 firecracker was thrown on stage, the deafening explosion leaving Tyler with a burned cornea and Perry with a burst artery in his right hand. As Whitford said: "Steven could have been blinded." Later that month, as Tyler and Perry added the finishing touches to *Draw The Line* at The Record Plant, they had even more reason to count their blessings. On October 20, a plane carrying Southern rock band Lynyrd Skynyrd crashed near Gillsburg, Mississippi, killing six of the occupants, including singer Ronnie Van Zant and guitarist Steve Gaines. This plane, a Convair CV-240, had been offered for Aerosmith's use earlier that year, but had been declared unsafe by the band's head of flight operations.

What happened to Lynyrd Skynyrd had a profound effect on the members of Aerosmith. As Joe Perry said: "It was a terrible tragedy, and we just considered ourselves incredibly lucky. To be that close to it, and knowing those guys, it was really a blow." But in the immediate aftermath, just a few days after the disaster, Aerosmith hit the road again, and while the shows were selling out, the flagship single for the new album, its title track, bombed. "It didn't make the top 40," Tyler said. "And this was supposed to be a huge album for us, a big follow-up to our best work."

A turbulent year for the band ended with the album's release on December 9. And just as Tyler knew how much was riding on it, so did Jack Douglas. As he explained: "It took us six months and half a million dollars to make that record."

Trouble and strife: Tyler and Perry with warring partners Cyrinda Foxe (left) and Elyssa Perry (right).

Demand for a new Aerosmith album was sky-high, and Draw The Line took off like a rocket. The bottom line was what mattered to Columbia Records, and according to Douglas, this was "the fastest selling record the label ever had". But by January 1978, the album had peaked at number 11 in the US – a major disappointment after the previous record, Rocks, had reached number three. And in Rolling Stone magazine, a review of Draw The Line was as stinging as it was perceptive: "Chaotic to the point of malfunction, with an impenetrably dense sound adding to the confusion… This album shows the band in a state of shock."

Going for the jugular, that review pinned *Draw The Line* as "a truly horrendous record". The truth of it was not quite so simple. Certainly, this album was no match for what came before, the twin peaks of *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks*. But there was a powerful intensity, a cocaine-induced mania, in the title track and the Perry-sung *Bright Light Fright*, the latter inspired, so Perry claimed, by the "energy" of the Sex Pistols – evidence, albeit slight, that some outside influence could permeate his fazed consciousness. There was depth in *Kings And Queens*, a weird and heavy trip in which Tyler sang of ancient European history, guillotines and Vikings – *Walk This Way* this was not. ➔

"We had reached the top, but the band was dying. I wanted to give them time to work out their problems." Manager David Krebs

Cheers!: another quiet night in with Aerosmith in 1978.

The album's best track, *I Wanna Know Why*, proved that Aerosmith could still sound as cool as fuck, even if Tyler and Perry had stopped giving a fuck. And while their version of *Milk Cow Blues* – a 1930s song credited to American bluesman Kokomo Arnold and famously recorded by Elvis Presley in the 50s – was laid down because they were short on original material, it had a real swing to it, and carried a little poignancy following the death of Elvis on August 16, 1977.

What was lacking in *Draw The Line* was anything approaching the beauty in songs such as *Uncle Salty* and *You See Me Crying* from *Toys In The Attic*, and the ballad *Home Tonight* from Rocks. This album, born of excess, was all hard edges. The only lightness of touch was in the illustration on the cover, a portrait of the group by caricaturist Al Hirschfeld.

As Jack Douglas put it: "*Draw The Line* is a classic title that says it all, the coke lines, heroin lines, drawing symbolic lines and crossing them all – no matter what."

By this stage, it was no secret that Aerosmith were into the hard stuff, Tyler and Perry most of all. "The press started referring to Joe and Steven as The Toxic Twins," Tom Hamilton said. "We started hearing rumours that we were breaking up when word got out how crazy things were." What was unknown, outside of the band's inner circle, was the twisted little drama playing out in Tyler and Perry's personal lives.

Perry and his wife Elyssa were tight with David Johansen, singer for the New York Dolls, and his wife Cyrinda Foxe, a model, actress and protégé of Andy Warhol. Johansen had even co-written the song *Sight For Sore Eyes* from *Draw The Line*. When it was discovered that Tyler and Cyrinda were having an affair, Elyssa was mortified. "I felt like an idiot," she said. "David was good friend." Her worst fears were confirmed when Cyrinda left Johansen for Tyler, and then revealed that she was pregnant.

With the relationship between singer and guitarist deteriorating, the tension heightened by non-stop drug use, Aerosmith manager David Krebs devised a simple strategy for 1978 in an effort to keep the band together. As he explained it: "We had reached the top, but the band was dying. I wanted to give them time to work out their problems. We came up with these giant events. That's how they spent most of the year, headlining ten major festivals."

Tyler and Jimmy Crespo, the man who replaced Joe Perry.

One such event came on March 18, California Jam II in Ontario, 30 miles from Los Angeles, where an audience of 350,000 saw Aerosmith topping a bill featuring Ted Nugent, Foreigner, Heart and Santana. And it was during this trip to California that this band of Beatles fans got to work with George Martin, the man known as 'the fifth Beatle'.

Martin was producing the soundtrack album for the movie *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, a musical comedy, loosely based on The Beatles' most famous work, starring the Bee Gees and Peter Frampton, and created by Robert Stigwood, the manager of the Bee Gees and the brains behind the box-office smashes *Saturday Night Fever* and *Grease*. The *Sgt. Pepper* movie had Beatles songs sung by a diverse cast – the Gibb brothers and Frampton, Alice Cooper and the comedians Frankie Howerd and Steve Martin. And for Aerosmith, there was a

Get your wings: the band and their private jet.

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"*Draw The Line* is a classic title that says it all, the coke lines, heroin lines, drawing symbolic lines and crossing them all." Producer Jack Douglas

cameo role in which they played to type as 'The Future Villain Band', performing a rocking version of the Fab Four's funkiest number, *Come Together*. The track was recorded with Martin in just two takes, and while the movie and soundtrack album would bomb, Aerosmith would have a Top 30 hit with *Come Together* in September, the month in which Tyler and Cyrinda were married.

Through that summer, the band played more of those giant events. On July 4, American Independence Day, they top-billed at the Texxas World Music Festival at the 100,000-capacity Dallas Cottonbowl, with Ted Nugent and Heart again as support acts, along with Journey and Eddie Money. They also played a few low-key club shows, billed as Dr. J. Jones And The Interns, which were recorded by Jack Douglas for the live album that was released on October 27. They named it *Live! Bootleg*, and the titled implied, it was, by design, the antithesis of Peter Frampton's sweet-sounding mega-hit *Frampton Comes Alive!*

The true measure of what Aerosmith delivered in *Live! Bootleg* was summed up by Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash, who was just a kid of thirteen when the album came out. "That was the big one for me," he said. "*Live! Bootleg* is one of the most underrated albums of all time, one of the best live rock'n'roll albums ever made. It started the trend for me to go out and discover new bands by buying their live albums, because that way I could get all the best songs and for me the whole live thing was the most exciting thing in the world. The way that *Live! Bootleg* starts with *Back In The Saddle*, that whole intro with the crowd going crazy and the flash-pots going off, that whole build-up, made it so exciting to me."

Live! Bootleg was a triumph, but within a month of its release, with the band back out on tour, a shocking incident in a Chicago hotel pushed Tyler and Perry even closer to breaking point. An argument between Elyssa and Cyrinda, the latter eight months pregnant, escalated into a brawl, in which Elyssa was alleged to have kicked Cyrinda in the stomach. Brad Whitford's wife Karen witnessed what happened, later recalled it as "a very ugly scene", and noted, "Things between Steven and Joe went immediately downhill, as you can imagine."

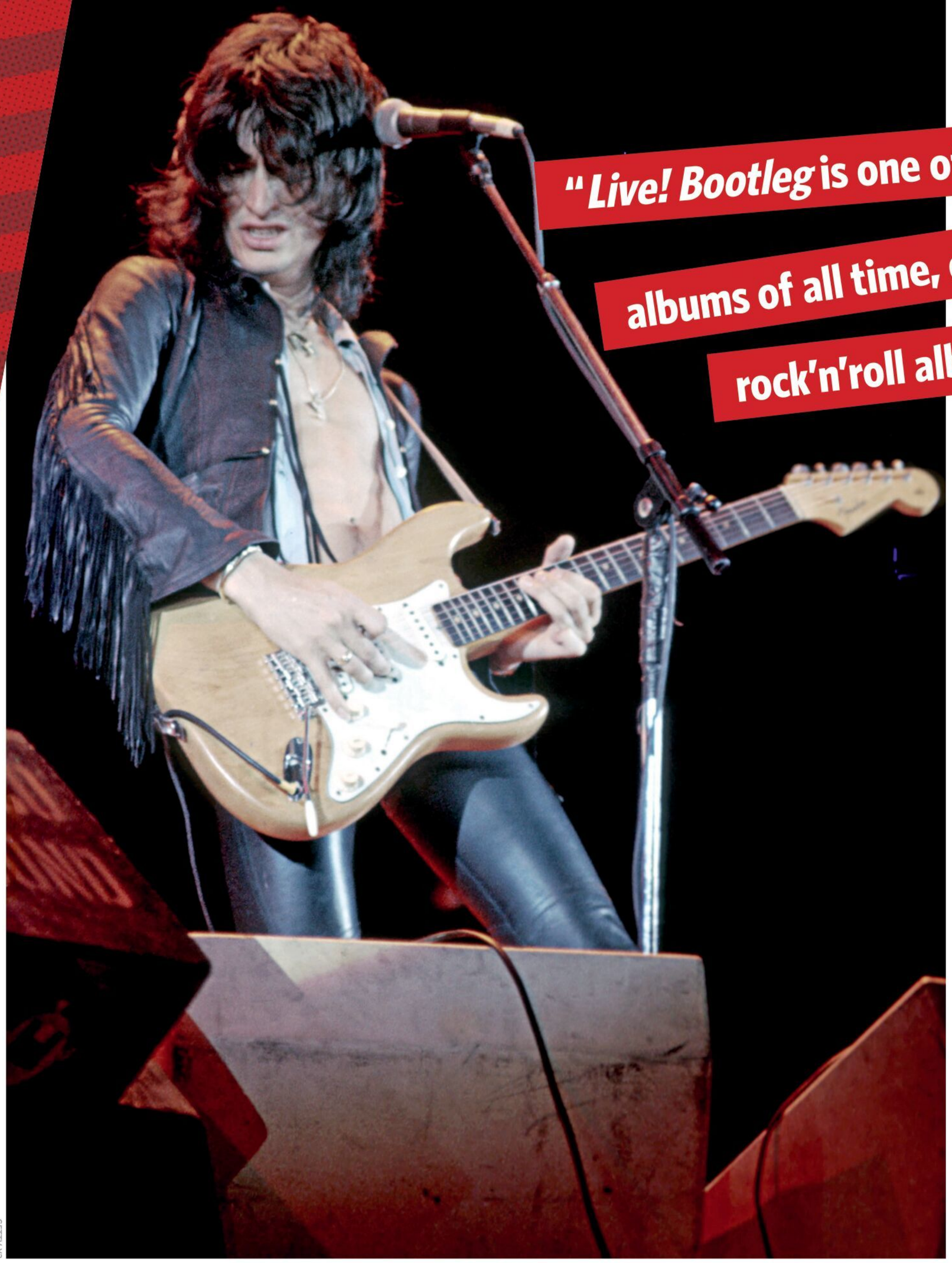
Fortunately, Cyrinda's pregnancy was not affected. On December 22, she gave birth to a healthy daughter, whom they named Mia. But for the band, the writing was on the wall.

In January 1979, even as *Live! Bootleg* rose to No.13 on the Billboard chart, *Rolling Stone* stuck the knife in again. "Aerosmith is a dinosaur among bands, the last of a generation of rock'n'rollers being edged out by more streamlined competition like Boston, Foreigner and Fleetwood Mac," proclaimed the magazine.

But it wasn't this new breed of Adult Oriented Rock band that was hurting Aerosmith. Nor was it the advent of punk rock and new wave. The damage was coming from within. Aerosmith was a band self-destructing – with the drugs and the booze, and with the enmity between their women that was effectively a proxy war between the guys themselves. Tyler and Perry had always been the axis on which the band revolved, but in the summer of '79, that bond was broken.

In the preceding months, the band was still functioning, to a point. They were still doing the big shows – headlining the California Music Festival at Memorial Coliseum in Los Angeles on April 7, with Nugent again on the undercard, alongside Van Halen and Cheap Trick, and 100,000 tickets sold. In May, work on a new Aerosmith album began. But on July 28, at another marquee event, the World Series Of Rock festival at Cleveland Stadium, the shit hit the fan.

The line-up that day was out of this world: below Aerosmith and, as usual, the Nuge, were Journey, Thin Lizzy, AC/DC and Scorpions. But when Aerosmith got up on stage, it wasn't ➔



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"*Live! Bootleg* is one of the most underrated albums of all time, one of the best live rock'n'roll albums ever made." Slash

pride, the desire to prove they were still top dogs, which had them fired up. It was hatred for each other. Moments before show time, in a backstage trailer, Elyssa Perry had traded insults with Tom Hamilton's wife Terry, thrown a glass of milk at her, and in the ensuing scuffle, all five members of the band ended up throwing punches. All of that bad energy went into what Elyssa described, mischievously, as "the best show of the tour". But once it was done, and they were all back in the trailer, Tyler and Perry went right at it. As Tyler recalled: "Joe goes, 'Maybe I should leave the band.' I said, 'Yeah, maybe you fuckin' should.' Joe goes, 'Oh yeah?' And gets up. And I yell: 'FUCK YOU, THEN! GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE!' And he left." Tyler concluded, funnily but somewhat simplistically: "Aerosmith literally broke up over spilt milk."

In the weeks that followed, as rumours of Perry's exit circulated in the rock press, the rest of the band got back to work on the new album at Media Sound studios in New York, while also auditioning new guitarists. One of the candidates was Michael Schenker, the mercurial German genius who had walked out of two major bands, UFO and Scorpions. It was Schenker's brusque manner – as Tyler quoted him, "Before I join your band I vant it clear I'm taking over right now!" – which turned them off. Schenker was similarly unimpressed. "Steven," he said, "was not in a good shape." In the end, it was a 23 year-old New Yorker, Jimmy Crespo, who replaced Perry.

Schenker's gut feeling about Tyler was correct. The singer was so deep into drugs while Aerosmith were finishing the album

The best of enemies: Perry and Tyler's split marked the end of Aerosmith's glory years.

Night In The Ruts that he later described the experience as "like a fuckin' solar eclipse." But even with Perry gone, and Tyler so far gone, this album, while jokingly named, turned out to be one of Aerosmith's very best.

A press release dated October 10, 1979 had put an end to speculation: "Joe Perry and Aerosmith announced today Perry's plans to depart the group to purse a solo career." The statement concluded with a barefaced lie: "His departure is described as amicable." And while the cover for *Night In The Ruts* featured Perry – in a photo of the band dressed as coal miners, shot in March 1978 – any talk of reconciliation was ended on November 16, the date of the album's release. That night, with a sense of comic timing, the guitarist's new group, The Joe Perry Project, played their debut show at Boston College.

Six songs on *Night In The Ruts* had been co-written by Perry, and five featured his playing: *Chiquita*, *Cheese Cake* and *Three Mile Smile*, all lean-and-mean rockers in the classic Aerosmith tradition; *No Surprize*, the ballsy opening track, in which Tyler told the story of the band's salad days; and *Bone to Bone (Coney Island White Fish Boy)*, a frantic number named by Tyler after slang for a used rubber. But in Perry's absence, Jimmy Crespo and another guitarist, Richie Supa, gelled pretty much seamlessly with Brad Whitford. And while the album was filled out with three cover versions, they all worked brilliantly: The Yardbirds' *Think About It* played at maximum overdrive, the old blues song *Reefer Head Woman* pulling raw emotion out of Tyler, and *Remember (Walking In The Sand)*, a hit for 60s girl group The Shangri-Las, handled with finger-clicking panache. But in the album's final track, a beautiful ballad named *Mia*, there was, as Tyler later admitted, heavy significance. "It was a lullaby I wrote on the piano for my daughter," he said. "But the tolling bell notes at the end of the song and the end of the album sounded more like the death knell of Aerosmith for people who knew what was going on."

In January 1980, when *Night In The Ruts* reached No.14 on the US chart, it seemed that Aerosmith might pull through without Joe Perry. But in the same month, when the band headed out on tour, it was heavy going. Tyler got so drunk before a show in Portland, Maine that he keeled over midway through the set, and had to be carried offstage. And even when the band had a good night, fans were still calling out for Perry, whose debut album with the Project, released in March of that year, was titled, pointedly, *Let The Music Do The Talking*.

Night In The Ruts was a great record, but for Aerosmith there were hard times ahead. The rot had set in. The decline was inevitable. Steven Tyler was just too proud to admit it, and too messed up to do anything about it.

Aerosmith had it all and blew it, and they nobody else to blame but themselves. As David Krebs said: "In 1978, Aerosmith represented the living spirit of American rock'n'roll. To see them destroy themselves through immense disregard for anything but self-indulgence was a tragedy."

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Here's lookin' at you, kid: *Permanent Vacation*-era Aerosmith, 1988. (*l-r*) Brad Whitford, Tom Hamilton, Steven Tyler, Joey Kramer, Joe Perry.

YEARS

As the 80s began, Aerosmith were in the grip of debilitating substance issues, estranged from their genius guitarist, and at their lowest ebb. Only a fool would've bet on them to return, bigger than ever. But that's what happened...

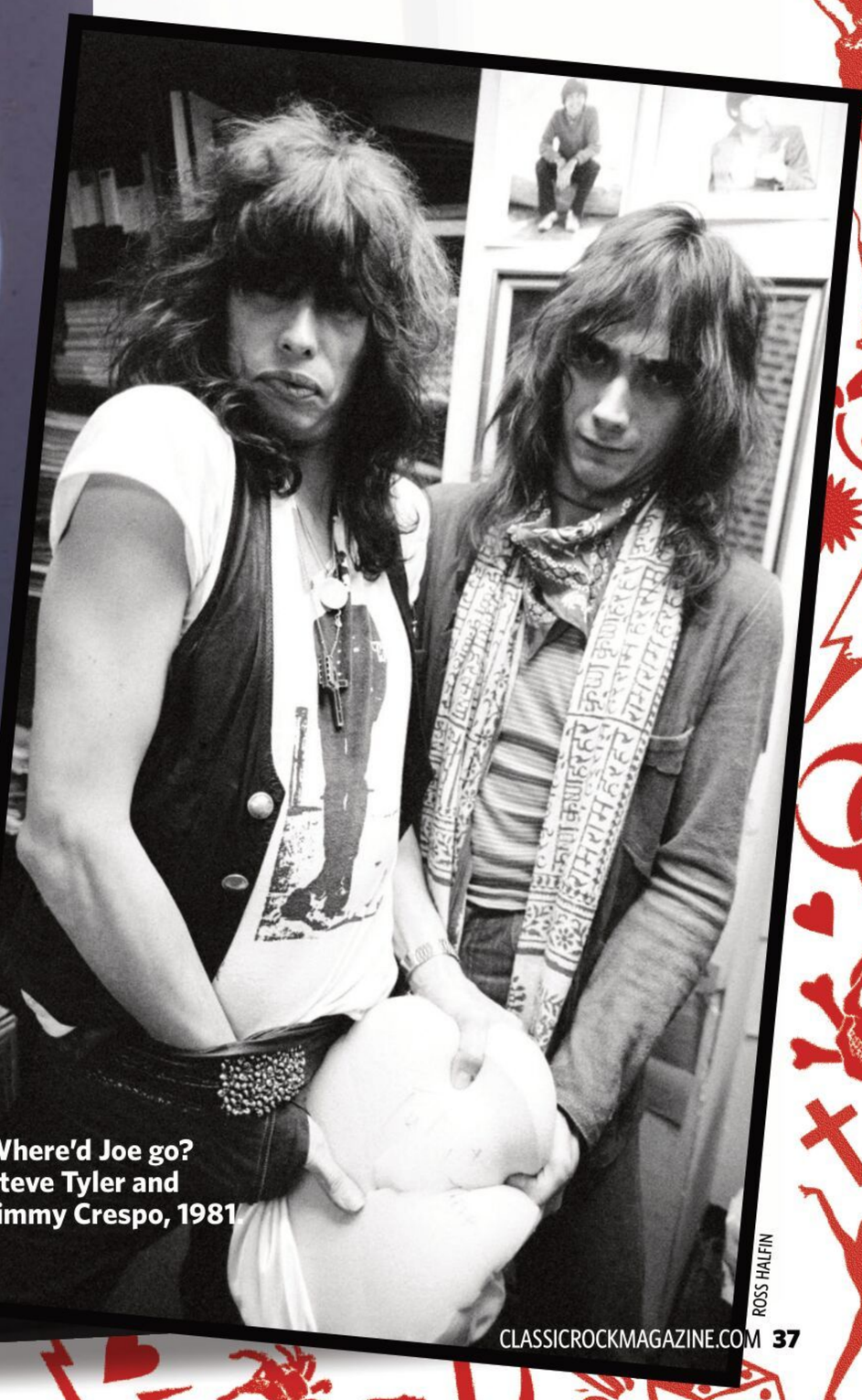
Words: **Neil Jeffries**

It's January 1980 and Aerosmith are playing *Reefer Head Woman* from their new *Night In The Ruts* album at the Civic Centre in Maine. It's a sold-out show, but singer Steven Tyler doesn't care.

Frustrated at having no cocaine to counteract the intoxicating effects of all the booze he's swallowed since waking – rounded off by two double martinis gulped minutes before taking the stage – he gives up and pretends to pass out. Throwing himself to the stage he fakes a seizure, twitching his leg to make it look authentic.

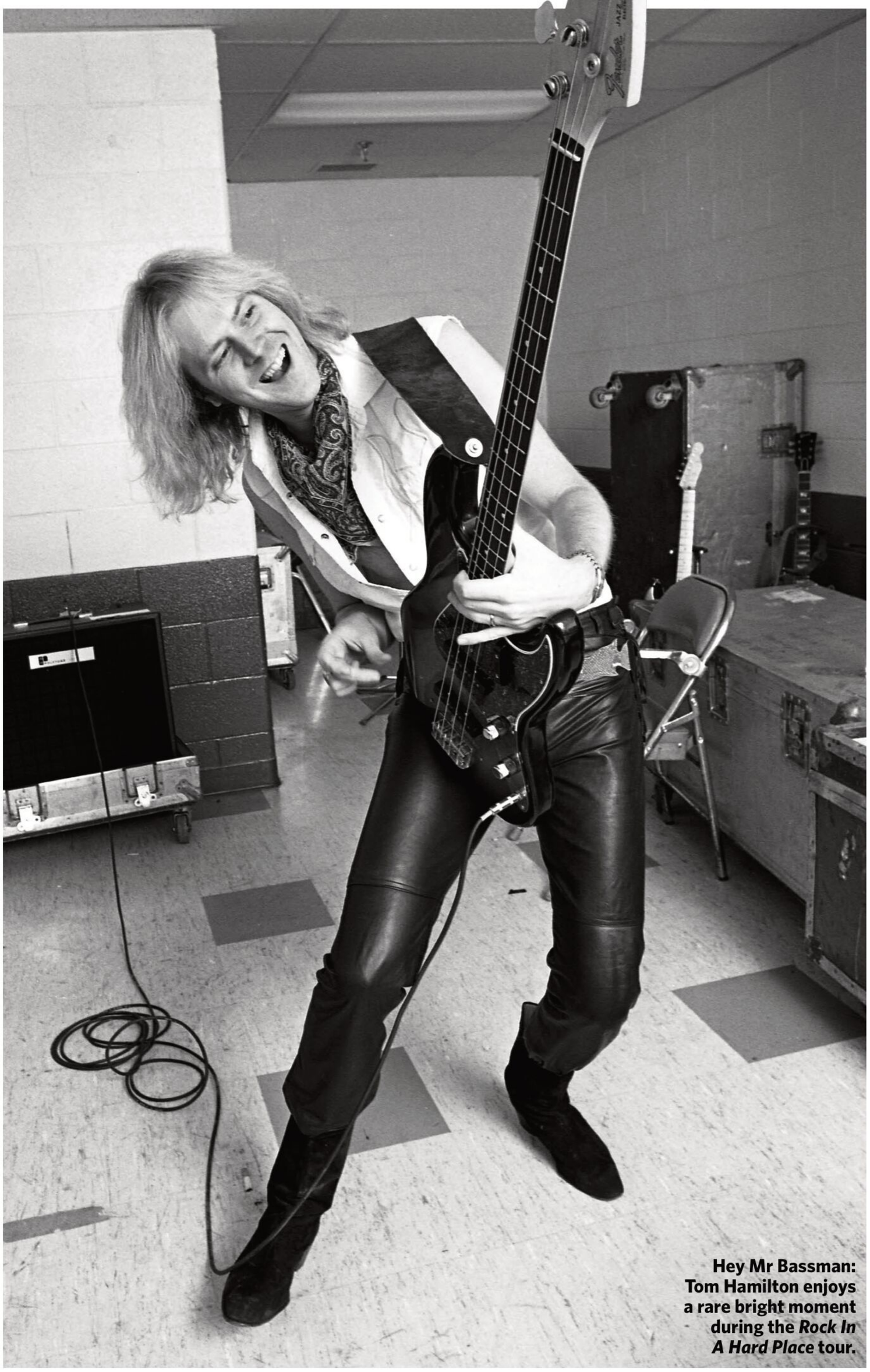
Such is his level of chemical dependency and alcoholic intoxication, this is the best idea he can come up with to avoid the indignity of playing a gig just plain old-fashioned drunk.

To this point in the tour Aerosmith have just about been getting away with it. Though with guitarist Joe Perry no longer in the band – replaced by JP-lookalike Jimmy Crespo – they are a shadow of their former selves. They've played shows where the singer has frequently forgotten his lines, and, when not at the mic has just sat on the drum riser, too unsteady to stand, much less move about.



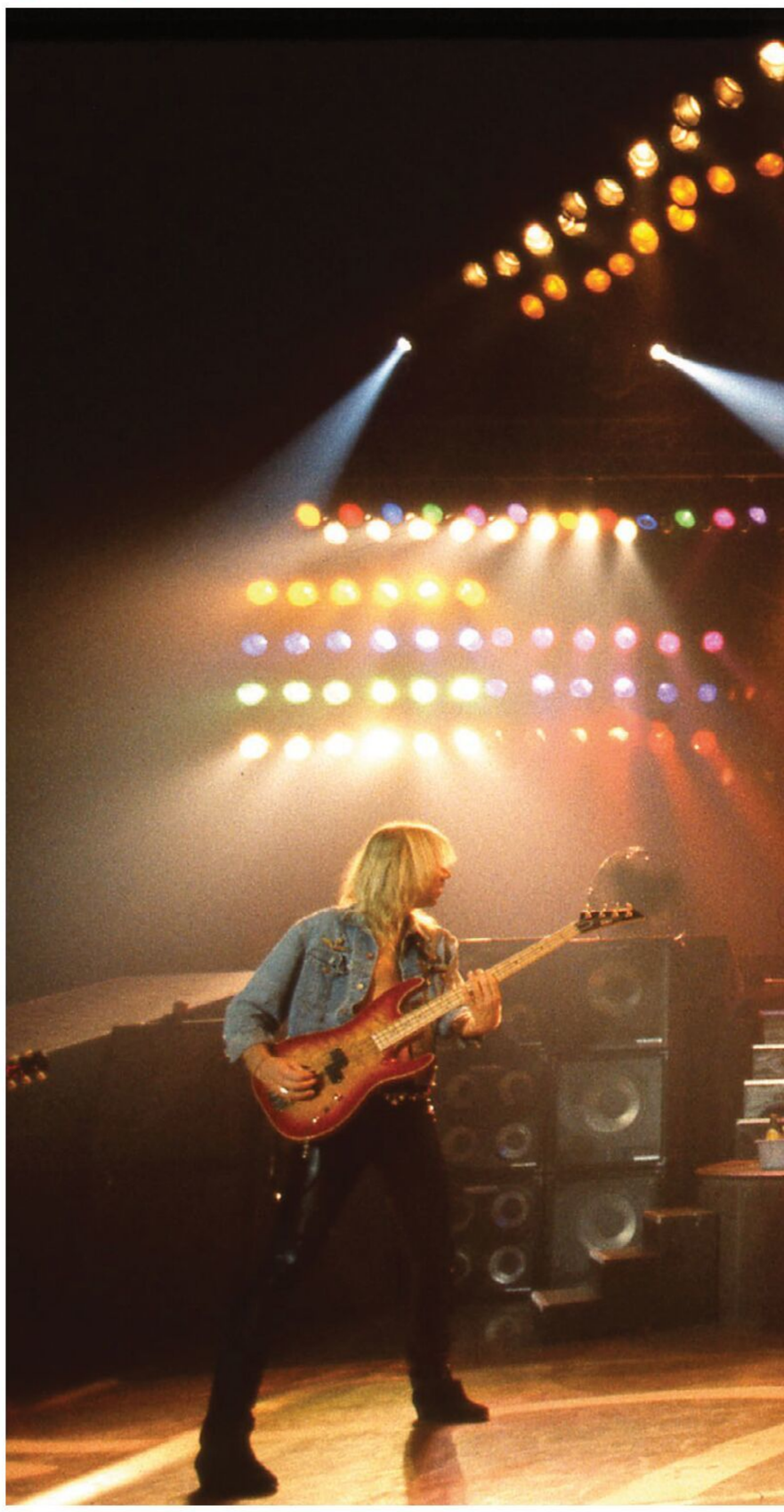
Where'd Joe go? Steve Tyler and Jimmy Crespo, 1981

ROSS HALFIN



Hey Mr Bassman: Tom Hamilton enjoys a rare bright moment during the *Rock In A Hard Place* tour.

MARK WEISS



Tonight it's worse. The band stop playing, and Tyler is carried from the stage, a faker and a fuck-up.

Elsewhere in early 1980, Perry is touring with his original Joe Perry Project. He feels liberated from the "dysfunctional depression" that was crippling Aerosmith and had forced him out of his own band – but now his new outfit faces ruin because singer Ralph Morman has turned into an out-of-control drunk.

"One night he showed up in a wild state of inebriation," Perry recalls in his newly published biography *Rocks*. "I hauled off and decked him."

These days Perry acknowledges the irony. As the book candidly admits, he was not in good shape himself: a barely functioning drunk addicted to snorting heroin. Career-wise, The Joe Perry Project's *Let The Music Do The Talking* album had been well reviewed, but was poorly promoted by Columbia and wasn't troubling the charts. The gigs, though good, were small-scale. This was a problem – because Aerosmith's co-manager David Krebs had not long since told Joe he personally owed $180,000 in room service charges and helpfully suggested that a solo album might be a good way to pay the bill.

For Aerosmith and for Joe Perry, however, things are going to get worse before they get any better.

The 1980s began less than four years after Aerosmith's fourth album *Rocks* had shipped platinum upon release, rising to No.3 on the Billboard Hot 100. Hindsight suggests that *Rocks*, the multi-platinum follow-up to the multi-platinum *Toys In The Attic*, was where the 'first career' of Aerosmith peaked. Afterwards, their decline and fall would be as marked and meteoric as their rise had been.

After Tyler's fake seizure, Aerosmith cancelled a week's worth of dates – thereby falling a little further – then resumed and limped on to the end of the tour, and more drink- and drug-induced lethargy. When they reconvened, work on a proposed next album was painfully slow. Then that faltering progress all but ground to a halt after Tyler badly injured himself in a motorcycle crash. Silently but inevitably, poverty crept up and was soon crippling them all.

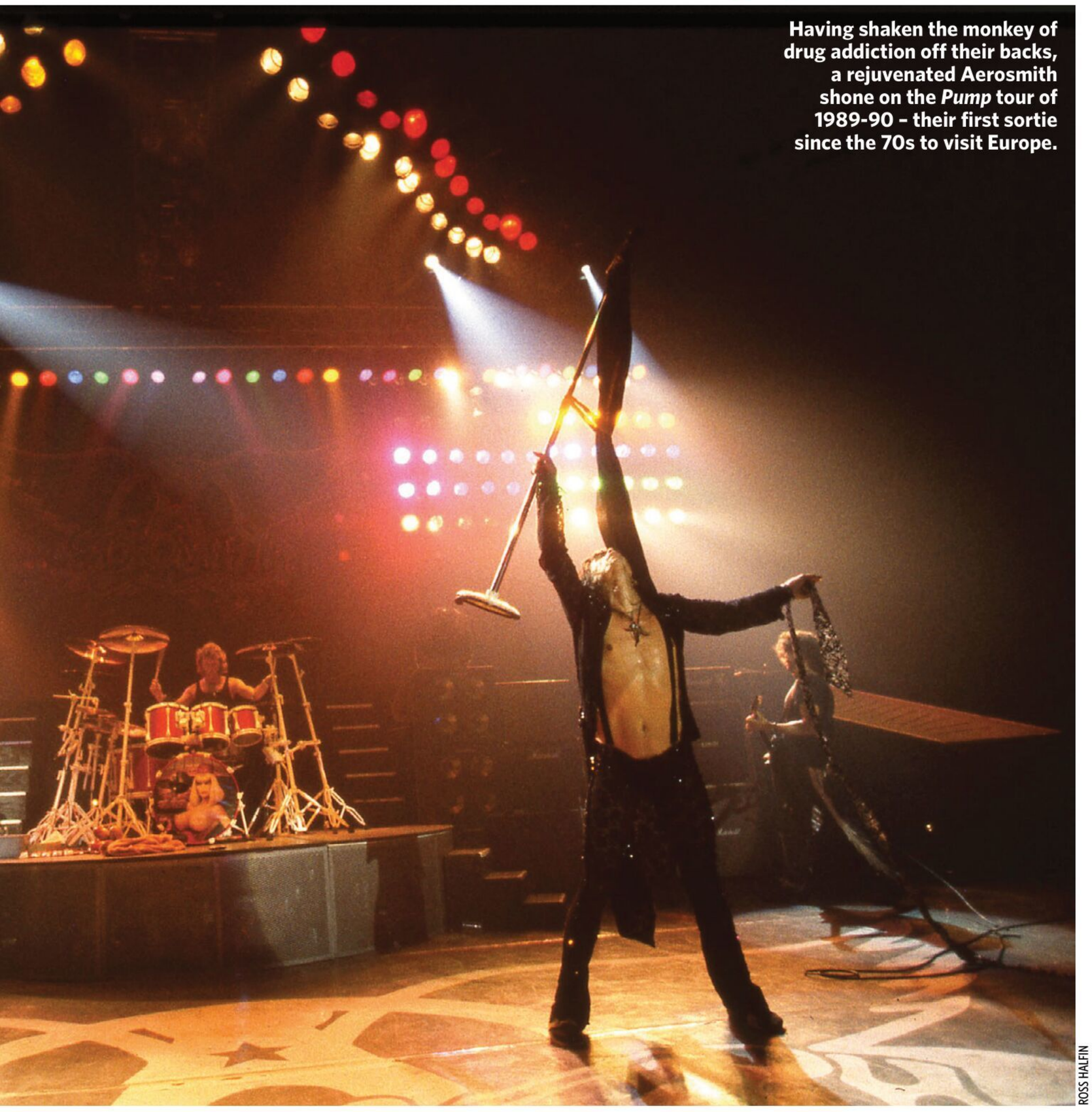
Bassist Tom Hamilton: "For two years, the album we were working on – *Rock In A Hard Pace* – was always two months away. It was hard times, we [Tom and his wife Terri] sold our house and moved into a condo…"

Drummer Joey Kramer: "It was rough. There was no money. I was on the balls of my ass. I spent everything I had… until, finally, *nothing*."

Guitarist Brad Whitford: "No money, no income, all my savings going to alimony and mortgages. Sold my guitars… sold my house…"

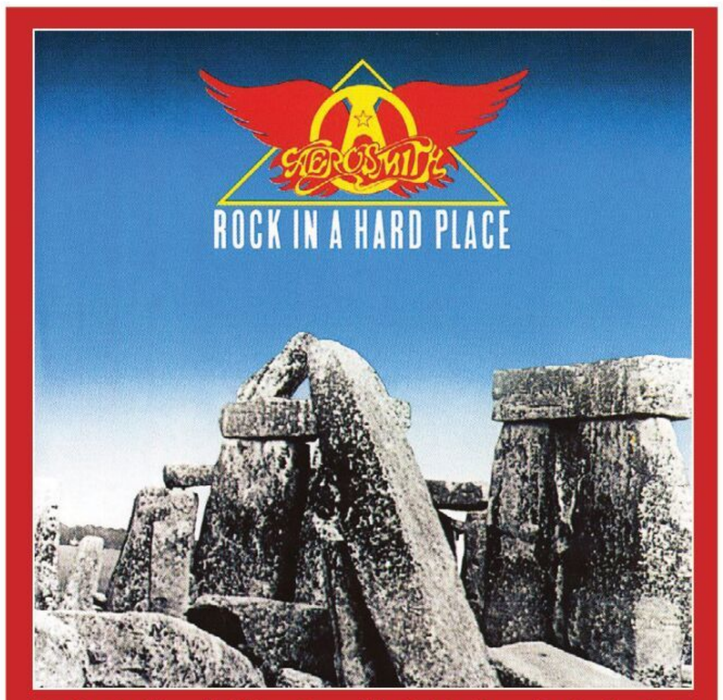
Eventually Whitford could stand it no more, and quit. Aerosmith were down to just three original members, Tyler plus the rhythm section of Hamilton and Kramer.

As Perry's marriage to fellow drug addict Elyssa continued to falter and debts mounted, he released



Having shaken the monkey of drug addiction off their backs, a rejuvenated Aerosmith shone on the *Pump* tour of 1989-90 – their first sortie since the 70s to visit Europe.

ROSS HALFIN



ROCK IN A HARD PLACE

Columbia, 1982

An album often derided, because Joe Perry and Brad Whitford had gone. So, how can it be regarded as a true Aerosmith record?

But the reality is that their replacements, Rick Dufay and Jimmy Crespo, did a fine job as guitarists, and *Rock In A Hard Place* is clearly superior to is predecessor, 1979's *Night In The Ruts*.

This was an album created in something of a turmoil, following a two-year hiatus. The band began recording with Whitford still in the line-up, but he soon departed; however, he can be heard playing the rhythm parts on *Lightning Strikes*, which is unquestionably the stand-out track here – so good, in fact, that Perry even admitted when he rejoined Aerosmith in 1984 that he loved playing this live, and wished he'd been on the studio version.

But this is far from being the only strong song on *Rock In A Hard Place*. *Jailbait* is a firm opener, while *Bitch's Brew* is one of those in-your-face moments that brought to mind the way things had been in the *Rocks* era. And the version of the torch song *Cry Me A River* is only a small step apart from the famed Julie London original.

It was the first studio album from Aerosmith that didn't sell a million copies in America. But with Jack Douglas producing, there was a definite sonic continuity to what had gone before. The band were certainly making no attempt to ingratiate themselves with the sounds of the new decade, and that suited them and the material. **MD**

Top track: *Lightning Strikes*. It's got everything: epic build-up, raucous hook, some devastating guitar work and a chorus that gets you hooked and reels you in.

"IT WAS ROUGH. THERE WAS NO MONEY. I WAS ON THE BALLS OF MY ASS. I SPENT EVERYTHING I HAD... UNTIL, FINALLY, NOTHING."

JOEY KRAMER

the second Project album, *I've Got The Rock'N'Rolls Again* (featuring new vocalist Charlie Farren) in 1981. Whitford, meanwhile, hooked up with Ted Nugent's singer Derek St Holmes to release the eponymous *Whitford-St Holmes* the same year. They toured briefly, but their record didn't sell well.

On the recommendation of producer Jack Douglas, Aerosmith recruited Rick Dufay to play on Whitford's side of the stage. It seemed like a good idea at the time, even though Dufay boasted to the singer that he had escaped from a "loony bin" having jumped out of a window and broken his legs…

The older, wiser and sober Tyler now reckons Dufay was "out of his mind". Back then, though, the singer barely cared.

When the tour ended he "got deeper and deeper into drugs", hanging out with and scoring heroin off his friend Richie Supa (with whom he'd co-written a live favourite called *Chip Away The Stone*). Somehow, stoned and hallucinating, he eventually managed to write enough lyrics to finish *Rock In A Hard Place* in time for release in August 1982. Good in parts, but a long way from former glories, it wasn't a record that suggested the epic amount of time spent on it had been a wise investment. A Gold sales award – ending a string of Platinum hits for Aerosmith – and a Billboard chart peak of No.32 confirmed this.

Eventually, Tyler admitted to himself he needed help. He first tried detoxing at the Good Samaritan Hospital in New York in 1983 but, as he admitted in his 2011 biography *Does The Noise In My Head Bother You?*: "One of the reasons I wanted to go to Good Samaritan was that I heard they did tests on heroin… I thought: 'Can I be one of the guinea pigs?'"

By then, Aerosmith's Krebs was hiring psychiatrists to meet Tyler and report back with their thoughts. Domestically, Tyler's fights with his wife of 12 years, Cyrinda, had turned physical and violent. Once, as she prepared to drive off, he jumped on her car and smashed the windscreen.

Tyler: "Cocaine insanity! She got out of the car and a violent, uncontrollable fight erupted. We were punching and scratching, and we fell over and rolled on the ground…"

For Perry, domestic life was no sweeter. Elyssa continued to spend money extravagantly, as if he were still a member of the 70s Aerosmith.

He recalled: "I was on the verge of losing my house. I was fucked up from drinking. I thought I was at the bottom, but every day that bottom kept getting deeper and darker."

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Scream for me: Aerosmith let it all hang out on the *Permanent Vacation tour*.

GETTY

CUT OUT: ROSS HALFIN

AEROSMITH DONE WITH MIRRORS

Geffen, 1985

1985 was all change for Aerosmith: new label, new logo, new producer. But, to use a David Lee Roth quote, they had the same old funky attitude. With the fab five reunited, thanks to the return of Perry and Whitford, there was genuine hope that Aerosmith could get back to the pre-eminence they enjoyed in the previous decade.

But by the time *Done With Mirrors* came out, the rock landscape had drastically altered. The success of Def Leppard and Mötley Crüe, and the arrival of MTV, had ushered in a fresh approach. Aerosmith were guided by Geffen to take note of this by working with producer Ted Templeman, and while he didn't smooth out their edges, nonetheless he did give them a more focused vigour.

In truth, it worked well. Songs like *My Fist Your Face*, *Shela* and *She's On Fire* were good enough to have graced any of the band's most acclaimed albums. And they even cut a tremendous version of the Joe Perry Project classic *Let The Music Do The Talking*, proving that the original had really been no more than a glorified demo for the real deal.

But the album only got to No.36 in the US charts, and failed to signal a return to the glory days. Much of the blame for its comparative failure lay in the decision to abandon the iconic Aerosmith logo, and also to play on the album title in the sleeve design. A misguided marketing approach. Musically, though, it was impressive. **MD**

Top track: *My Fist Your Face*. This is Aerosmith delivering a killer punch or several on a song that drips old style sleaze, yet cranked out in the manner of band with a fresh desire.

Sometimes, though, as the unexpectedly sage-like JK Rowling has observed, rock bottom can become a solid foundation on which to build a new life.

That new life – or "second career" as the five original, once-again-Platinum-selling members of Aerosmith are wont to describe it – was still a way up the road.

Perry was taking any gigs he could to earn cash – sometimes supporting the likes of Heart and the J Geils Band, always travelling in a van and staying in cheap hotels to keep costs low. Back home, he took the life-changing decision to walk out on Elyssa, after six-and-a-half years together – but paid a heavy price in the battle for access to their infant son Adrian.

He was happy to play with the Project, but the debts he faced weren't going away. One good thing was happening in the guitarist's life, though. He had hooked up with a new manager, Tim Collins, who became "the only steady force in my life". The deal was sealed after Perry tested Collins' commitment by emptying a drawer in which he kept his unopened mail: mostly bills, IRS claims and foreclosure notices threatening repossession of his home, but also some unsigned death threats (presumably from drug dealers he owed money) and royalty cheques worth thousands of dollars. Collins took them away in a grocery bag and came back a week later offering to pay off "a big portion" of the guitarist's debts, no strings attached.

Asked why, Collins simply reasoned: "I figure I need to do this to win your trust. I believe in your talent. I believe your best years are ahead of you. I want to manage you."

One of his first moves was to negotiate Perry out of his deal with Columbia and get him a new one with MCA. Perry disbanded the old Project and hired a new one (fronted by singer Cowboy Mach Bell) on smaller salaries to record their third album, *Once A Rocker, Always A Rocker*, in 1983. It wasn't as good as the first two, but the band got to open for ZZ Top on some of their US *Eliminator* tour. The headline gigs they were playing, though, Perry says, "were getting smaller and smaller".

He did persuade Whitford to join the line-up, however, and the rhythm guitarist stayed for a month. Kramer later played drums at a few dates, too. Much more significantly, though, Perry was about to meet his soulmate, who was discovered when the Project were about to make a video for their last chance at a hit, a song called *Black Velvet Pants*.

Perry: "Tim Collins had a bunch of books sent over by talent agencies, I thumbed through half-heartedly until I came to a picture that stopped me in my tracks – a headshot of a beautiful blonde called Billie Montgomery. There was a look in her eyes that got to me, heart and soul. I had to meet her."

When he did meet her, it was love at first sight. And their relationship would endure long after the video shoot had wrapped, to this day.

Aerosmith, meanwhile, were in trouble. They

were playing bigger venues than the Project but, as Tyler has admitted, the tour for *Rock In A Hard Place* was "a disaster".

Tyler: "By 1983 I had no money and no future except getting further into the pit. Back in 1976, when I read stories about guys who lost everything and blew a million bucks snorting all they had, I used to say: 'That'll *never* happen to me.' But in the end, I blew $20 million."

In addition, he came to admit that he was missing his buddy: "During the years that Joe and I were broken up I realised I wasn't half the musician I thought I was without him."

The two had kept in touch, though.

Perry: "I'd occasionally call Steven, or he'd call me… 'How're things going?' Great, I'd lie. How about you? 'Great!' he'd lie… The bullshit flew thick and fast."

Tyler: "I went to see the Joe Perry Project perform at the Bottom Line, then Joe came to the Worcester Centrum in the spring of 1983 to see an Aerosmith concert. We did a few lines of heroin in the dressing room – just for old times' sake…"

The heroin took its toll on Tyler, who collapsed on stage in front of 14,000 people… and although it had been Tyler's wife Cyrinda who supplied the drug, Perry took the blame, with Tom Hamilton lambasting him: "It's just like the old days, Joe. You're no good for this band. Look what you did! Why don't you just stay the fuck away from us?"

Yet the idea of a reunion persisted.

In early 1984, Tyler and Perry met with Tim Collins and, despite some initial friction, Tyler – by then living in a hotel on $20 a day – agreed the original line-up should get together for a meeting at the only place available: Tom Hamilton's house.

Perry: "If you want to put it on the IQ meter, Tom is a really smart guy, but I think he had just been more conservative with his money and watched what was going on. Also, he didn't have to go through a divorce. He's the one who's been married the longest among us.

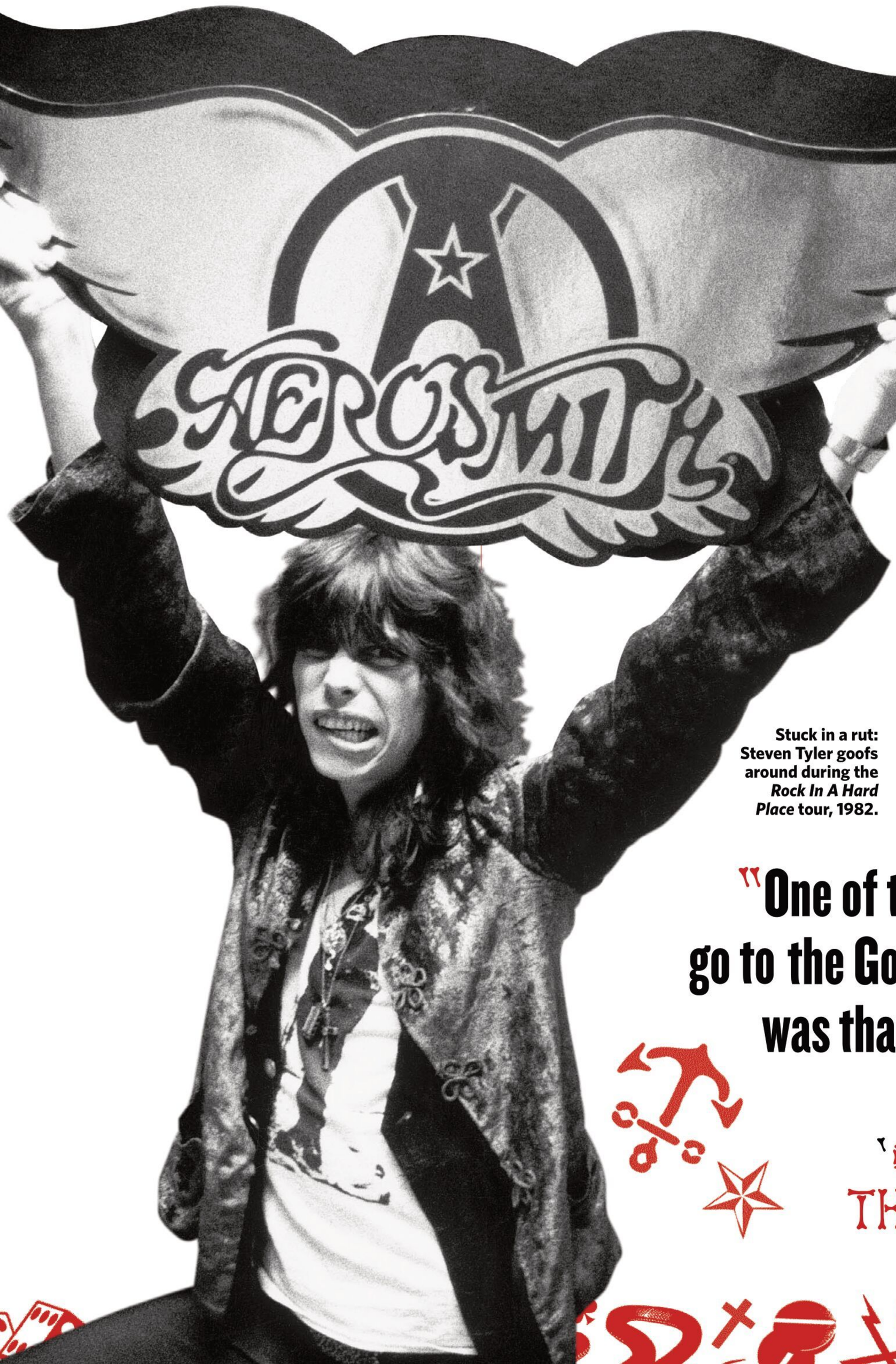
"Any professional who has to go through a divorce, the finances are going to take a real hit. It's one of those things in life, it isn't peculiar to rock'n'roll. If you're making a lot of money, they take a lot of money."

Once it became apparent that Joe would only rejoin the band on the condition it cut all ties with Leber-Krebs Management and joined him with Tim Collins, they set about discussing a way forward and naming a scapegoat for all their problems. They settled on David Krebs.

Perry: "The main influence that the drugs will have had was that we were partying too much and didn't notice the kind of money we were spending or take care of the decisions we were making – I don't think we could have spent *that* much on drugs! And it's not like we all had three houses and 16 Maseratis. We all had one house and a couple of nice cars, and that was it.

"I look back and just think we were taken advantage of, maybe in some quasi-illegal ways. You just have to do the numbers in your head: all those years we were selling out so many arenas, so many times. So to sit there and be told that the band's kitty was empty, I mean – did they do something illegal? I don't think so. We couldn't prove anything. Was it immoral? Yeah!

"They weren't taking care of us in terms of taxes and things like that. I should have been more on top of it but that was my own naïveté. There was



Stuck in a rut: Steven Tyler goofs around during the *Rock In A Hard Place* tour, 1982.

"One of the reasons I wanted to go to the Good Samaritan Hospital was that I heard they did tests on heroin… I thought: 'CAN I BE ONE OF THE GUINEA PIGS?'"

STEVEN TYLER

PERMANENT VACATION

Geffen, 1987

Aerosmith learned from the comparative commercial failure of *Done With Mirrors*. Back came the winged logo. And in came outside writers for the first time in the band's career. There was just one Tyler/Perry song here, namely *Girl Keeps Coming Apart*. Desmond Child, Jim Vallance and Holly Knight were all involved on the album's biggest successes, while producer Bruce Fairbairn gave the whole sound a contemporary sheen.

Aerosmith now had to compete with Bon Jovi and Whitesnake. And *Permanent Vacation* did exactly that. Tracks like *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)*, *Angel* and *Rag Doll* were major implants on the singles chart in the States, with interest in the band fuelled by the success the previous year of Tyler and Perry's collaboration with Run-DMC on the latter's version of *Walk This Way*.

It also helped this was the first time the band had recorded sober. However, this was perhaps also the reason why the album came across as a little too sophisticated in tone for what was expected from the band. You had the feeling that something like the ultra bluesy *Hangman Jury* would have been better recorded in the days of *Rocks* or *Toys In The Attic*, while the cover of The Beatles' *I'm Down* is no more than a competent filler.

But the album struck the right chord for a new generation who swiftly took Aerosmith to their bosom, propelling the album to No.11 in the States, and also gave them their first Top 40 triumph in the UK. **MD**

Top track: *Magic Touch*. The most obviously AOR song here. The start is laced with melodic temptation, and it doesn't disappoint. A real anthem for the mid-80s.

a lot of money there, just lying on the table, and people took it because they could. That is the story. I can't prove anything – but I was constantly asking for accountings and things like that, but it was kinda tough to get the rest of the band to lock up."

While the reunion idea was left hanging, a third party was about to plant a crucial seed. Alice Cooper was looking for a new guitarist, and his manager Shep Gordon called Collins to sound out JP. Seeing no long-term future for the Project, Perry jumped at the chance and went to Gordon's county pile to meet and jam with Alice. The next day, while Alice played golf, Perry called Tyler to gloat. At the time Tyler pretended not to care but deep down he was incensed. His book suggests he remembers the incident differently to Perry, but says that he later called him back:

"Are you seriously going to be his guitar player? What the fuck? That's the dumbest thing I ever

"DURING THE YEARS THAT JOE AND I WERE BROKEN UP I REALISED I WASN'T HALF THE MUSICIAN I THOUGHT I WAS WITHOUT HIM."

STEVEN TYLER

heard! Just stop. The shit's over. Why don't you just come back with Aerosmith?"

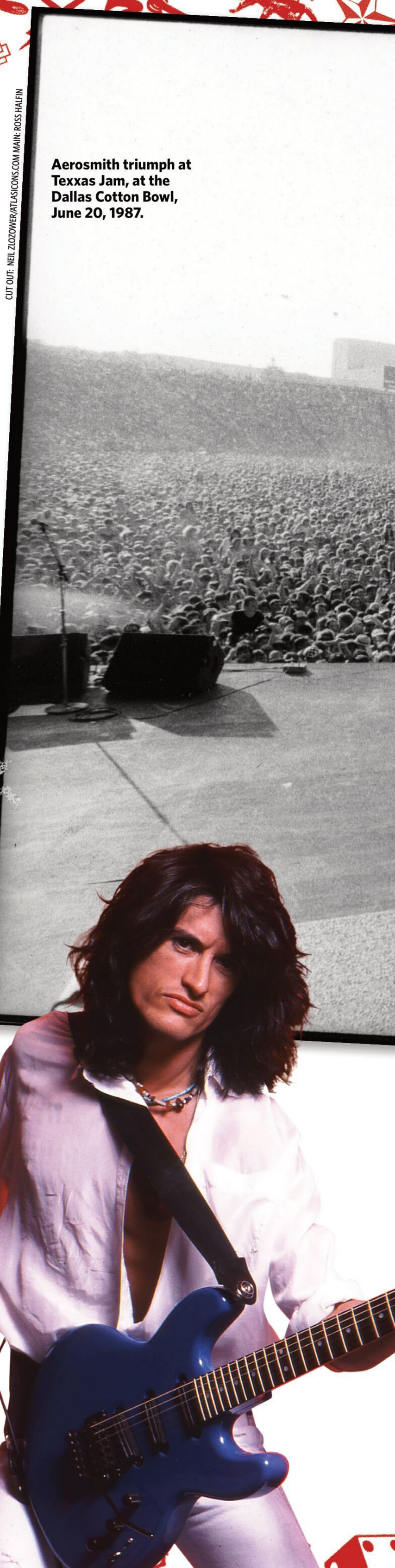
Well, since Tyler had asked so nicely, how could Joe refuse?

Initial rehearsals were fraught with tension, but gradually the band found something like their old groove, reworking old songs they remembered and discovering others they'd forgotten. Collins built a support network, hired a crew and so the band – crucially, still drug-dependent at this point – went out on what was dubbed the *Back In The Saddle* Tour. Some shows were good, some were horrible, but fans were stoked and tickets sold. The tour ran from late June to end of August then, after a break, from December into January 1985.

Meanwhile, Tim Collins set about courting record labels. One of the keenest was Geffen, as represented by weirdy-beardy teetotal A&R man John Kalodner.

At first the band were sceptical, viewing him as just another record company guy – albeit looking like a guru in his white suit and long hair. Financially burned and emotionally fragile, they didn't trust outsiders. But Kalodner kept showing up, to see if these 70s legends might still be worth a deal in the 80s. In the end, at a show at LA's Greek Theatre, a link was forged while Kalodner was talking with Brad's wife, Karen. She showed him the gun she always carried and, in *Crocodile Dundee* style, he showed her his.

Kalodner recalled: "I pulled up the trouser leg of my white suit and showed her the .357 Magnum I was wearing in an ankle holster. 'This is how I get around LA,' I told her. I was showing off, but it worked. As soon as the band found out I was

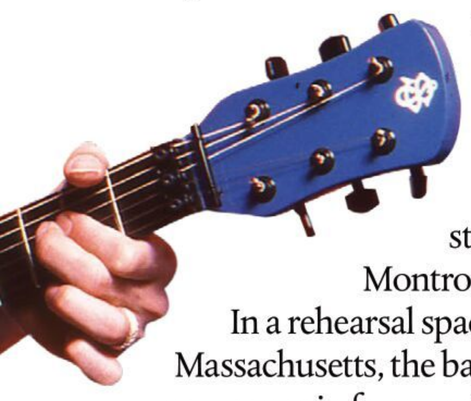


CUT OUT: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM MAIN: ROSS HALFIN

Aerosmith triumph at Texxas Jam, at the Dallas Cotton Bowl, June 20, 1987.

packing dynamite, they thought I was totally cool. It broke the ice with them because they loved guns."

A deal with Geffen followed. Next they needed a producer. Tim Collins instructed Kalodner to get them Ted Templeman, who'd just hit platinum with Van Halen's *1984* – though the band's admiration for Templeman stemmed from his work on Montrose's debut.



In a rehearsal space in Somerville, Massachusetts, the band knocked together "17 new songs in four weeks". Judging by the eight that made what became the band's eighth studio album *Done With Mirrors* (its title a reference both to magic and a cocaine user's preference for snorting the drug from reflective surfaces), few were up to scratch. On day one, they ran through most of them and Tom Hamilton insists: "I think we wound up using most of the takes from that first day of just slapping them down on tape."

Two weeks before the record was due to be mastered, Tyler was in his hotel room trying to write lyrics. It didn't bode well.

Perry: "We were still doing everything like we had before. Everybody was still… dabbling. We thought we could continue the same way."

Kramer: "*Done With Mirrors* sounds to me like an incomplete record, without the finishing touches, the nuances, the personalities."

Kalodner was even more disappointed: "When I realised the only good song was *Let The Music Do The Talking* – an old Joe Perry song – I knew we were in trouble."

He was right. Hardcore fans liked it but, outside the rock charts, there were no hits from *Done With Mirrors*. To get back in the charts, the band were offered a most unlikely route. A call to Collins from Rick Rubin of hip hop label Def Jam Recordings saw Perry recording guitar tracks and Tyler adding vocals to a new version of their 1975 hit *Walk This Way*, by New York rappers Run-DMC. The track was done in a day on March 9, 1986, and the famous "breaking down the walls" cross-culture/anti-racism video shot two weeks later.

Although plans to work further with Rubin faltered (yielding only their cover of *Rockin' Pneumonia And The Boogie Woogie Flu* on the *Less Than Zero* soundtrack) the single became a crossover hit. It reached No.8 in the R&B/Hip-Hop singles chart and No.4 in Billboard's Hot 100 after the video proved a huge hit on MTV. Although only two of the members had been involved, Aerosmith's profile grew and the name reached a whole new generation, in the US and in Europe.

While their old management tried to sue the band, and their former label muddied the waters by »»

Season of wither: Aerosmith field a 'B-team' for the *Rock In A Hard Place* tour, 1982. Jimmy Crespo, second from left; Rick Dufay, far right.

BOTH PICTURES: ROSS HALFIN

releasing compilation albums (including *Classics Live!*, featuring the Crespo/Dufay line-up), the *Done With Mirrors* tour ran out of steam, the album having sunk without trace.

Tyler had tried rehab on three further occasions – encouraged by his band-mates who reasoned that as long as the singer was sober, they could continue getting high and function behind him. Predictably, Tyler didn't agree and simply rebelled and lapsed.

The band and Collins persisted. Tyler and his new wife-to-be Teresa checked themselves into a methadone clinic and made progress. But this was not enough to satisfy everyone, and so in the autumn of 1986 Tim Collins hired a therapist to call an intervention on the singer. Once again, objecting to being singled out as what he called the "designated patient" while knowing full well that the band (and Collins) were as guilty as he, the intervention felt like an assault to Tyler. But the power of his peer group proved irresistible. Tyler entered rehab once more, this time emerging fiercely determined to make his band-mates and new manager do the same. This time: success.

"When I read stories about guys who lost everything snorting all they had, I used to say: 'That'll never happen to me'. BUT IN THE END I BLEW 20 MILLION!"
STEVEN TYLER

One by one – starting with Joe Perry in October 1986, following the birth of his second son Anthony – the rest of Aerosmith went through rehab, too. For some, the respite lasted only two or three years – but they never fell so far from the wagon as they'd been before. For Tyler, it was good for 12 years – enough time to allow Aerosmith to soar to the end of the 1980s as successfully as they'd done in the previous decade. Except this time, they were healthy.

Perry: "We realised after *Done With Mirrors* that we had to be *done* with mirrors – we had to change the way we were doing things. One of those was getting fucked up and partying too much.

"So we cleaned up and finally that creativity could happen again. It was the final step. We proved we could sell tickets, going out without a record, touring just on the strength of

our name and to show that the original line-up was back together. But we just needed to make that one final step."

That step was 1987's *Permanent Vacation*. Tyler described it as "the best album we'd made in 10 years – and the first one we ever did sober". It was also, famously, the first album where they called on the services of writers from outside of the band.

That process was instigated by A&R man Kalodner, who insisted that, after the failure of *Done With Mirrors*, the band make their next record *his* way – by bringing in fresh blood to help them write. He persuaded Aerosmith they needed to score some hits, and that they could do so without selling out their hard-rocking roots. His first call had been to Jim Steinman but, because Steinman didn't want to work away from his house, he didn't get the gig. The plan to use Ted Templeman once again ended when the producer baulked at Kalodner's insistence that, unlike on *Done With Mirrors*, the band's A&R man be allowed in the studio to keep an eye on progress.

Kalodner's golden ticket solution was for Aerosmith to go to Little Mountain Sound studios in Vancouver to record with producer Bruce Fairbairn – the man at the helm for Bon Jovi's multi-platinum *Slippery When Wet*, recorded the year before. Fairbairn's team included Jim Vallance, who had co-written every song on Bryan Adams' 1983 album, *Reckless*.

Perry: "Bruce had a little clique of talented musicians, a real scene up there. Vancouver is a great place, I love that city, there's a lot of creativity there. Jim Vallance was the nicest guy you'd every want to meet and hang around with. It was really fun working with him.

"Keyboards and guitar were his two main instruments, but I'm sure he could play drums, too. Being a songwriter, I think he could play anything, to some degree. But he was also getting into that whole computer thing. Jim was one of the first guys to use computers to write programs for different drum patterns. That was really where he and I locked up.

"For me the biggest inspiration comes from the drums. When I first played with Steven he jammed on drums. I'd see him play in bands when he was a singing drummer, and when I put this band together, that was what I envisioned. His singing was top-notch but when he drums he's not just hitting them, he really thinks about the song. He has this way of turning the beat around and that's inspiring to me."

For Tyler, the most important part of Team Fairbairn was Desmond Child. Born in Cuba as John Charles Barrett, Child was 34, five years younger than Tyler when they met. Behind him was a short recording career alongside two girls in Desmond Child & Rouge, and a far more successful career writing songs for the likes of Kiss (including the disco hit *I Was Made For Lovin' You* and *Heaven's On Fire*), Cher, Bonnie Tyler and… Bon Jovi. He enjoyed a co-credit on *Livin' On A Prayer* and *You Give Love A Bad Name*, songs that had yielded the band No.1 and No.7 placings, respectively, on the Billboard chart, as well as two Top 20 hits in the UK.

Tyler: "I'd written with the band and I'd written with Richie Supa, but Richie and I were best friends. Desmond Child was another matter all together."

According to Tyler, Child walked in sporting a moustache and looking "dapper". They hit it off instantly, although not necessarily in a good way.

"I loved writing with Desmond because we always got into arguments," said the singer, without irony. "When Desmond started throwing things at me that I didn't know how to use I should've said: 'Nah! I can't sing that.' But it took me a couple of years before I could voice my objections that strongly."

One of the first songs that they worked together on was *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)*, which at that stage was a Tyler/Perry composition that the singer recalls had a largely finished lyric but, much to his frustration, lacked a first verse. Child gave it to him with the line '*Pull into a bar by the shore*'. Tyler loved it

The Toxic Twins, reunited: Joe Perry and Steven Tyler, promoting *Pump*, 1989.

PUMP

Geffen, 1989

What Aerosmith gained through *Permanent Vacation*, they took to another level with *Pump*. Not only was this the most successful album of the band's chequered career to date (Top Five in the US and Top Three in Britain), but it's arguably their best album of the 80s, and one of the finest they have ever done.

Bruce Fairbairn was once more in the producer's chair. But if his work on the previous album had come across as being a little stilted, now he gave Aerosmith a lot more freedom and subtlety. There were still outside writers – Child, Vallance – but they were used more sparingly. So the result sounded like a far more satisfying connection between old school Aerosmith musical values and a more modern hard rock sound.

There's a real flow here, from opening track *Young Lust* to the final spurt of *What It Takes*. And it never sounds as if the band are trying to fit in with what younger bands like Guns N' Roses were doing. This is Aerosmith very comfortable with who they are, and out to make a great album on their own terms.

There are some simmering, brilliant songs, such as *Love In An Elevator* (preceded by the suggestive *Going Down*) and the socially aware *Janie's Got A Gun*. Everything is of the highest calibre. There's not a dud from these dudes. It also gave them a new audience, one for whom the 1980s output meant more than anything the band did in the 70s. **MD**

Top track: *Monkey On My Back*. The Tyler-Perry combination at its best. The lyrics give an insight into the band's battle against addiction; the slightly funky groove matches the personal strength of the storyline.

GETTY IMAGES

GETCHA ROCKS OFF

"In the essential dream of my childhood I'm in the water or the woods. I'm swimming though an ocean of startling clarity. I'm seeing a thousand different varieties of fish; I'm feeling like a fish myself, aware that at any moment a bigger fish might swim my way – a shark or a barracuda. The thought is more exhilarating than frightening."

Yes, that *was* written by the same guy who plays guitar in Aerosmith. It is. It also turns out to be the perfect way to launch a tale that is extraordinary in so many ways. Indeed, for a guy we all recognise, its most extraordinary revelation is that we don't know Joe Perry at all.

And why should we? For over four decades almost every word he's spoken in public has been uttered while sitting alongside his lead singer Steven Tyler. Perry has played the dry-witted straight man tapped up for a quote only when ol' motormouth needs to take a breath. Now, as Perry tells *AOR*: "I wanted to say what I generally don't. One of them was to lay out my side of the story."

Tyler has flippantly declared that he won't read this book and you can be sure that's because he knows he won't like – much less agree with – Perry's side of the story. But Perry knows that too but doesn't flinch from telling truths that must be uncomfortable for both of them. The drinking, drugs and debauchery we expected, but it's the machinations of the business – the band and management politics – that are the real revelations.

"The politics that go on behind the scenes have changed," says Perry, hinting at the schism that exists between the band wherein four of them share one management team and a singer on his "fifth or sixth" since going it alone. "That's what a lot of the book is about – how hard it is to keep a band like this together because of those changes. But we've managed to pull it through because we still love to play love together. That's a really big part of it."

Rocks is a very considered and absorbing read in exactly the way Steven Tyler's stream-of-consciousness *Does The Noise In My Head Bother You?* wasn't. Clearly this is because it bears the co-writer's credit of David Ritz – a four-time winner of the Gleason Music Book Award and clearly no slouch at keeping even the train-wreck parts of JPs life story a-rollin' after his previous experience doing the same for Ray Charles BB King and Aretha Franklin.

The no-holds-barred truths that emerge paint the picture of a single-minded but unexpectedly vulnerable man. For all his distrust of Aerosmith's old management, he speaks with genuine love of their original mentor Frank Connelly – and doesn't flinch from telling how it went wrong with Tim Collins, the man behind their 1980s rebirth.

From playing at Jacques Cousteau to styling himself on the cover of *Bo Diddley Is A Gunslinger*, from loving British blues to living the American dream – it's all here. **NJ**

Joe Perry's *Rocks: My Life In And Out Of Aerosmith* is available now via Simon & Schuster.

and flung '*Her picture graced the grime on the door*' right back.

Two lines later, though, the fledgling partnership hit a bump in the road. After Tyler's '*She was a long-lost love at first bite*', Child proposed: '*I threw my money down on the stage/And, well, I didn't care.*'

Tyler thought that "fey" but, in an uncharacteristically tactful reply, merely complained it didn't rhyme, and then fixed it himself with '*Baby maybe you're wrong/ But you know it's all right*'. The rest is rock history.

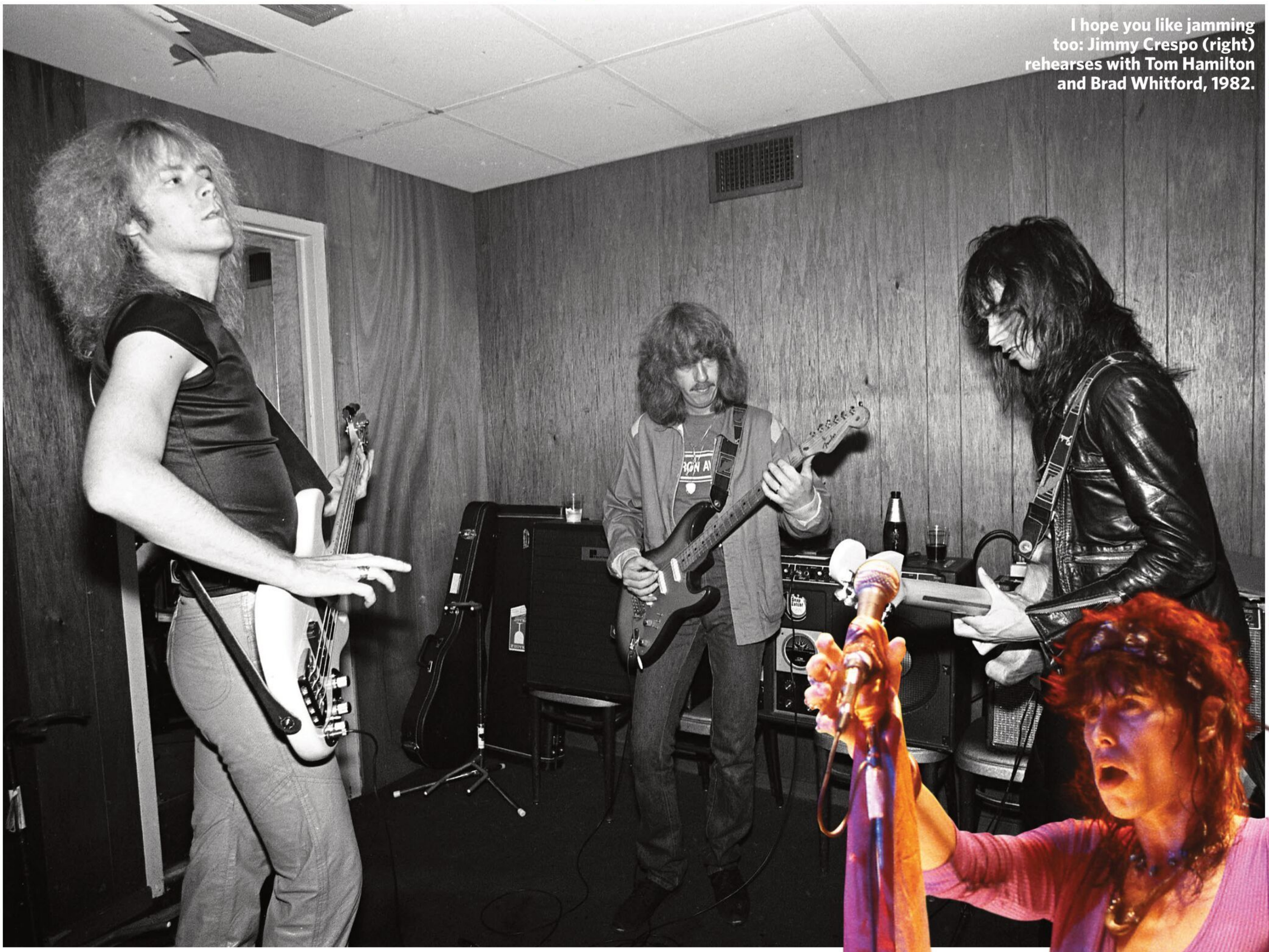
Dude… was the first single released from *Permanent Vacation*, in October 1987 and took Aerosmith to No.14 in the Billboard chart. It later took on a life of its own thanks to the promo clip shot for MTV, its brilliant title (inspired by Mötley Crüe's over-use of the word 'dude' during a New York bar-crawl on which Tyler was present), and its later use on the soundtrack to movies *Mrs Doubtfire* and *Wayne's World 2*.

An even bigger hit, however, was power-ballad *Angel* – co-written by Tyler alone with Child.

These days Perry looks back on the song with mixed feelings, and describes its creation in his book as "a turning point".

Perry: "I would say that was the start of a big change. Steven and I always had this 'team' thing – we would get together and write. Okay, over the years, obviously, he wrote some songs with Tom and with Brad too, but he and I had this thing that was tight, you know? We were friends. He was probably one of the guys I hung around with the most. We didn't go out as a band together because we had other interests. That was how he and I, right from the start, hooked up.

"The band always felt like a democracy – all for one and one for all – but Steven and I had this thing that was one step further, like a lot of songwriting teams in rock'n'roll history, I guess. So it just



I hope you like jamming too: Jimmy Crespo (right) rehearses with Tom Hamilton and Brad Whitford, 1982.

CUT OUT: ROSS HALFIN/MAIN IMAGE: MARK WEISS

surprised me that he would sit down overnight and do that.

"I literally lived five minutes away so it really shocked me that he didn't phone up and say, 'We're working on something new, come over.' When I found out he had it was like: Wait a minute, I thought we were friends. I thought we were songwriting partners. It just didn't even cross his mind that it would be a blow to me."

Perry, note, had no problem with the song itself... Indeed while some hardcore Aerosmith fans saw the song as overly commercial, the ballad style and format was part of the band's DNA. Their first album contained *Dream On*, the second *Seasons Of Wither*, while *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks* closed with *You See Me Crying* and *Home Tonight*, respectively. And although that softer side was mainly down to Tyler, Perry himself did it with *Play The Game* off the third Joe Perry Project album, *I've Got The Rock'N'Rolls Again*. As much as they were known for hard rock, part of Aerosmith had *always* been an AOR band.

Permanent Vacation was released at the end of August 1987. In October, amid a flurry of interviews revealing how they'd kicked the habits that had been killing them, the reborn Aerosmith took to the road in America. The tour would run until September 1988 and take them back to the level of their mid-70s heydays. Before the tour's close, the album would be certified double platinum in the US, with *Angel* reaching No.3 to become their biggest hit to date, surpassing even *Dream On* when it was re-released in 1976, off the back of *Toys In The Attic*'s success.

In February 1989, after a four-month break, Aerosmith took that success and euphoria back into Little Mountain to hook up with Bruce Fairbairn and co once more, to make *Pump*. Released three months before the end of the decade in which they'd reached rock bottom, *Pump* took them to their greatest heights yet.

"*Pump* really felt like that band had back in the 70s," says Perry. "I sometimes get confused talking about *Pump* and *Rocks*... Those are two hot points in our two careers."

Pump yielded six singles to *Permanent Vacation*'s four, reached No.5 in the Billboard chart and No.3 in the UK. The success fuelled a 12-month tour that began in Europe in October – a territory they'd avoided since a few tentative dates in the late 70s – and continued around the world, ending in Australia. Aerosmith were, finally, a global act.

Tyler: "The best tours are the ones that are propelled by hit singles. The tour's the surfboard, the wave is your popularity. It's a wave 20 feet tall, and you're riding that fucker as long as you can."

Aerosmith were back, and as big as they ever were. Impossible as it seemed.

Perry: "The odds of one person staying sober were small. But five guys? Unheard of. In this business no one gets a second chance. Yet we were more successful than ever."

Aerosmith

Dude (Looks Like A Lady)

A pouting member of Mötley Crüe, a Bon Jovi songwriter, a risque video... Joe Perry looks back on how the song that secured Aerosmith's place at rock's top table again came together.

Words: **Rich Chamberlain**

It may be easy to gloss over today thanks to their subsequent decades of superstardom, but go back to early 1987 and Aerosmith were staring down the barrel. They had overcome the barren years in which they limped on without Joe Perry and Brad Whitford, but what should have been their triumphant return, 1985's *Done With Mirrors* (on which Perry and Whitford reunited with Steven Tyler, Tom Hamilton and Joey Kramer) was poorly received – even by the band.

"*Done With Mirrors* was not exactly a resounding success as far as we were concerned," Perry tells *Classic Rock* 30-plus years on from the album's release. "Some people like that record and some people don't. I don't like it so much."

But while Aerosmith's eighth album flopped critically, it set them on the path to becoming the biggest rock band on the planet. Again. The tours that sandwiched the record's release showed Tyler and Perry that they could still tour the world without tearing strips off each other, for starters. Their dissatisfaction with *Done With Mirrors* also taught them that they needed to rip up their own rule book when it came time to work up their next record. That was 1987's *Permanent Vacation*, which resurrected Aerosmith's career and sold by the boatload.

"When it came to *Permanent Vacation* we knew we needed to step it up," Perry says. "MTV had come around by then, and videos were important and the whole thing had changed. We knew we needed to change and open up the way we did things. It was a new era. We put everything we had into that record and we didn't stop working on those songs until we really nailed them. Fortunately it went down well and it was the start of a whole new era for us."

The album's success was given a big leg-up by second single *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)*. The song itself is a bombastic slice of pop rock perfection that finds Aerosmith at their cartoonish best, underpinned by a hip-swinging horn section. As a song surprisingly inspired by early electronica and honed by outside songwriter Desmond Child, it encapsulated perfectly the band's new anything-goes approach.

"Computers were starting to come in at that time," Perry says of the track's genesis. "Synthesisers were getting used more in music, and somebody brought in this sampler. It was very crude, early-days electronics. We sampled a guitar chord and messed around with it, and that started the basic rhythm for *Dude*. Then Steven got started writing lyrics."

The old story goes that the song's trademark lyrical line was switched from '*Cruisin' for a lady*' to '*Dude looks like a lady*' after Tyler saw a pouting Vince Neil prowling the Sunset Strip. It's a tale so fantastic that it must be apocryphal, right?

"There's definitely some truth to that story," Perry confirms, almost with a laugh. "I know that Steven saw Mötley Crüe and that lyric came into being afterwards. Steven used that as a jumping-off place. It wasn't like they were the total inspiration for the song but it definitely moved the lyrics along. Put it this way: the lyrics would have been a lot different if he hadn't seen Mötley Crüe looking that way."

"Put it this way: the lyrics would have been a lot different if Steven hadn't seen Mötley Crüe looking that way."

Even with smirks at the Strip's most androgynous bunch of make-up-caked whisky swillers, *Dude* still lacked something lyrically. In 1987, for Aerosmith the thought of bringing in an outside songwriter was heresy, but Bon Jovi hitmaker Desmond Child was ushered in. You can't argue with the results, but Perry admits that there were doubts.

"Steven had lyrics but they just weren't quite right, they didn't quite fit. Desmond came in and tweaked the lyrics a little bit with Steven. There was a lot of reluctance [to working with Child] at the start. But we knew that we had to change something up. We fought it all the way, but once we got to know Desmond it worked. That song was done except for literally just a couple of lines, and the changes just gave it a different vibe."

With the lyrics finally nailed down, *Slippery When Wet* producer Bruce Fairbairn was brought in. It turned out to be a master stroke. With Fairbairn's painstaking pre-production methods, they knew the song inside out before the red light went on.

The single hit the Top 20 in the US and gave the band their first UK Top 50 entry. It also clocked up hours of MTV airtime, thanks in part to its cheeky video which featured a red-hot band performance and plenty of bare female flesh. Today, Perry admits that the video stemmed from their new outlook of sharing the load.

"The first video we did for *Draw The Line*, we tried to direct it ourselves and it really wasn't that good. So by *Dude* we thought: 'Let's find someone that does this for a living.' So we called Marty Callner. Marty loved trying to push MTV's buttons. He loved seeing how much he could get away with. That helped the videos like *Dude* do as well as they did and helped get all of the airplay. He'd go: 'Wow! They let that through but we're going to have to take this one out.' He was a lot of fun to work with. That was when music videos were at their peak."

And so it was mission accomplished. *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)* helped *Permanent Vacation* become a huge success, setting up the band for the monster smash album *Pump* that followed in 1989. And almost 30 years on, *Dude* continues to pass the ultimate test of time.

"As it turns out it's one of those songs that did really well," Perry says. Everything on that record was definitely a step up from *Done With Mirrors*. But that particular song did well and people still love it today when we play live. It still makes the cut when we play live, and that says a lot."

GETTY

NUMBER ONE HITS? DREAM ON...

Dude (Looks Like A Lady) was the first time Aerosmith collaborated with outside songwriters, and it's a method that has served them well since. It even delivered their biggest hit in 1998's *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing*, the signature tune for the Bruce Willis blockbuster *Armageddon*.

"As time has gone on we've used outside songwriters more and more," says Perry. "Up to the point where we did that Diane Warren song which was our first number one single."

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
September 1987 as a single.

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.45, US No.14

PERSONNEL
Steven Tyler
Lead vocals
Joe Perry
Guitar
Brad Whitford
Guitar
Tom Hamilton
Bass
Joey Kramer
Drums
Bob Rogers
Trombone
Ian Putz
Saxophone
Tom Keenlyside
Saxophone

WRITTEN BY
Steven Tyler, Joe Perry and Desmond Child

PRODUCER
Bruce Fairbairn

LABEL
Geffen

Joe Perry (left) and Steven Tyler: started to look like hitmakers with *Dude*.

PUMP IT UP

After the multi-platinum *Permanent Vacation*, it was time for **Aerosmith** to go one bigger. They stepped up to the plate and hit a home run with 1989's *Pump*, their biggest album ever.

Words: **Mick Wall** Image: **Aaron Rapoport/Getty**

So, I asked Steven Tyler and Joe Perry: is it true that you once…

"Yes!" yelped Tyler, an overexcited puppy in violet shades. "All of it!"

What about the time…

"Totally," said Perry, gunslinger drawl, head-to-toe leather.

And…

"More than once," Tyler said with a grin, pushing back his long tresses to overexpose his pouting-skull features. "And in many more places."

But…

"We're not like that any more," said Perry, barely moving his lips. "We do different shit now."

"Right, well, that's that cleared that up, then," I should have said but didn't.

It was a sunny Sunday morning in London, late summer 1989, and I was interviewing 'the boys' from Aerosmith about the release of their new album, titled simply *Pump*.

Steven and Joe had just come from the gym where they had pounded through their usual two-hour morning workout. Now they were sharing pots of strong black coffee.

"That's our high now," explained Tyler, pouring his third cup. "Beat the shit out of yourself on the rowing machine then drink this. Like a speedball," he said, and smacked his considerable lips, "but without the come-down."

"Or the divorces," said Perry, deadpan.

I had tried getting them to talk about the 'bad old days' of the 70s: the days of travelling in separate limos; of downer capsules sewn into scarves, and cellophane bags of heroin the size of bin liners, and cocaine road queens; of long sleepless nights that turned into years then lifetimes, then – bang! Unhappy endings. But they weren't having it. They'd been asked it all before. A zillion times. Change the record. So I did.

Aerosmith came from an era when the two bands they had always been most closely compared to were the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, combining the swaggering outlaw status of the former with the overlord musical assault of the latter, back when rock still rolled, drugs were mind-expanding and chicks got in the back door for free.

Now, in the late 80s, Aerosmith's closest competitors were Mötley Crüe and Poison, Bon Jovi and Guns N' Roses. A time when 'heads' had been replaced by headbangers, deep-cut album tracks overtaken by low-com-denom videos, shit for sugar, class for ass.

The question was: how comfortable were Aerosmith – the band who made their (bad) reputation for not even knowing that rules existed – now being positioned in the middle of all that safe-as-mother's-milk shit?

"You mean *heavy metal*?" hissed Tyler, holding out a hand to regard his daintily polished fingernails. "I don't even recognise what we do in the bands you just mentioned. Maybe Guns N' Roses has a little of the real thing going for them. But to me it was always Led Zeppelin who invented that whole thing. We came along a little bit after that but we had all the same musical roots, going back to The Yardbirds, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck… the Stones and The Beatles.

"But we weren't trying to be out-and-out *heavy*. We just wanted to rock *loud*. But also have some great songs in there too, whether they were great ballads to kick back on like *Dream On*, or some funky-assed dance stuff like *Sweet Emotion* or *Walk This Way*. And we achieved that, I think."

So with all this good stuff going on, why had they never been commercially successful outside of the United States?

"Oh, that's easy," said Perry, chewing gum while drinking his coffee. "Because we never toured any place else."

And why was that?

He looked at me like I'd just shit the bed. "Drugs, man! The drugs! We couldn't risk going through airports."

So it is true what they say?

"We just told you," said Tyler. "All of it!"

"Totally," said Perry.

Okaaay.

"The only pressure [with *Pump*] was to be *less* like what the record company said we should be."

Steven Tyler

The fact is, none of the usual questions rock bands got asked in those easy-to-fool days applied to Aerosmith any more. Tyler was 41, Perry 39 when *Pump* was released. They and the rest of the band – bassist Tom Hamilton (38), rhythm guitarist Brad Whitford (37) and drummer Joey Kramer (39) – were old enough to know better than to question the newfound master-of-the-universe status of MTV or the music industry's greed-head preference for low-quality-sound, high-dollar profit-margin CDs.

Plus, Aerosmith had had it all their own way for more than a decade – writing their own down-and-dirty songs until they all started to sound the same (only not as good), living their own down-and-dirty dreams until they turned into nightmares. Not stopping until long after the wheels had fallen off the meat wagon.

Following a harrowing collective rehab in 1986 enforced by then-manager Tim Collins, and a laying-down-the-law meeting with their label Geffen Records, where it was made clear that ➢

CAMERA PRESS/STEVE DOUBLE

they did what they were told or else, Aerosmith had reluctantly accepted 'help' in the studio for their next album, *Permanent Vacation*, a desperate last-ditch attempt to resuscitate a career that most considered already dead.

That help had come, principally, in the form of producer Bruce Fairbairn, hot as a pistol after the squillion-dollar success that year of Bon Jovi's *Slippery When Wet*, and Desmond Child, writer of reliably generic rock hits for Kiss, Joan Jett and, most recently and successfully, in 1986, Bon Jovi (*You Give Love A Bad Name, Livin' On A Prayer*).

Child had excelled himself on *Permanent Vacation*, 'helping' Aerosmith come up with *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)* and *Angel*, their biggest hit singles in their own right since the 70s. Jim Vallance, fresh from co-writing nine US Top 20 singles in three years with Bryan Adams, was also brought in to co-write four songs, including the album's other big hit, *Rag Doll*.

All that extra assistance, along with a progressively successful year-long 'world' tour – which pointedly did not include Britain or Europe – drove *Permanent Vacation* to the edge of the US Top 10, becoming the first Aerosmith album in a decade to sell more than a million copies.

Clean start established. New direction approved. Now for the big one.

"I never carry cash any more. I just point at things in the store and the people there just give them to me."

Steven Tyler in '89

"No, we didn't feel any extra pressure making this one," Tyler insisted when I asked on the eve of the release of *Pump*. "We've never felt pressure making albums," he said with a straight face. "The only pressure this time around was to be *less* like what the record

Pumped with *Pump*: (l-r) Brad Whitford, Tom Hamilton, Steven Tyler, Joey Kramer, Joe Perry.

company said we should be and more like ourselves. Like, really let rip this time."

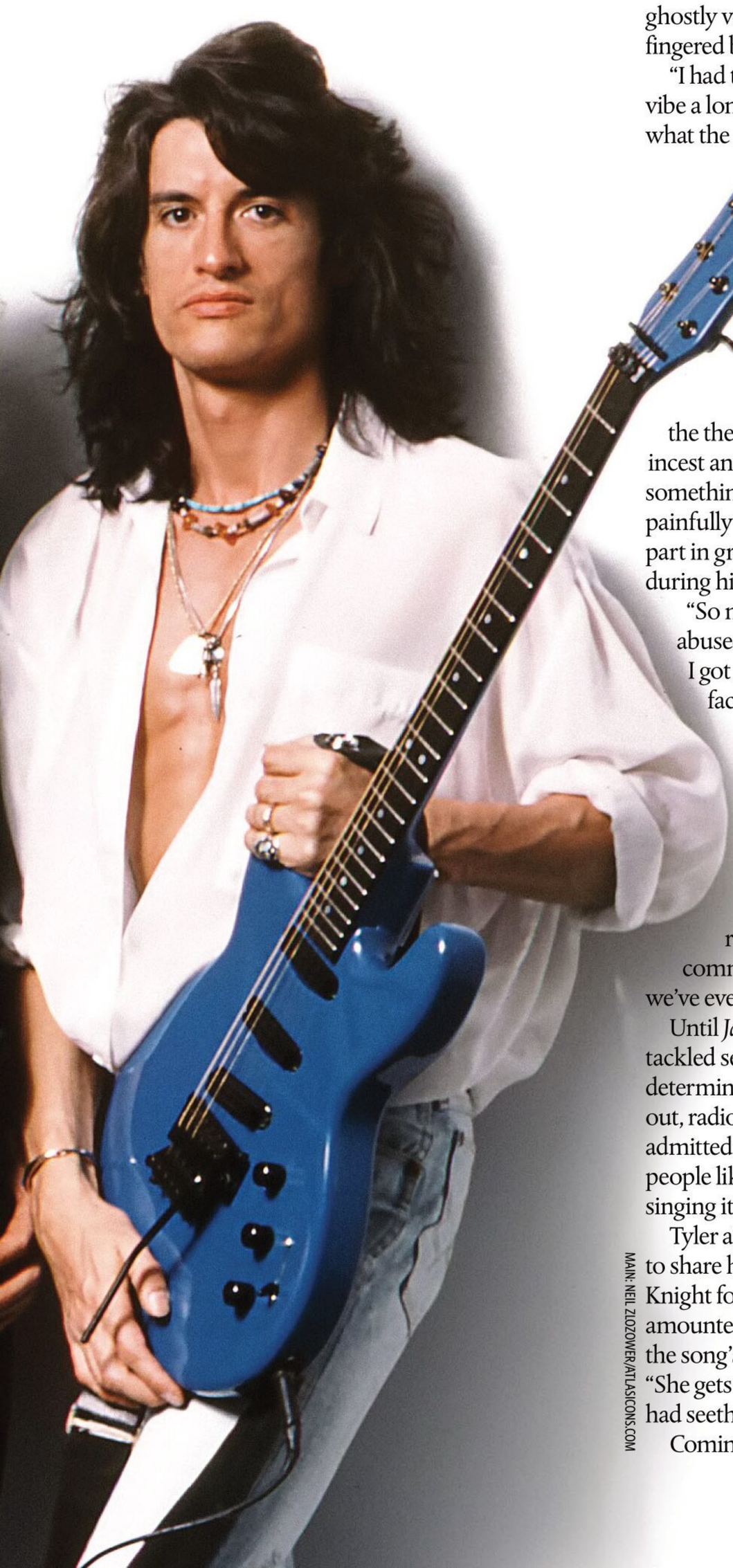
In fact the making of *Pump* was – initially, at least – very much in the mould of a self-consciously durable follow-up to *Permanent Vacation*, down to the same producer, Fairbairn, and 'co-writers' – Child and Vallance again, responsible for two tracks each. But while the latter pair did help the band scrub up well with two more hit songs – *What It Takes* and *The Other Side* respectively – this time around it was the band as individuals who came up with the real goods, in the shape of Tyler and Perry's *Love In An Elevator* – a more emblematic Aerosmith rocker it is nigh on impossible to make a case for – and Tyler and Hamilton's moody, evocative *Janie's Got A Gun*.

The former was classic Aerosmith: broad of humour, bulging of guitars, screeching vocals, bossy drums, and well, cheeky and danceable – a quality that was in short supply in the formulaic hair-metal of the times. Even the barbershop-quartet vocals at the end spoke of a band reaching beyond the narrow confines of their supposed contemporaries.

The latter, though, was something else again. Originally titled *Danny's Got A Gun*, after a real-life friend of Tyler's, it was preceded on the finished album by a 10-second interlude called *Water Song*, the work of Canadian experimental multi-instrumentalist Randy Raine-Reusch, featuring him playing, variously, a glass harmonica, wind gong and Native American bull-roarers, setting up a haunting atmosphere from which softly sprung Tyler's low-tone keyboard and ghostly vocals and Hamilton's creepy, sponge-fingered bass.

"I had the title to that and the kind of soulful vibe a long time before I could figure out exactly what the song was gonna be about," Tyler said.

EDDIE MALLUK/ATLAS ICONS.COM



In the end it was almost a year later, he said, before he was able to complete the lyrics, partly inspired by an article he had read in *Time* magazine about a girl who killed her sexually abusive father, and partly by his determination to say something out loud on the then deeply buried subject of incest and child sex abuse – something he had been made painfully aware of while taking part in group therapy sessions during his time in rehab.

"So many kids had been abused by their parents, [and] I got really angry with the fact nobody was paying homage to the children that are sexually abused by mum and dad… That song and *Dream On* have gotten the most response [letters and comments] of any songs we've ever done."

Until *Janie's Got A Gun*, Aerosmith had never tackled serious issues, but Tyler, in particular, was determined to make up for what he felt were sell-out, radio-lite songs like *Angel*. As Joe Perry admitted: "It was a huge hit for us and a lot of people like it, but I know Steven has a hard time singing it."

Tyler also had his knickers in a twist over having to share his songwriting royalties with Holly Knight for her contribution to *Rag Doll* – which amounted her simply to suggesting a change from the song's original title of *Rag Time* to *Rag Doll*. "She gets half my fuckin' royalties just for that?" he had seethed to Geffen label chief John Kalodner.

Coming up with something as strong as *Janie's Got A Gun* would go some way to helping redress that balance for the singer.

"Steven came in and played *Janie's Got A Gun* one day at rehearsal, and we all just stood there," Tom Hamilton later recalled. "It was like a visit from the gods. There was something really amazing happening in that room."

The lyrics had originally included the line '*He raped a little bitty baby*', but Tyler was eventually persuaded to amend it to '*He jacked a little bitty baby*', so that the song – which he considered the most important he had ever written – could be played in a wider context on radio and TV.

Inevitably in that pre-internet age, the song still stirred up a certain amount of 'concern' among the record company, and 'controversy' in the more left-wing areas of the staid media, drawing accusations of encouraging vigilante justice. Nevertheless, the video went into heavy rotation on MTV and the song reached No.4 on the US singles chart – albeit in slightly altered form, the line '*and put a bullet in his brain*' redone as '*and left him in the pouring rain*'.

But when the band played the song live on subsequent tours, Tyler would re-insert both original lines – about the bitty baby being raped and the bullet in the father's brain. Take that, corporate America! Now, about those royalties…

"I hate it when people say we only release ballads so we can have hits."

— Joe Perry in '89 —

Faffing about the specifics of the lyrics didn't change the fact that *Janie's Got A Gun*, and by extension the whole *Pump* album, successfully recalibrated the image of Aerosmith in America. While they could still pull the trigger on flash-gun gutter-rock like *Young Lust* and *F.I.N.E.* (aka Fucked Up, Insecure, Neurotic and Emotional), they proved on tracks like *Monkey On My Back* that they still could play like a band telepathically linked, Perry's rattlesnake-shake slide guitar wrapping itself around Tyler's hoarse vocal revelations, a preacher in his pulpit. This wasn't just a band that knew how to rock it hard and heavy, this was a real gap-toothed monster that really knew how to *swing*.

And on tracks like the raw-to-bleeding ballad *What It Takes* and the soul-deep *The Other Side*, we were so far beyond what used to be called power ballads that we were actually tiptoeing into the kind of sophisticated pop styles The Beatles had ➢

MAIN: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

"If we had had this level of success in the seventies we would not be here now."

— Steven Tyler in 1990 —

hallmarked in the 60s, when Aerosmith were growing up, transcendental transistor radio glued to their still easily-affected ears.

There were still moments where the band were clearly going through the motions – neither *Don't Get Mad, Get Even* nor *My Girl* begged to be heard more than once – but for the most part *Pump* lived up to its name ecstatically.

As a result, no longer would Aerosmith be bracketed with Mötley Crüe, Poison and Bon Jovi; no longer would they be seen as 70s hangovers. Now they were the big daddies of late-80s rock. Even Guns N' Roses would bend the knee in public, with Slash never tiring of repeating the story of how he lost his virginity while listening to Aerosmith, the band last seen belting out their own pug-faced version of *Mama Kin* while on tour opening for Aerosmith.

By the time *Janie's Got A Gun* won a Grammy for Best Rock Performance By A Duo Or Group With Vocal in 1990, *Pump* was on its way to selling more than 10 million copies worldwide. It became the band's biggest album ever, even taking Aerosmith into the UK charts for the first time in their career – prompting – ta-da! – their first European and UK shows since the 70s.

I recall catching them during their four-night run in London – two shows at Hammersmith Odeon, two at Wembley Arena, in November 1989 – and being astonished by how much better, how much slicker and sicker they were even than when I had caught them nine months previously, on the climax of their US tour, when Guns N' Roses were pushing them to go one better each night. When I had watched Tyler and Perry standing with lit faces at the side of the stage watching Slash do his solo. It had seemed like a passing-of-the-baton moment.

Seeing Aerosmith demolish the famous old Hammy O, it was clear that they were now operating on a much higher level of rock-consciousness than ever before. Amazing though it was to experience them blazing blue-flames through next-gen 'Smith gear like *Dude, Elevator, Janie, F.I.N.E.*, what really made the lid flap open was that they reached into their back pockets and threw down absolutely steaming versions of old-gold 'Smith X-raters like *Rats In The Cellar, Draw The Line, Sweet Emotion* and *Walk This Way*. I mean, come on, man! They didn't oughta do it, but they did.

At a reception after the show, I chatted briefly to Joe Perry, blathering on excitedly about how *Pump* was their best album ever, how well the songs from

EDDIE MALLUK/ATLAS ICONS.COM x5

it fitted in with the best of their back catalogue, how wonderful life on Earth was, especially now I'd had those 10 pints. Something like that, anyway.

"It's been good for us," he agreed, still chewing gum and refusing to smile, the grey in his hair now styled into a dandy's hot streak. "It proves you can't pigeonhole us. I hate it when I go into a record store and see our albums in the heavy metal sections. I'm like, what's up with that?"

He swivelled his eyes. "But I also hate it when people say we only release ballads so we can have hits. I mean, why bother making singles if they're not gonna get played? People say: 'But you're an artist, you shouldn't care about that shit.' I say: 'I am an artist – but I'm also an entertainer. I didn't get into this to sit on a stool in a bar playing to five people. I like the success.'"

Just then, as if to prove the point, Steven Tyler bounced over, a man for whom the word 'success' clearly meant even more to.

As he pointed out, "I don't need money anyway. People just give me things. It's true. I never carry cash any more. I just point at things in the store and the people there just give them to me."

He looked at me, as though peering through a microscope. "You know why we called the album *Pump*?"

Uh, because you are, uh, pumped?

"*Because we are pumped*!"

He threw back his head and laughed, a wolf howling for its moonlit supper.

"What greater success can there be but that?"

During a follow-up phone call some months later, by which time *Pump* was firmly on its way to giving Aerosmith a global profile at last, I asked Tyler if perhaps this level of success had actually come too late for them to really enjoy?

Croaky laugh. "No, man! If we had had this level of success in the seventies we would not be here now. We would never have survived it.

"Right now it feels more like it did when we first started. *Pump* has done well for us, really shoved us down people's throats for the first time all over the world. But we still have to go out and prove ourselves every night."

And when the show is over, how did they come down – minus the old standbys of booze and dope?

"We play! That's all we do now, just play music – for ourselves, for other people. It doesn't matter if people see us a certain way. In my mind I was always a rock star. And *Pump* is just the beginning of where we go next. We're in the nineties now, all the rules are changing."

In a couple of weeks' time the band would be playing at Donington, as we called the Monsters Of Rock festival back then. Jimmy Page had told me he was intending to go to the show specifically to see Aerosmith.

How did that make Steven feel?

Another long, throaty, wolf-laugh. "Well, how I think of it is like this. Jimmy Page is going to come to our show and see us do *Train Kept-A-Rollin*, a tune we first saw him do in The Yardbirds, which then turned us on to forming Aerosmith. So how I will feel about that on the night is… well… pumped! What more can I say?"

I pumped Tyler goodbye and put the pump down. Then went and wrote the pumping story. Feeling pumped. Or feeling F.I.N.E. I can't remember which.

All pumped up: (l-r) Tom Hamilton, Joey Kramer, Steven Tyler, Brad Whitford, Joe Perry.

'The *Pump* album successfully recalibrated the image of Aerosmith in America.'

Q&A

Joey Kramer

Addiction. Depression. A nervous breakdown. Trying – and failing – to please his father... Aerosmith's doughty drummer has been through the lot.

Words: **Peter Makowski** Portrait: **Whitney Hayward/Getty**

When Aerosmith toured Britain in the 1970s one acerbic critic described drummer Joey Kramer as being one of the "less interesting three" – referring to him, guitarist Brad Whitford and bassist Tom Hamilton. Since then, they have jokingly referred to themselves as 'The LI3' and quite happily stood back from the spotlight as Steven Tyler and Joe Perry have taken centre stage. Kramer came out of the shadows with the release of his 2010 autobiography *Hit Hard: A Story Of Hitting Rock Bottom At The Top.* As the book was released, he sat down to talk about his battles with addiction, depression and the nervous breakdown which drove him to the brink of suicide.

What made you write this book?
I was sort of inspired to be of service to people. I used to sit around with friends of mine telling stories about the band and being on the road, and eventually people started telling me: "Joey, you gotta write a book." I thought: "Who's gonna be interested in a book that I write?" And thenI started writing journals – and when I read them back I realised I had a little bit more of an edge than the next guy by the virtue of a lot of the stuff that I went through. I realised in combination with doing a rock'n'roll memoir I could also add to it my struggle with addiction, recovery, depression, anxiety and things that a lot of normal people suffer from all the time, everyday.

Your book is definitely more honest, less grandiose and sensational than previous drug-alogues like Mötley Crüe's *The Dirt* and even Aerosmith's own *Walk This Way*.
Well, it definitely makes it okay to not have to be a rock star to crash and burn. The same things happened to me that happen to anybody and everybody. I think that anxiety and depression is so prevalent today, that's what led me to write about it. Every time I turn on the television there's either an ad for some kind of medication or they're talking about it. And here I was having gone through it, so why not share my experience, strength and hope with everyone? It was just a question of me getting honest. And that's why I'm really proud of the book because everything that's in there is true.

***Rock Bottom* could be read as a self-help manual, but *Walk This Way* was the ultimate guide into how not to do things…**

"All I could do was whimper and cry. There were even thoughts and talk of suicide." – Joey Kramer

Well, you might have noticed that I contributed very little to *Walk This Way*. That's because I didn't really want to have anything to do with the book. It wasn't the band's idea; it was all down to our former manager.

It's interesting how you compare your relationship with your father to your subsequent interaction with Steven Tyler. Was there a connection?
Oh, absolutely! My father was the guy in my life that I was always trying to please. And it seemed that whatever I did, it didn't really matter. And then when I left my family of origin and went into the family of the band, the five of us, I just assumed my same position. I transferred my father's stuff over to Steven. So he became the guy I was always trying to please, and always trying to help, so he would pat me on the back and say: "Good boy." Steven was a much better musician than me at the time and I knew that he was aware of a lot more things, so I listened to him. He was my hero but as time went on that wore off.

When did you become aware that you were suffering from depression?
It was at a time that I was already nine years sober and I had a nervous breakdown. I got to the point where all I had the ability to do was whimper and cry and I could barely say my name. I was emotionally bankrupt. I really couldn't do much of anything – I had to be institutionalised. There were even thoughts and talk of suicide. I looked over that edge and decided that I didn't want to go there. So I went to place called Steps for a month and really got an education to what was going on, becauseI wanted to know why all this stuff was happening. I found out that knowing why is just the booby prize. It really doesn't matter why, it's about facing it.

How did the rest of the band respond?
Well, they were supportive in that they understood that I needed to get the education and help that I was getting. The only problem was it would have been nice to have them call me and talk to me. But the manager we had at the time told them to leave me alone.

It must felt strange coming out of rehab and going straight back to work.
Oh, sure. When I came back out and they wanted me to do the record [*Nine Lives*] with nobody having any idea what sort ofa thing it was that I had just gone through. They all thought I should be happy and elated because I was going to get to do the record. In the meantime I was very fragile, still broken basically, and the last place on earth that I should have been was the studio. But I knew that if I wanted to keep my gig I had to go back in and muster up whatever it took to play.

Did you ever sit down and talk about your breakdown with the guys?
We didn't really talk through things *per se*. It took me about a year to get back in the swing of things. We eventually went out on the road and I was told to just call it my big blue funk and speak around it and not give any definite information. But I disagreed with that; I wanted to be completely honest about it and people responded to that positively.

BACK IN THE SADDLE

On the heels of their 80s resurgence, the 90s saw **Aerosmith** hitting the stratosphere once more. But along with the commercial omnipotence, there were deaths, firings, bad blood and a scandal over a pierced nipple...

Words: **Henry Yates** Image: **Mick Hutson/Getty**

The narrative of 90s rock is carved in stone. The grunge scene, according to the media party line, swept away all that excess, culled all those cosseted dinosaurs with their gratuitous guitar solos, teased hair and ravaged septums. But that doesn't quite square with the second coming of Aerosmith: a band whose sound and persona ticked all those boxes, and threw in songs about elevator sex and a mic stand bedecked with silk scarves for good measure.

The Bostonians had indeed stumbled, but that was a lifetime before, in the newly sober and rudderless mid-80s. Stick a pin in the band's imperious 90s run, by contrast, and you might have found them toasting back-to-back US No.1 albums, being inducted on Hollywood's Rock Walk, sweeping the MTV and Grammy Awards, or finally reaching a crossover audience with their first and only US chart-topping single. As Steven Tyler beamed in one late-decade interview: "The last eight years have been what the first ten were supposed to be like. We climbed out of the ashes."

Put the rebirth down to 1989's *Pump*: the comeback special that gave Aerosmith their springboard into the new decade. A year later, in 1990, the fag-end of that album's campaign was still burning, with single releases for *What It Takes*, *The Other Side* and *Monkey On My Back*. Meanwhile, the band's label cashed in on what they probably assumed was a lucky blip, releasing 1991's lavish *Pandora's Box* compilation. That too went platinum, but there was a sense it was time to stop sweeping the vaults. "A patchy, expensive introduction to the newcomer," griped Q magazine's review, "and [it] falls irritatingly between the stools of rarities collection and definitive compilation."

The decade's first flash of creativity went down in early 1992 at LA's A&M Studios, even if this initial attempt at what would become the *Get A Grip* album was aborted. "We decided the songs just didn't jump," noted Joe Perry, and the label

Old glory: Tyler and Perry hoist the flag high.

agreed, with Geffen's John Kalodner recalling that "when Steve, Joe and I sat and listened, I just felt they needed more variety".

A scan of the *Get A Grip* credits reveals how the band fixed that issue, bussing in an army of guest songwriters that included Jim Vallance, Desmond Child, Taylor Rhodes, Richard Supa, Jack Blades, Tommy Shaw, Mark Hudson – and even Lenny Kravitz (on *Line Up*). "With *Permanent Vacation*," reasoned Perry, "we found out after it was out, when we were on the road, that certain songs didn't work for us. Because of these experiences, we did a lot of editing before *Get A Grip* came out, and that's another reason we ended up pulling back and writing a bunch more songs."

Tyler was sanguine, telling *Rolling Stone* in 1993 that they had hatched "a shitload of great stuff. We knew we had to make it the biggest, the baddest, the bravest and the scariest Aerosmith record yet.

"We got a grip on all the things that make us Aerosmith," the singer trumpeted in the same interview. "We got a grip on all the things that sometimes get too refined along the way. We got a grip on what we're all about. I mean, this stuff is something. This is rocksimus maximus."

In retrospect, *Get A Grip* didn't quite top Aerosmith's 70s classics. But the highlights across these 14 tracks are undeniable, right from the neck-tingling moment that Intro's tribal rap-rock breaks into the stinger riff and holler of *Eat The Rich*. *Livin' On The Edge* was an arms-around-the-world soft-rock ballad, inspired by the 1992 Los Angeles race riots (the band would later order President Trump to stop using the song at rallies). *Amazing* and *Cryin'* were an irresistible pair of power-ballads whose popularity would irk Perry in years to come ("I go, 'I'm gonna go out to play fucking *Cryin'* again?'").

"Our manager started making up some nasty rumours that I was back on heroin and the band were breaking up." Steven Tyler

Elsewhere, *Shut Up And Dance* was a route-one crowd-pleaser, while the lighters-aloft *Crazy* came with a dubious rebel-schoolgirl video that saw actress Alicia Silverstone and Tyler's own daughter, Liv, fling their shirts from a moving car. "If you only knew what it looked like originally," said the singer. "It was total lesbian. I said, 'That's got to come out'."

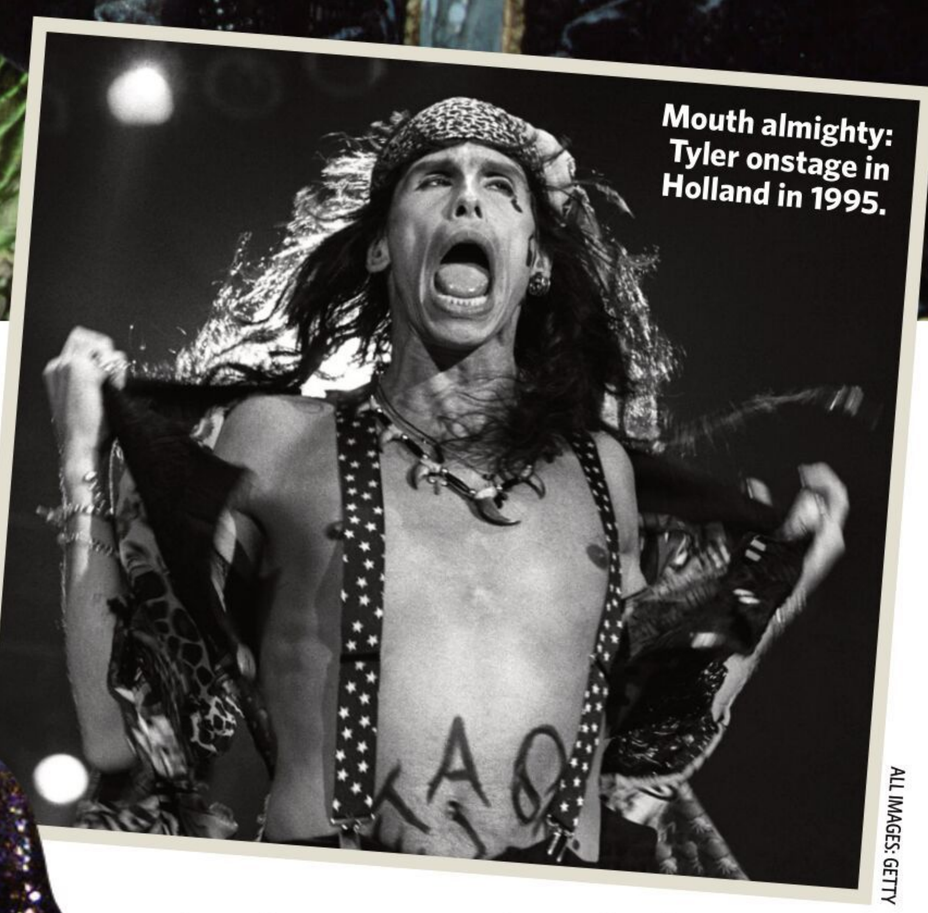
Conversely, Tyler pushed hard for the inclusion of the title track's references to their former lives as junkies. "Some of the guys said: 'I don't think you should be singing, *"The buzz that you be gettin' from the crack don't last/I'd rather be OD'in' on the crack of her ass*" – it's too sexist'," noted the singer of *Fever*. "And I said: 'I'm not putting this album out until this song is on there. I put this down as a statement of where I'm at now, and that's gotta go on this album.'"

Released in April 1993, *Get A Grip* did even better business than Pump, hitting No.1 in the US and No.2 in the UK (only pipped by Cliff Richard's *The Album* in the latter). Ultimately, it would become Aerosmith's best-selling global release, shifting some 20 million units – even despite protests from animal rights activists, quelled when it was revealed the sleeve's pierced udder was a digital creation. And if some critics flagged up a surfeit of ballads and external songwriters, most reviews saluted an album that continued the upward trajectory. "Nothing stands between the world's greatest hard rock band," wrote the venerable music writer Robert Christgau, "and their best album since *Rocks*."

That summer, taking the album out on a 16-month world tour, the band's stock had never been higher. The one frustration, noted Perry, was that some of the new songs didn't ignite the crowd. "We worked on [the song] *Get A Grip* out at Long View Studio in Western Massachusetts," he told the Radio website. "I can remember staying up in the loft with Steven and we were working on some different things. We said, 'This riff is gonna work. This has got it'. We named the record after it… we played it live and it just laid there flat. We discovered there were other songs people would rather hear."

As 1994's multi-platinum hits compilation *Big Ones* reminded the world, Aerosmith had plenty of those. But the band had one eye on the future, too, with that summer's prescient CompuServe promotion letting fans download the track *Head*

Never mind the bollocks: Tyler takes a bite out of John Lydon's ear at the MTV Music Awards.



Mouth almighty: Tyler onstage in Holland in 1995.

ALL IMAGES: GETTY

American bad-asses: Tyler with Kid Rock at the 1999 MTV Music Awards.

First from the Internet: an industry-first from an A-list band. With the primitive bandwidths of the time, the download process could take as long as 90 minutes, but that didn't dissuade more than 10,000 fans from doing so during the two-week promotion. Warming to this nascent technology, by year's end, the band had also embarked on the Cyberspace Tour '94 that saw them conduct a series of one-hour online interviews. "If our fans are out there driving down that information superhighway," reasoned Tyler, "then we want to be playing at the truck stop."

But for now, at heart, Aerosmith were a major-label band operating within the traditional industry and enjoying all its trappings: a fact underlined by their new record deal with Sony, worth an estimated $30 million. The first release under this contract was originally intended to be a straight blues album. Tyler: "And then we caught wind that Clapton was doing it, and we went, 'Fuck!' It always happens."

Instead, setting up in January 1996 at Miami's Criteria Studios with producer Glen Ballard, Aerosmith embarked on what became *Nine* ➢

Steven Tyler: on his ninth life – or should that be 900th?

ALL IMAGES: GETTY

Lives, this twelfth album's title referencing the band's famous resilience (Perry: "It should have been called *Nine Hundred Lives*"). That resolve was about to be tested. Joey Kramer was struggling; having lost his father, the drummer plunged into a "big blue funk" and stepped away from the band, telling MTV, "I went into a deep depression. It was an emergency that came up for me and I had to take care of myself. That was the most important thing at the time."

There were deeper problems in the guts of the band. Manager Tim Collins, it's universally acknowledged, deserves huge credit for dragging the drug-addled lineup back into contention in the previous decade. But by the mid-'90s, it slowly dawned on the members that he was using divide-and-rule tactics. Kramer alleges his position was put under threat by Collins. "While I was away taking care of this problem," the drummer told *Mojo*, "[Collins] lied to my partners. He told them the record company was putting pressure on to get the album done. This was not true. He was trying to get rid of me."

Tyler accused Collins of even more damaging mind games in an Independent interview. "We were in Florida, on such a roll. There were beautiful girls and beautiful weather and ice-cream parlours. Then [Collins] started making up some nasty rumours – that I was back on heroin and the band were breaking up. He told the band a lot of things that I never said – that I wanted Tom [Hamilton, bass] thrown out and I wanted Joey thrown out. And they drank the Kool-Aid. ."

"In the end he was pushing his doctrines on the band," Tyler added in a *Times* interview. "Don't get out of limousines with your wives at gala events, 'cos you'll alienate your core fans. It was control issues. He went from being a really good facilitator and pilot of the Aerosmith ship, a conscious pilot to a Pontius Pilate. He went to *Rolling Stone* magazine and told them that I was still on drugs, and that he knew I was fucking women, just a whole barrage of things that no true friend or manager should do to their client."

Collins had to go. And so did much of the early *Nine Lives* material, when the record label decided that Ballard's multi-tracked production and the songs recorded with stand-in drummer Steve Ferrone "just didn't have the Aerosmith kick-ass ability". The sessions moved to New York, Kramer returned to the drumstool, and production duties were bestowed upon Kevin Shirley, whom Tyler noted "has got it somewhere stuck between *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks*".

In fact, *Nine Lives* had broader horizons than that. There were straightahead rockers, like the title

Daddy's girl: Tyler with daughter and Aerosmith video star Liv.

track, written immediately after the band returned from watching AC/DC, and the horn-bolstered *Falling In Love (Is Hard On The Knees)*. "The more you learn, the more you're afraid to give up," said Tyler of the latter's lyric. "In the beginning you'll fall for anything, if you don't learn what to stand up to. Love can take you down. But it's a strange world now. I'm not sure if I'm falling in love with more things, or just relying on the old things I love the most and trying to get back to them."

But there were curveballs, too, like the louche, easy-rolling pop of Grammy-winning single Pink, and the sitar lines of the subcontinent-flavoured Taste Of India. "*Nine Lives* was different," said Tyler on the Charlie Rose talk show. "In the sense that we hit upon a couple of East Indian vibe type-things that Yma Sumac and Donovan were into and the Stones and The Beatles. And it was something we'd never done together."

Released in March 1997, that vibe spilled into *Nine Lives*' original sleeve art, which featured a cat-headed Lord Krishna prancing on the coils of the snake god Kaliya (until objections from the Hindu community saw it replaced by a feline tied to a knife-thrower's wheel).

Nine Lives was another big one, once again hitting No.1 in the US, and while the album didn't sell in the same numbers as *Get A Grip*, many critics were impressed ("Aerosmith can be relied on," wrote *Rolling Stone*, "to temper their puerile machismo with plenty of humor, heart and artistic ingenuity"). As for the lineup, they were just glad to have made it through. "At the end of *Nine Lives*, I wanted to quit the band after all the shit," noted Tyler. "Now I want to do another record. The air is clearing."

As it turned out, it would be another four years before Aerosmith returned with *Just Push Play*. But they still had one more ace to play out the decade. Directed by action supremo Michael Bay and starring Bruce Willis (and Liv Tyler), 1998's *Armageddon* was a forgettable popcorn movie about a space mission to thwart an asteroid headed for Earth. But when songwriter Diane Warren offered Aerosmith her power-ballad, *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing*, the band's emotive reading outlived the film. "When I first heard it," Kramer told *Classic Rock*, "it was just a demo with piano and singing. It was difficult to imagine what kind of touch Aerosmith could put on it and make it our own. As soon as we began playing it as a band, then it instantly became an Aerosmith song."

"'I could lie awake just to watch you sleep…'" mused Tyler of the song's opening line. "I mean, how much in love with someone do you have to be to do that? But [Warren] nailed it. That's one of the most precious opening lines of any song I've ever heard. And with a movie behind it, that's like the Titanic coming into shore riding a five hundred-foot tidal wave."

I Don't Want To Miss A Thing would give the band their first and only US No.1 single, as well as an Academy Award nomination. But in 2002, *Classic Rock*'s Ian Fortnam wondered if the band might have preferred their big crossover moment to be a self-penned song. "Well, yeah," considered Perry. "But, at the time, we just didn't have the time to settle down and do it. We were out on the road, so they brought us in to see the movie and said 'Here's the song, this is where it fits into the movie, you can do it if you want'. We were in the studio within the next three days cutting it. And yeah, we do wish that we'd had a little more time, so that we could have had a shot at writing it, but it was perfect timing. The song was great, people loved it, and I don't think people care that much who wrote it."

I Don't Want To Miss A Thing tied a bow on a decade that had been as close to an unmitigated success as it gets in the hazardous business of major-league rock 'n' roll. And yet, in July 1999, as the band watched the grand opening of the Rock 'N' Rollercoaster Starring Aerosmith at Walt Disney World in Florida, the symbolism might not have been lost on them. After scaling such unimaginable heights, one wrong move and there was an awfully long way to fall.

"The last eight years have been what the first ten were supposed to be like. We climbed out of the ashes." Steven Tyler

"Rock stars make more money, take more drugs. Blues guys mostly drink, smoke a little pot"

Rock'n'roll loves its survivors, and Aerosmith's **Joe Perry** and blues icon **Johnny Winter** are two of them. In 2014, the pair sat down to talk hell-raising, music-making and the price of fame.

WORDS *Ken McIntyre*
PHOTOS *Travis Shinn*

He may have just entered his eighth decade, but Johnny Winter is having a moment. One of rock's great survivors, the grizzled Texan blues-rock pioneer is as busy now, at the age of 70, as he's ever been. As well as a career-spanning new box set – the aptly titled *True To The Blues: The Johnny Winter Story* – there's a warts'n'all documentary on the horizon: *Down & Dirty*, which covers both his lengthy music career and the battles with booze and drugs that have accompanied it.

No less intriguing is *Step Back*, the second in a series of covers albums – Winter calls them 'tributes' – that find the singer and guitarist recording songs by some of his influences from the 50s and 60s, accompanied by friends and contemporaries, such as Eric Clapton, ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and, on a version of Lightnin' Hopkins's *Mojo Hand*, Joe Perry.

Not entirely coincidentally, Perry is currently perched on the edge of a sofa in Winter's trailer parked outside LA's Saban Theatre, a couple of hours before the latter is due to take the stage. *Classic Rock* has engineered a meeting between these two icons, who, despite similarly lengthy careers and a shared love of the blues, have never met before…

Indeed, the Aerosmith guitarist is especially enthused to meet the more laconic Winter. Back in the late 60s, Perry was one of those hungry Young Turks who soaked up such groundbreaking Winter albums as *The Progressive Blues Experiment* and *Second Winter*, taking cues from Winter's soulful playing that he would later incorporate into Aerosmith's arena-wrecking mega-hits. "I've been influenced by Johnny probably since I was about seventeen or eighteen," says an uncharacteristically effusive Perry. "I've always loved his music." ➔

Gibson
Les Paul

And is this really the first time your paths have crossed?

Joe Perry: This one time, many years ago, at the Academy of Music in New York in 1972 – this was before we had a manager – [Winter's former manager] Steve Paul had heard of us and said: "I've got this show with Humble Pie and Edgar and Johnny Winter, and I'll give you twenty minutes so I can check you out." So we played that show, did our twenty minutes, and he passed on us. Johnny and I might have passed each other in the hall that day, but that was probably it.

But I remember going to see him at a club called the Boston Tea Party in Boston in 1969. That was Johnny and Rick Derringer, and it was a really kick-ass rock band. That show got me to put a slide on my finger. And I haven't put it down since.

I think you're both bluesmen, at the core.

JP: I am as much as I can be, really. Johnny's got the credentials and he's played with a lot of the greats. I was more the next generation. Just like Johnny, I'm just another link in the chain. The thing with the blues is, you can play the same song every night, and every time it's a different song. At least for me it is. We carried that over into rock'n'roll. I mean, we've done some songs that were pop hits, they weren't the blues, but I tried to carry over that feeling, to make them a new song every night. It's not the blues per se, but you're giving it that platform, you're giving it some guts. That's what I got from Johnny, watching him pour his heart and soul into it.

Johnny, when did you first realise that you were going to be a blues player?

Johnny Winter: When I was twelve, hearing the blues on the radio. I thought: "I have to learn how to play this, this is cool." It was just more emotional, it had more feeling, than any other kind of music I ever heard. It just makes you feel good. I still love hearing it, and I still love playing it.

Which is better – being successful, or being hungry?

JW: I like being successful a lot better [laughs].

JP: I like to have a comfortable bed, and I like to eat once in a while. But I have to say, some of my best times were back when we were struggling.

JW: That was very fun, when you're still trying to make it.

JP: It's that time when people you don't know start showing up at your shows. At first you're just calling up all your friends to come to the club so the owner thinks you've got something going on. But then there's that night when there's new faces in the audience, and you realise you've got something that they want to hear. That's a great feeling.

Johnny, when you were coming up, were you on a different circuit to bands like Aerosmith?

JW: Not at first. I was playing rock and R&B for a long time before I started playing the blues. Until the British bands came around, white people didn't even want to hear the blues. It wasn't until the Rolling Stones and John Mayall and people like that, when white people started caring about the blues. So I didn't really get to start playing it until about 1967. I never wanted to be a rock star, it's just that Steve Paul wouldn't let me play the blues.

How did audiences react when you first started playing the blues?

JW: There were only a couple of places to even play it. There was a club called the Love Street Light Circus in Houston, and a place called the Vulcan Gas Company in Austin. I wasn't making nearly as much money playing the blues. It was really my drummer 'Uncle' John Turner's idea. I didn't know if we could make any money off of it. And for about a year we didn't. They paid us fifty dollars a week. We were really struggling, sleeping on floors and stuff. And then a *Rolling Stone* article came out about us and everything changed overnight. Suddenly we were playing big festivals. The week before, we were playing to a hundred people.

Was there one show where you realised you were a success'?

JW: I'd say Woodstock. That's when I thought we'd pretty much made it. There were so many people there. There was mud everywhere and nobody knew who was going on when. It was a big fuckin' mess. We had to take a helicopter out of there, you couldn't drive at all. I remember flying over the crowd, just thinking: "Look at all these fuckin' people." It was really something else.

JP: You look at the careers of the bands that played Woodstock, and that was the show that put most of them on a national level. I mean, Ten Years After were kind of a one-trick pony, they didn't have much backing them up, but the bands that had the stuff, Woodstock made 'em.

Did you go to Woodstock, Joe?

JP: I'm not really a mud person. I heard about it, I knew it was going on, but I stayed in New Hampshire that weekend. But we were asked to play the anniversary show. Steven [Tyler, Aerosmith singer] and Joey [Kramer, drummer] were both there, and they were talking about tripping and getting muddy, and I was like, just get me in and out without any mud. It was really crazy. There was a little of the vibe of the first one, I think – a lot of people showed up with knapsacks and tents – but there was also a lot of Coca-Cola signs all over the place. That put a crimp in the vibe, for sure.

Corporate sponsorship wrecked rock'n'roll.

JP: The way the business has gone, I think you're seeing the end of a really cool era. I think we were fortunate to be able to see it, to see bands of real quality playing in clubs and theatres in the sixties and seventies, and you got to see that all grow and grow. It didn't used to be about money, at least not for the musicians. In the beginning, nobody made money making records. You put out a record to advertise your tour, and you toured to sell records. The guys that made the money were the lawyers and the managers. We got to go out and play and party and get laid, and that was it.

Johnny, is the lifestyle of a bluesman the same as the lifestyle of a rock'n'roll star?

JW: Pretty much. Rock stars make more money, they take more drugs. Blues guys mostly drink, smoke a little pot. They don't do a lot of coke or heroin.

Would you rather hang out with blues guys?

JW: Oh yeah. They're a lot friendlier, a lot more willing to help you out.

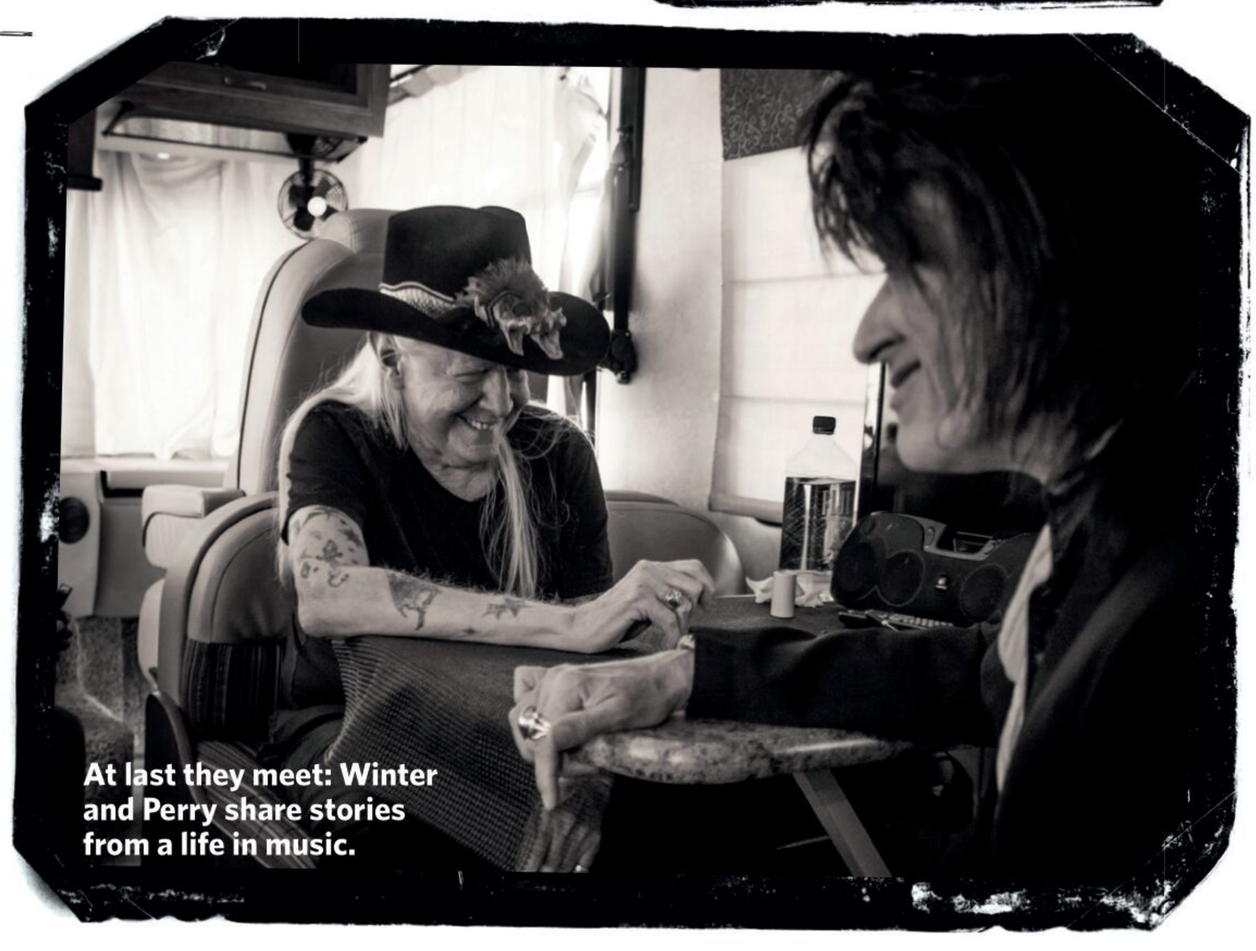
JP: Blues players are a little closer to the road, a little closer to their audience, a little less concerned about the charts and all that stuff. Those are the kinds of guys I'd like to hang out with.

When was the 'golden age' for seeing live music?

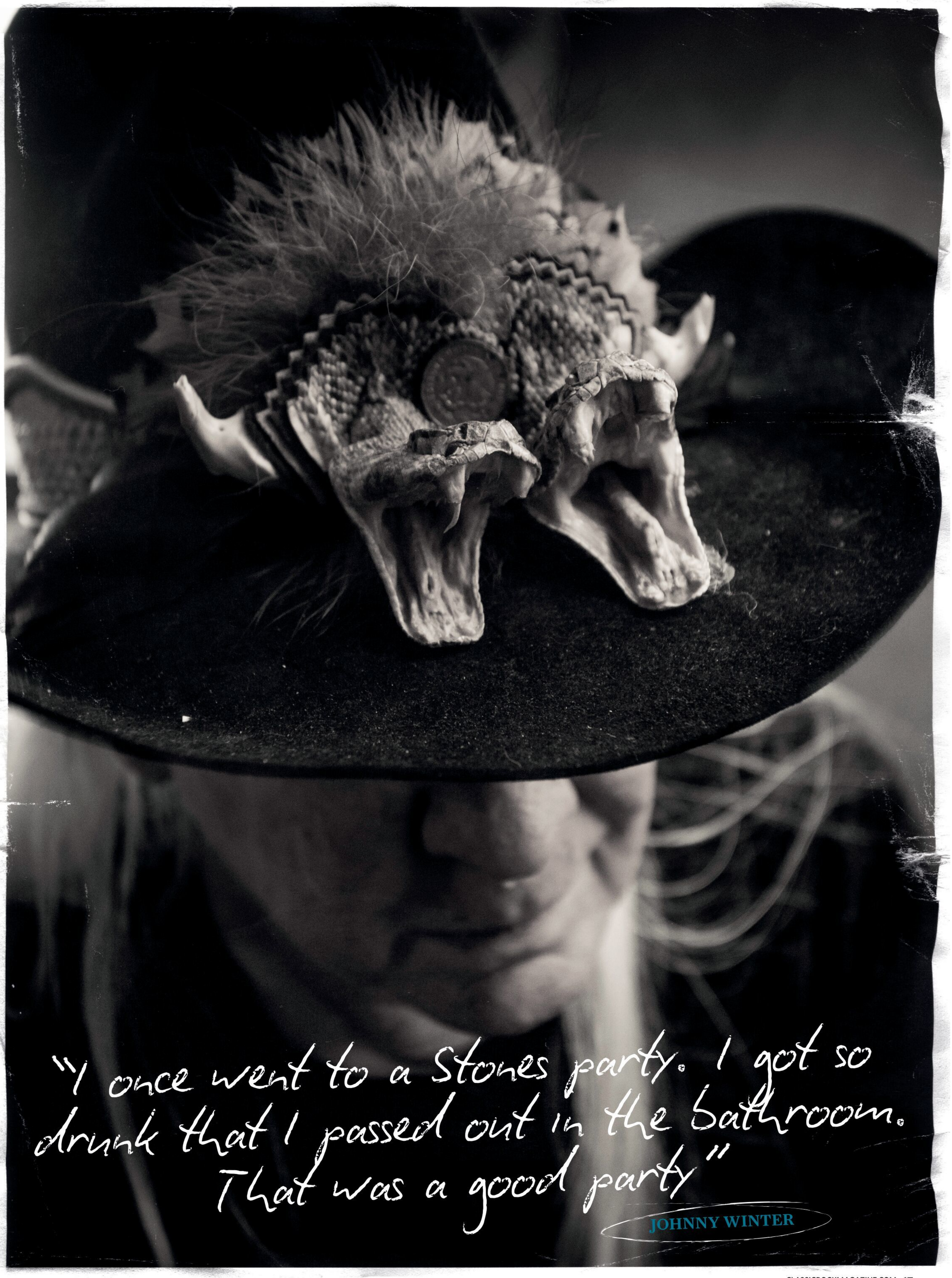
JW: The 1950s, for sure. It was ➔

"I couldn't tell you Justin Bieber from Lady Godiva or whatever her name is"

JOE PERRY



At last they meet: Winter and Perry share stories from a life in music.


"I once went to a Stones party. I got so drunk that I passed out in the bathroom. That was a good party"
JOHNNY WINTER

Winter's Tale

Ten definitive Johnny Winter tracks...

SCHOOL DAY BLUES
Johnny's very first single (by Johnny And The Jammers), when he was just 15, is a proto-punk blast of reckless teenage energy.

MEAN TOWN BLUES
Liberated from schmaltzy rock'n'roll for the first time, this is the sound of Johnny discovering who he really was: a blues demon.

BIRD CAN'T ROW BOATS
Recorded before his grand blues experiment, this is Johnny's uniquely Texan take on the trippy acid rock that bled out of SF in the late 60s.

JOHNNY B. GOODE
Johnny never forgot the simple pleasures of a catchy rock'n'roll tune. In '69 he redefined the Chuck Berry hit as a snarling riff monster.

HUSTLED DOWN IN TEXAS
By 1969, Johnny had become a master bluesman. This scorching space-age blues track from his *Second Winter* album shows him at his peak.

ROCK AND ROLL, HOOCHIE KOO
Rick Derringer's solo '73 remake might be best-remembered by most people, but he recorded it with Johnny first – and it belches fire.

STILL ALIVE AND WELL
Imagine having to convince people you're still alive at 29. This is what death-defiance sounds like: a chest-thumping, wolf-howling ode to beating the odds, delivered with a swashbuckling, cocksure strut.

CHEAP TEQUILA
This acoustic track from his '73 comeback record finds Johnny warning the next wave of boozy rock stars: '*Live just for today/Drown in cheap tequila and flush yourself away.*'

MASTER MECHANIC
Johnny spent the 80s exploring his roots. This is his take on raw Delta blues: nasty, sex-charged, primal, essential.

HIGHWAY 61 REVISITED
Johnny first covered Dylan's '65 hit on his second album, but this version, played live with an all-star backing band at Dylan's 30th anniversary concert, is thoroughly raging.

a great decade for music. There was a lot of great blues, and rock'n'roll had just come out. It was some of the best music I've ever heard and some of the best shows I've ever seen – stuff like early Elvis, Fats Domino, Little Richard. I loved it.

JP: For me, I think it was the education I got when the English guys came over and turned Americans on to American music. I have to say it was the Stones. They really stuck to their guns. They were really surprised when they came over here and turned on the radio. They expected to hear the blues. They couldn't believe we weren't listening to the blues in our own country. When they would come on a TV show here, they wouldn't come on unless they also had, like, Howlin' Wolf on. I remember seeing that on *Shindig*.

JW: He would've never gotten on without those guys. They did a lot for the blues.

JP: And they gave credit to people. I mean, I love Jimmy Page and everything, but he put his name under a lot of things that he shouldn't have, let's put it that way. But the Stones always gave credit where it was due. After they got bored with being pop stars, they really got into their roots. *Exile On Main St* is a hardcore blues record. And it turned a whole generation of white kids on to the blues. Johnny covered a lot of Stones over the years – *Silver Train* is one of my favourites.

Did you know the Stones, Johnny?

JW: Yeah, I knew Mick and Keith. I once went to a party they were having, and I got so drunk that I went into the bathroom and passed out. My wife had to drag me out. That was a good party.

Given all the rehabilitation involved, is the rock'n'roll lifestyle really worth it?

JP: After a while, you realise how much it's taken out of you.

JW: I would've died if I didn't stop. I'm sure of that. The kind of stuff I was doing, there's no way I'd still be here if I didn't quit.

JP: Your body's only got so many drinks in it. It's only got so many hits of blow, so many pills it can take. When you're born, there's a set amount that you're going to be able to take before it turns around and bites you on the ass. Some people can do it forever and they've learned to control it. Other people, within a year they're dead. And you don't know that when you're drinking your first drink or taking your first hit. It's playing with fire. At first you're just having a few drinks, maybe nursing a hangover the next day, but eventually it affects your playing, and you end up not caring as much, and if you let it get that far, your body starts falling apart.

Of course the mythology is that drugs and alcohol fuel the music, that you wouldn't have been able to make it without them.

JP: Well, it helps you bear the road. But one of the things that got me sober was I realised it was the music that got me high in the first place. The first time I heard the music that inspired me, I was stone-cold sober. So I think back to those times and I realise it was already in there.

Does the blues work as well stone-cold sober?

JW: I know it does. I like it a lot better, actually. I know I play better.

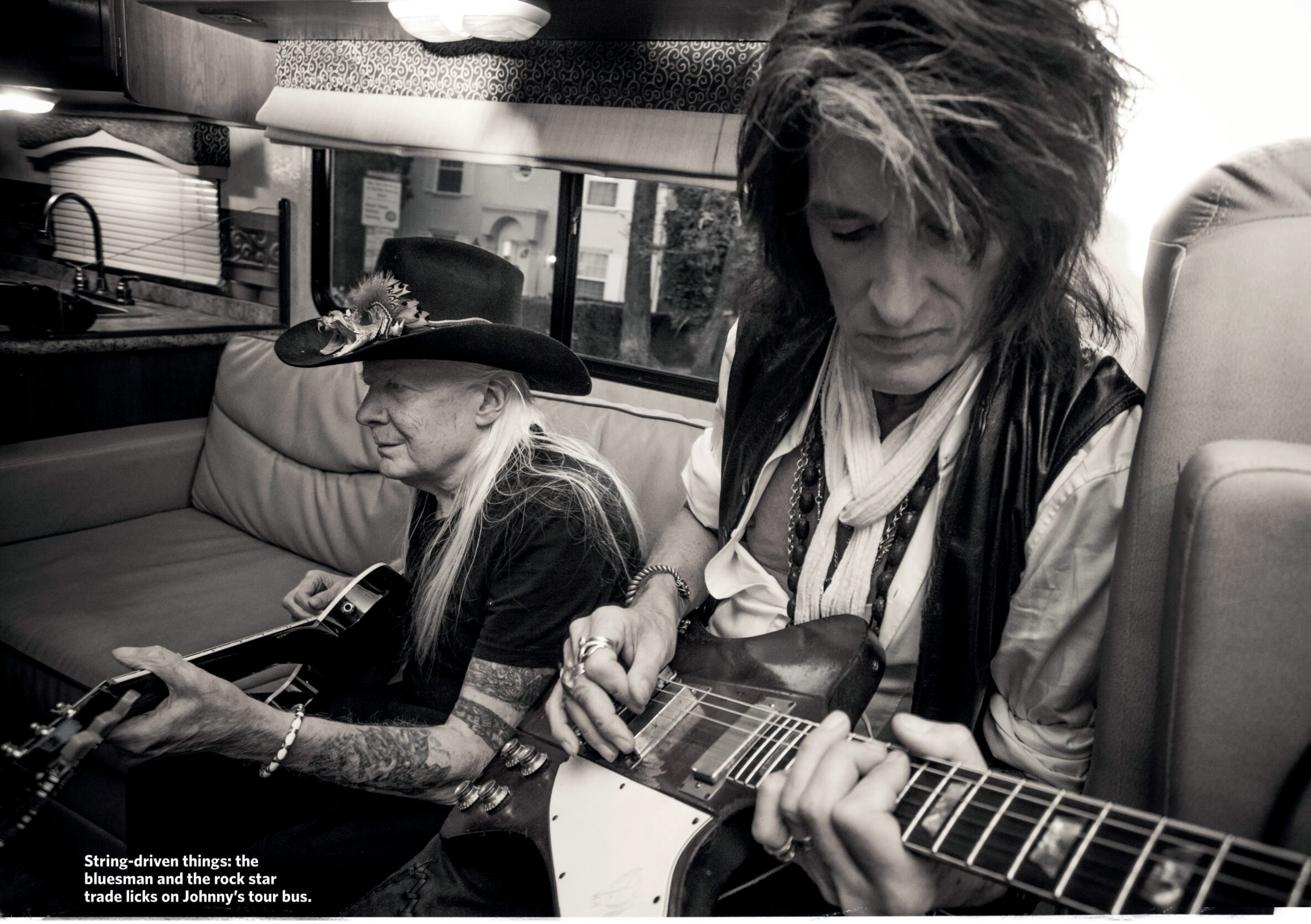
JP: For sure. You want to hear what your rhythm section's doing, you want to react to that. If you're out there sober, you can do things you never thought you could do.

Johnny, what's your favourite show that you've ever played?

JW: That's a tough question. There's

> "The lawyers and managers made the money. We got to play, party and get laid"
>
> JOE PERRY

Johnny Winter: still alive and well. Surprisingly, given the things he's done.



String-driven things: the bluesman and the rock star trade licks on Johnny's tour bus.

> "The way the business has gone, I think you're seeing the end of a really cool era"
>
> JOE PERRY

been a lot of great ones. Probably Woodstock, though.

JP: There's different reasons why a gig can be good. But one that got me down deep in my soul was a show we did last year. When Aerosmith first got together there were five of us living in an apartment together. I rented the apartment. We were five guys, all struggling to make it. Forty years later they wanted to put a sign on the building as a historic site. So we did a gig on a flatbed truck, right out in front of the building, and forty-thousand people showed up. Just standing there and looking at all those people, and turning around and seeing where my old bedroom was, forty-two years ago, that one really hit me. I don't know if we played great. All I know is that forty-thousand people showed up and it was really an amazing thing.

Johnny, you have a documentary coming out, *Down & Dirty*. What was it like making it?

JW: It was a lot of fun. They followed us all over, from Japan to Europe, everywhere. It covers my whole life story, good and bad. Joe's in it.

JP: I am?

JW: Yeah. And you look good [laughs]. I saw it a few months ago, at the premiere at South By Southwest. I really loved it.

Does it have everything you've always wanted to know about Johnny Winter?

JW: Yeah. Probably more than you'd want to know.

How do you guys feel about the state of rock'n'roll these days?

JP: Everything is so compartmentalised these days. So specialised and industrialised. I couldn't tell you Justin Bieber from Lady Godiva or Lady Goo-Goo or whatever her name is. I mean, more power to them, they're the latest thing, but I just don't hear that stuff.

One thing's for sure: when you guys stop playing, it's all over – the whole notion of 'classic rock'.

JP: That's what I was saying earlier – it's the end of an era. The Stones are still out there doing it. I'd like to be the last one standing, but with those guys, who knows?

Seeing this whole thing go from basically a cottage industry in the fifties and sixties, through the punk thing, then the MTV era. That was a crazy time. The record companies were pouring out money like it was water. Then Napster came and killed the record industry. That was fine for us, because we make our living playing live, but it knocked off a lot of people who made a living selling records but didn't do well playing live. Guys like Johnny and I were fortunate enough to come up in a time when you had to be good at playing live to make it. But the era that we've all known and loved is over. When a guy like Billy Joel says he's not going to write any new songs because it's a waste of time, that all anybody wants to hear are his hits from way back when, that's when you know it's really over.

Johnny, are you ever going to quit?

JW: I don't think so. Not unless I'm no longer physically able. Otherwise I'm gonna keep going.

Joe, do you have a favourite Johnny Winter song?

JP: *TV Mama*. I love the lyrics, I love the feel of that song. But of course there's so many that I like, and I might really love the solo on a particular song, so it's hard to pin down just one. But I think that album [*Nothin' But The Blues*, 1977] is the best of them. Johnny's records are part of that lexicon of music that I have to keep with me at all times for when I need that kick in the ass.

Johnny, do you have a favourite Aerosmith song?

JW: Probably *Walk This Way*.

JP: [Laughs] I'm surprised that he even knew who we were, to be honest. I mean, give me a break. We're from different worlds.

Aerosmith

I Don't Want To Miss A Thing

How the veteran Boston band beat drink, drugs and depression to finally score what is still their only US number one single.

Words: **Rich Chamberlain**

As Aerosmith began work on their 12th album, the appropriately titled *Nine Lives*, from the outside at least they looked to be in the best shape in quite some time. The drug- and alcohol-fuelled days of the 70s and early 80s had long since been put behind them, and they'd reaped hefty rewards in the wake of their sobriety. The three albums that preceded *Nine Lives* – *Permanent Vacation*, *Pump* and *Get A Grip* – were critically lauded and, commercially, hugely successful. The Boston bad boys had, remarkably, cemented a second stint as the hottest band on the planet.

"There is a belief among musicians that if they don't have their drugs and alcohol then they will lose their fire," drummer Joey Kramer says of Aerosmith's cleaning themselves up. "We completely disproved that assumption."

But, even years after the band had kicked the booze and drugs, the battles weren't over. Early into the 1995 sessions for *Nine Lives*, Kramer was struggling. In fact, he was in the midst of his own personal hell. Suffering from depression, he stepped away to seek professional help. Seasoned session drummer Steve Ferrone was brought in to help track the record in Kramer's absence, but his work was scrapped when a revitalised Kramer returned in the autumn of 1996.

"I went through a nervous breakdown, depression and anxiety," Kramer reflects. "I came back with a nice perspective on what I bring to the table in Aerosmith. That was healthy for me. We ended up re-recording because people were listening to the tracks [for *Nine Lives* recorded in his absence] and were saying some negative stuff about it and saying the band didn't sound the same."

Fast-forward to mid-1998, and Aerosmith were coming to the end of a hugely successful world tour on the back of *Nine Lives*. The album had already gone double-platinum in the US and the band had won a Grammy for the previous year's hit single *Pink*. The clean, sober, fit and healthy Aerosmith had their mojo back and were, once again, back in the saddle and back on top.

But one thing still eluded them. Although they had a catalogue packed with career-defining classics, they were yet to score a number one single in the US. They'd come mighty close, with *Angel*, *Janie's Got A Gun* and *Love In An Elevator* all having made the US top five, but by the summer of 1998, a number one hit was seemingly slipping further away from their grasp.

Despite the *Nine Lives* album selling by the boatload, none of the singles from it had managed to crack the Top 20. It had now been eight years since their last top ten single, *What It Takes*, from the album *Pump*. But then a Hollywood-sized opportunity landed in their lap.

The scientifically baffling end-of-the-world summer blockbuster film *Armageddon*, starring Bruce Willis, needed a soundtrack single recorded by an A-list band. Aerosmith were the perfect choice, not least because the film co-starred Steven Tyler's daughter, Liv. The ballad *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing*, written by Diane Warren, was chosen as the track to be reworked and recorded for the film. But initially Kramer wasn't sold on it.

"I kind of knew it was a hit, but I didn't really like the song," he admits. "I didn't think that song was us. When I first heard it, it was just a demo with piano and singing. It was difficult to imagine what kind of touch Aerosmith could put on it and make it our own. When we finally did make it our own, that's when it became what it is. It was just a question of learning the song and playing it as a band. As soon as we began playing it as a band, then it instantly became an Aerosmith song."

Renowned hitmaker Warren was by no means the first gun for hire to write for Aerosmith, of course. Desmond Child in particular had worked well with the band since their mid-80s comeback, on songs including *Dude (Looks Like A Lady)* and *Angel*. But was working with outside songwriters a process that the band happily embraced from the get-go?

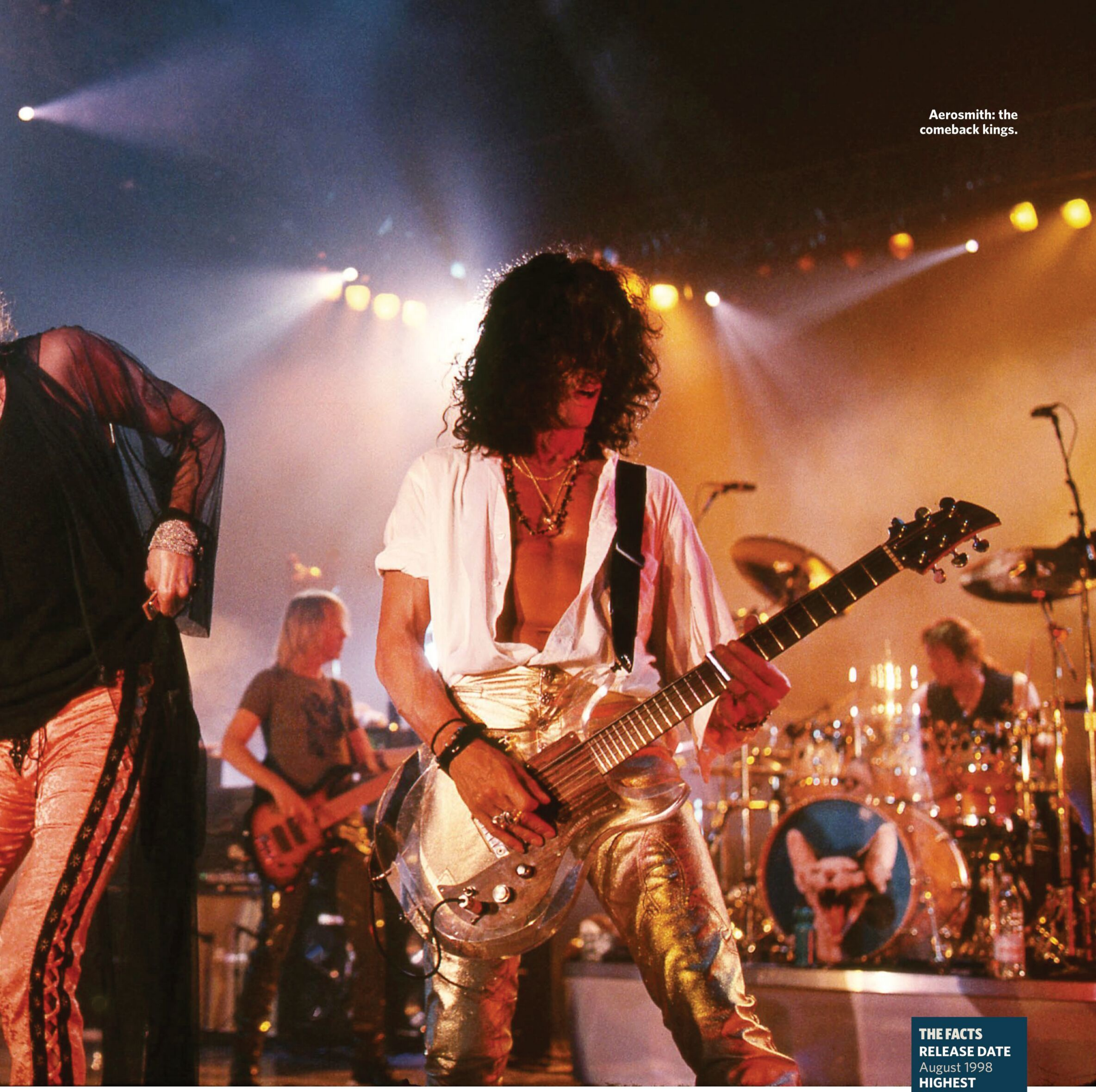
"I couldn't answer that question because I never worked with any of the songwriters that Steven and Joe worked with," Kramer answers. "If I had, I could have come up with some songs as well. But because of how the politics worked in the band at the time, those guys worked with the songwriters and came up with the songs. It's not a time that I remember fondly. It would have been nice [to be more involved in the songwriting] because all of the rest of us have ideas about songs."

Regardless of who wrote the song, the history books show that *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing* was a US number one hit, and still the only one of Aerosmith's career. Its success went hand in hand with the film's stellar box office performance, helping to bring a younger generation of fans to a band who at that point had already been going for almost 30

THE LONG GOODBYE?
Aerosmith may be the comeback kings, but all good things must eventually end. In 2017, with their Aero-Vederci Baby tour billed as a farewell, we asked drummer Joey Kramer how he feels about preparing for the band's final UK show at that summer's Download festival. His response suggested that he might not be ready to bring the curtain down just yet.

"One of the things I really love about being in this band is that it never gets boring," he said. "We can decide something one day, and a good reason to change our minds will come along and we will do so. So you never know what will happen."

MAIN: ROSS HALFIN; JOEY KRAMER: ZACH WHITFORD/PRESS



Aerosmith: the comeback kings.

years. In doing so, another chapter was added to the big book of Aerosmith comebacks. That's a pretty weighty tome, but this entry is particularly special for Kramer. The drummer had been lifted from the punishing depths of a nervous breakdown to the summit of the US *Billboard* chart. So presumably *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing* is close to his heart?

"It's okay," he replies flatly when asked to share his thoughts on the track 19 years on from its release. "It's just another song."

Kramer might view it today as just another song, but back then, *I Don't Want To Miss A Thing* ensured that the *Nine Lives* world tour kept on rolling. It eventually stretched to over two years and more than 200 dates.

"We were just about to go off the road and that song came around," he says. "We continued to tour off that song for another year. That was welcomed by the band. At that time, that was what we did. We would be on the road for twelve or eighteen months, and the only time we came off the road was to make another record."

While Aerosmith are currently gearing up for their 2017 European farewell tour, the 66-year-old Kramer admits that such punishing schedules are a thing of the past. But that's not through a lack of effort.

"Things are a little bit different today," he says, laughing. "We're all a little older. I can't do the things now that I did when I was twenty-five. But Lord knows we try. We give it a good shot!"

"I didn't think that song was us at first. As soon as we began playing it as a band, then it instantly became an Aerosmith song."

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
August 1998

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.4, US No.1

PERSONNEL
Steven Tyler
Lead vocals
Joe Perry
Guitar
Brad Whitford
Guitar
Tom Hamilton
Bass
Joey Kramer
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Diane Warren

PRODUCER
Matt Serletic

LABEL
Columbia

Deuces Are Wild

Dinner with Jimmy Page, late nights in hotel rooms: in 2007, *Classic Rock* spent a wild weekend with **Aerosmith**...

Words: **Peter Makowski** Portraits: **Ross Halfin**

London, Tuesday, February 20, 2007, 11.35pm. Me, photographer Ross Halfin, Aerosmith tour manager John Bionelli and – oh yeah – Joe Perry and Jimmy Page are sitting at a table in Nobu, one of the trendiest chi-chi nightspots in the capital. A place where über celebrities and icons can relax and two rock behemoths can play catch-up and generally indulge in some muso conviviality without the threat of taterazzi flashbulbs or autograph-hunting eBay entrepreneurs.

Aerosmith are in town to promote an up-and-coming world tour that will include their first British gigs in almost a decade. They also played a secret show at the Hard Rock café to a select few – a gig which marked the return of bass player Tom Hamilton, missing from the band recently after undergoing treatment for throat cancer. They're still one of the biggest live draws in the US, but the last few years have been quite hard for this little ol' band from Boston, taking in death, illness, divorce and a change of management. At last things are beginning to fall back into place.

"We're at that age where these kinds of things happen," says Perry casually. And he should know, having recently experienced serious concussion after an accidental collision with a camera during the filming of a live show. "Wondering when you're gonna play again is what does it. When I play I can't help but think: 'Who knows? This might be it.'"

Having Perry and Page on the same table makes for intriguing conversation, taking in – among other topics – the recent Cream reunion (how Eric Clapton was disappointing but Ginger Baker exceeded all expectations); the unsurpassable brilliance of Jeff Beck; private family stuff (Perry's sons have formed a band called Tab. Joe gives Jimmy a CD-R, adding that his sons "would be buzzed to know you have it"); and the minutiae that musicians talk about fervently when they get together – equipment, strings, amplification and the like.

Aerosmith seem to have a similarly chilled-out attitude to everything they do, oblivious to such earthbound constraints as schedules and deadlines. One of the reasons *Classic Rock* is sitting in the world's most expensive sushi bar is because we've been trying all day to get an audience with the band's elusive guitarist. We had been scheduled to meet up earlier in the afternoon. This was cancelled – Perry, we were told, was still jet-lagged and needed to sleep. Then the orders came: head to a photo shoot on the other side of London. A few hours later, and I'm in a studio surrounded by assistants, a make-up artist, but still no Joe Perry. Instead, there's a visibly harassed Ross Halfin, who has given up clock-watching as his overtime bill mounts up.

When he does arrive, Perry looks dishevelled and disconnected. As pale as the white backdrop he is standing in front of – and swathed in a black cape – the image he strikes is positively vampiric, and he wanders around with a dazed look as if he has literally just been woken up. After the shoot, it becomes obvious that it won't be possible to get anything down on tape while the studio staff are dismantling the set around us, which is when it is

> "Go with him," advises Jimmy Page. "He's obviously ready to speak to you now." We don't argue...

decided that we should go for a meal with a member of Led Zeppelin. As you do.

As we wait around, Joe tells me about a series of recent tragedies that have occurred in the world of Aerosmith, culminating with the death of his friend's 17 year-old daughter in a car crash. His voice crackles with emotion as he talks, and it's easy to wonder if this has anything to do with his current state. His mood brightens up when talking about the band's forthcoming show at Hyde Park.

"I can't wait to get back to Europe," Perry beams. "We have some of our best audiences over here. It's a shame it's taken so long. The 9/11 events affected us, as people around the world perceive us as the token American band and that made travel difficult. But we love playing over here. This is where it all began."

By the end of the evening, Perry invites me back to the hotel to finally do a proper interview. To be honest, I'm reluctant: it's past midnight, it's been a long day, and it doesn't feel right to take advantage of his *bonhomie*. No thanks, Joe, I tell him, we'll reschedule.

Perry leaves the table for a moment and Jimmy Page – who is an expert in these matters – leans over and puts me straight. "Go with him," he advises. "He's invited you – he obviously feels comfortable enough to want to talk to you right now."

Experience has taught me that you cannot argue with The Master. Joe and I head to the hotel and my mind wanders back to my equally unpredictable experiences with Aerosmith…

New York, sometime in 1981. "What's the matter boy… you trippin'?!"

I am staring at the second most famous pair of lips in the history of rock'n'roll. They are parched, blistered, distended and quivering, as if possessing a life of their own. They also happen to be attached to one of the most gaunt, pale visages I have come across since my arrival in New York – and if you take into consideration that I have just spent the previous week in an upmarket crack house, you'll have an idea of what state Steven Tyler was in when we first confronted each other a quarter of a century ago.

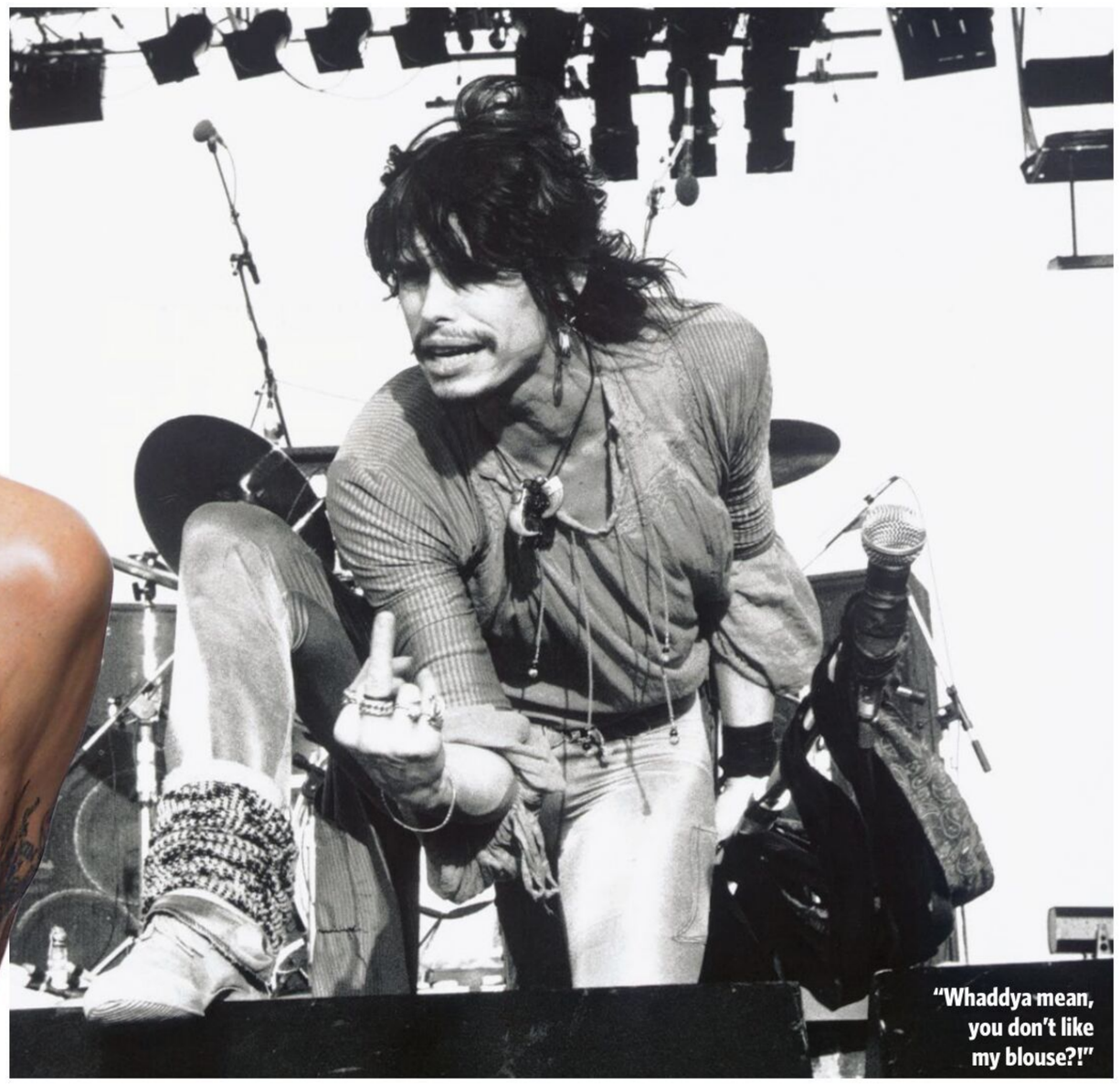
It was the beginning of the 80s and Aerosmith had recently and spectacularly demolished their reputation as one of America's best-selling and most popular touring rock outfits in a cloud of heavy-duty chemical abuse, which led to the rapid dissolution of the prophetically named Toxic Twins, Tyler and Joe Perry. Long-time fans, both myself and Ross Halfin were in the States (and in a state) on a mission, determined to track down the band. And while we hit a wall with Joe Perry, we had a stroke of luck with Tyler whose then management Leber/Krebs seemed quite keen to talk to us (for reasons that remain perplexing to this day). This gave us an opportunity to hang around the office – which is how I had my first encounter with Tyler…

"Are you trippin', boy?" Tyler repeated and pointed at my enormous pupils. His, on the other hand, were pinned almost to the point of extinction, disappearing into the back of his shrunken skull. Substance-wise we were on the opposite ends of the class-A spectrum. I was a hopped-up ying to his opiated, drooling yang. Needless to say, this encounter was punctuated with a lot of awkward, nodding silences. In-between he played us a couple of songs from the latest, yet unreleased, Aerosmith album, *Rock In A Hard Place*. Swathed in variety of exotic scarves, dripping in esoteric jewellery and generally looking like the victim of a head-on collision with a Moroccan bazaar, Tyler became animated as soon as the music came on.

He produced a lethal-looking flick-knife out of thin air and proceeded to stab it into the expensive antique office desk, punctuating the rhythms

Grape expectations: it's the nearest Steven Tyler gets to wine these days.

Wasted youth? Uh-uh.
This is Tyler in his 50s.



"Whaddya mean, you don't like my blouse?!"

that blared out of the speakers which shook dangerously above his lolling head.

"This song's all about China White!" he hollered above the noise. "Do you know what that is?" He lifted the unfeasibly large blade up to his reddened, chapped beak and snorted. "It's the strongest heroin you can get, man!" He chuckled hoarsely and then plunged the blade into the already decimated furniture, like a gang-banger's Excalibur. "Gotta go guys," he suddenly announced, leaping off his chair as if someone had lit a roaring fire underneath his bony ass, a typical addict on a mission. As soon as he left the room, one of the huge speakers became unhinged from its bracket and landed with a dull but damaging thud on the exact spot he had been sitting – it pretty much summed up the precariousness of the man's existence at the time.

I looked at Ross. We were simultaneously elated and depressed. It was one of those rare moments a hero had lived up to these fans' unrealistic expectations. But, at the same time, it looked fairly unlikely that we would see Tyler again outside of a shot of him in a casket.

We were, of course, wrong.

Same year, same city, a couple of days later. We are now at a fancy reception for 80s pop/rock siren Pat Benatar. Heaving with the usual variety of liggers, swiggers, snorters and bullshit artists, I found myself sat next to a skeletal size-zero Jewish American princess, who resembled Sandra Bernhard in the grip of a severe methamphetamine habit. Her eyes rolled about in their sockets like a couple of loose marbles in a schoolboy's satchel, and when she spoke the words seemed out of sync with her gurning, twitching, foam-flecked mouth. Refreshed to point of blackout,

I was immediately attracted to the charms of this kosher Kate Moss.

As the evening progressed it transpired that she was a 'very good friend' of Steven Tyler and his then wife (and former New York Dolls muse) Serinda. Roughly translated this meant that she was one of their regular dealers. "I can get you an interview anytime you want," she slurred confidently, after I explained how difficult it was getting connected with the band.

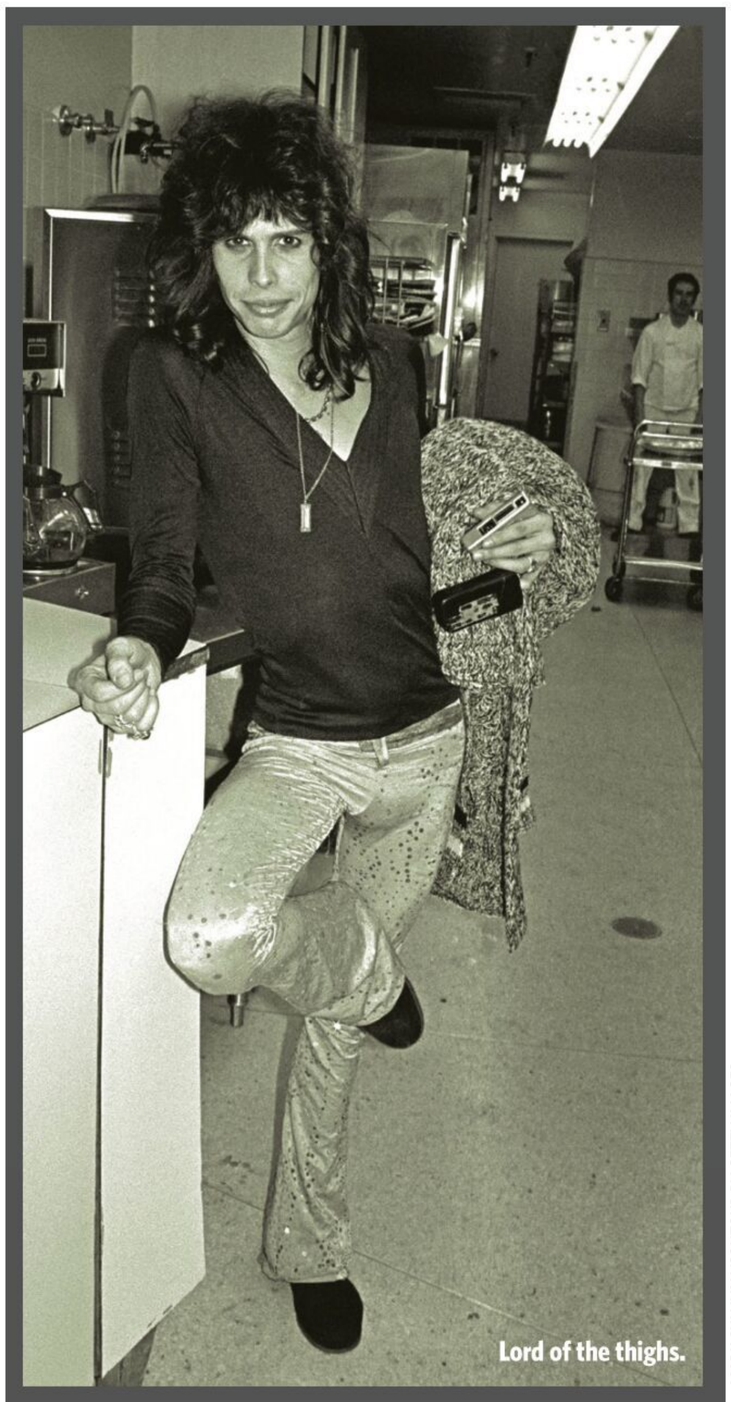
On Ross's strict instructions I took her back to the hotel, fed her cake and let her use all the amenities. If there was a snowball's chance of another rendezvous

Once a rocker, always a rocker.

"You can call us a bunch of tarts, a bunch of Stones imitators... but we're still together and rocking." – Steven Tyler

"You trippin' boy?"

Pioneer of scarves-around-the-mic-stand-chic.


Lord of the thighs.

MARK SULLIVAN/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES

"I know what my limits are. I'll never play like Jeff Beck, but I can be inspired by him." – Joe Perry

I wasn't going to let it pass by. She left with the contents of the mini bar, towels and toiletries. A couple of days passed with no word. Just at the point that it started to look like we'd been well and truly shafted the phone rang – it was my new drug mensch announcing that we had been granted an audience with Tyler and spouse at the band's office.

"Get there for 3 am," she whispered without a hint of irony, "and remember, be easy on him – he'll just be getting up."

Needless to say, by the time we got to the venue Tyler was sufficiently lubricated. He was accompanied by his new guitarist Jimmy Crespo, a quiet and pleasant enough character who looked the part and knew his place. Serinda completed the cast, tending to our needs like a debauched matron. "Don't forget, honey, the heroin's in the fridge!" quipped a more amenable Tyler before showing Ross and myself clips of Aerosmith on *Saturday Night Live*, being introduced by one the band's all-time heroes, Little Richard. "A cool motherfucker," Tyler recalled. "He introduced us as 'Harry Smith'!"

While Steven was reluctant to share his stash, Serinda made sure that we all got suitably (and less than elegantly) wasted. Less of an interview and more of a stoned exchange, one of the few memorable moments was Tyler's recollection of sharing some amyl nitrate with Jimi Hendrix on a fairground ride.

"Man, he was a cool guy," said Tyler as the evening drew to a close. "If he were alive today I'd definitely be hanging out with him – and Janis Joplin."

With that Ross took some photos and we departed into the New York dawn chorus of irate yellow minicab drivers and screaming news-stand vendors. Tyler and co vanished back to the world of 24-hour party people, in a merry-go-round of abuse that would last a few more years.

London, Sunday, February 18, 7 pm. Twenty-five years later, our meeting is in the more exclusive surroundings of the Mandarin hotel in Knightsbridge. As I arrive Steven Tyler is running late with his interviews because he has spent the day doing an unplanned photo session with that bastard Halfin. This has created chaos with the day's schedule which is now slowly unravelling before my eyes.

"Welcome to the world of Aerosmith," chirps Barbara Charone, the band's ever optimistic and bulletproof PR (and former work colleague of mine at *Sounds*). I get to the interview suite as a female broadsheet journalist is just concluding her in-depth probe in a coquettish and gushing manner. "So, Mr Tyler, you don't partake in the imbibing of alcohol any more: what kind of drink do you have to accompany a fish dinner? Water?" There is a pause and then then Tyler replies in Dick Van Dyke cockney: "I don't drink water – fish fuck in it, darling!" She leaves the room charmed and bedazzled, blushing like a honeymoon bride. Aerosmith are definitely in the house!

Barbara informs me that due to circumstances beyond her control I have only 15 minutes. Great. I start off by reminding Tyler of our first brief encounters with some photographic evidence.

"Man! How can you remember this shit?" Tyler is looking aghast at a picture taken at the time. In one he is holding a cushion that has been fashioned into the shape of giant quaalude. "Not bad – I'm wearing my Brian Jones T-shirt." He nods approvingly and sighs: "That was a few lifetimes ago."

LIVIN' IT UP WHILE I'M GOIN' *DOWN...*

The sex life of Steven Tyler, aged 59.

Words: Neil Jeffries

Steven Tyler might have been into sex before he got into rock'n'roll. He recalls he would "pick up girls and try to get into their pants" as a 13 year old. But whichever came first (no pun intended), one thing led to another.

He writes better lyrics than he's ever been given credit for and is often at his best when thinking from the crotch: *Lord Of The Thighs, Uncle Salty, Back In The Saddle* were all fuelled by his legendary libido. The problem, as with so many things in the Aerostory, came when he added drugs.

In 1977 Aerosmith's audience got a hint that Tyler was doing more drugs and less sex on the *Draw The Line* track *Get It Up*. In it he sang: *'Can't get it up, gotta get it up... Gotta give it up, give it up...'*. But at least he could still wax poetic about cunnilingus: *'Really have a good time/Suckin' up the moonshine/Up underneath her clothes line.'*

Tyler – a twice married and divorced father of four – says in the Stephen Davis book *Walk This Way* that in a way he still loves every woman he ever lived with: "When we make love, the gods come out. I'm in there, a sea of lubricity, sharing a thing that gods do. Normal people didn't fuck like that."

Although only a fool would suggest his sex drive ever went away, when Tyler finally got clean of drugs, he re-discovered it big time – and was never afraid to wear his heart on his sleeve.

Manager Tim Collins must take part of the blame: "You gotta write about pussy!" he told the singer after hearing a *Permanent Vacation* demo called *Rag Time*. By the time it was released in 1987 it had, at Holly Knight's wise suggestion, been re-titled *Rag Doll*. On *Pump* in 1989 he reached new heights with *Love In An Elevator*, part of a very select band of Top 20 hits about enjoying fellatio with a lift attendant.

In 1991, though, Collins confronted Tyler suggesting his sexual hedonism had reached unnatural levels after he heard the singer had taken to showering with two *Penthouse* models after shows. Through therapy Tyler recognised he had a number of problems and checked into a clinic – but argued that 'sex addiction' was not top of his list.

Six years later he wrote *Pink* for the *Nine Lives* album: *'Pink... it's my new obsession... as the bing on your cherry... on the lips of your lover... gets me high as a kite.'* It looked more like a case of overkill than cure. **Neil Jeffries**

It certainly was, and the man in front of me bears little resemblance to the ravaged troll I met all those years ago. Looking lean and fit, nowadays his stashes of cocaine and Deerling grinder have been replaced by a running machine and fitness regime. Both he and Perry look disgustingly healthy considering the trials and tribulations they put themselves through, all of which are extensively documented in their gruelling biography *Walk This Way* (aka *The Dirt Snr*).

"I think that I managed to stop early enough that I could check the damage I was doing to myself," Perry says later, "so I was able to maintain some of my health and don't have to worry about hep C and things like that."

Unlike Tyler. The singer recently had treatment for hepatitis and an operation on his nodules. "With the throat everybody was saying it was cancer," he laughs. "The press love to play up on that shit. It was just nodules that had to get scraped. No big deal. I get fuckin' nodules every time I tour, cos I sing so hard…"

Tyler agrees that the band have had more than their fair share of hard knocks recently, and he has a theory why. "Our problem is that when you're a relevant band and you're still doing albums, singles, radio, movies, getting Oscars, Grammys et cetra, you don't have time to go to the doctors or the dentist, and life gets put on the back burner. My wife left me because I wasn't at home for the kids' birthdays or graduations. I would love to cancel things but I'm selfish [laughs]. So when we had a chance to take a year off, Joe selfishly did a solo album – a love album to his wife.

I found out I had hep C and went right into chemotherapy. The doctor told me: 'You better do it now or you'll never have another chance to do it.' I fucking jumped in with both feet and got rid of it."

Tyler looks down and quietly sighs to himself. "I do what I can, man. At the end of the day there's always 16 people you haven't called. I haven't seen my children – it's a rough life, man."

London, Wednesday, February 21, 2007, 1.35am. Sprawled lazily across a couch in his hotel suite, Joe Perry has that stoned demeanour which doesn't even require drugs any more.

With Perry what you see is what you get. The quiet, moody foil to the hyperactive vocalist, it's easy to see how the relationship has lasted so long. "My enthusiasm comes and goes," he admits. "Sometimes I wonder if it's worth it. As much as I love writing and performing my own songs, I sure can't sing like Steven can sing. The music part is a no brainer, but keeping it together personality-wise, it's tough. Just putting up with everybody else's bullshit. There's four other guys I've been hanging around with in a really intimate situation for 37 years. Sometimes you think: 'Is it time? Is it worth it?' And yes, it still is. The fact that there's 37 years makes me wonder what the 38th year is going to be like – I'm kind of curious to see."

It's nothing short of a miracle that all the original members are still together after such a long time, especially if you consider the number of life-threatening situations they put themselves through. Their turning point came when they got back together in 1984 and recorded *Done With Mirrors* – not Perry's favourite album but a pivotal one when it came to the healing process, he says: "We were still getting high on a limited basis. We were trying to get clean. We were trying to modify our using but the weekends got longer [laughs], y'know what I mean?

"Getting sober is very much of a mindset. If you're waiting for that weekend then you are still in that headspace; you're not really free of the addiction. It's not doing you any favours, except maybe giving your liver a break. So we did *Done With Mirrors* semi-straight. And because getting high used to help with the anxiety, we felt a lot more pressure so the record was very uninspired and that's when we figured we had to stop completely."

Tyler gets his balls out in the home of Ross Halfin Esq.

"In my last years of hard partying, I was making music in spite of drugs, not because of them." – Joe Perry

"You hum it, I'll howl it." Impromptu karaoke in North Cheam.

Making his Marc: Tyler at the scene of Bolan's tragic car crash in Barnes, west London.

It wasn't an overnight event. "When we went out on the road after …*Mirrors* was released I can remember telling my road manager: 'Okay, I'm going to have you carry the coke and only give it to me when the show is over' [laughs]. That kind of stuff. And slowly but surely my habit began to pick up and eventually we had to cancel the tour. And that's when we learnt how to get sober the right way."

It was quite amazing that the whole band got sober together. "Yeah, although it took a while. It wasn't like we sat in a room and said: 'Okay, we're going to get sober now.' It took a couple of years for everybody to get it, because some of the guys weren't as bad as the others. Tom Hamilton never missed a gig. Tom never fell down the stairs, so why should he stop having a beer when he comes home from rehearsals? He probably could have controlled it easier than any of us. But it wasn't about that. It was about the fact that he did go around the bend a few times – he knew the quality of his life pretty much sucked. Everybody came to terms on their own and realised they had to do it. Nobody got sober because of somebody else: you got to find your own way. And I think that's what took the longest."

It's a fact that since the beginning of time drugs have been a major catalyst in the creative process, and as far as Aerosmith goes they wrote some of their most enduring classics while, frankly, shit-faced. When asked what they felt was the most definitive 'Smith song, both Tyler and Perry instantly picked *Draw The Line*, written during the most chaotic period of their career. Was there a time when Joe thought getting clean would prevent him from tapping into his creative muse again?

"Well y'know, if I look at my last years of hard partying, I was making music in spite of the drugs, not because of them, and I knew that near the end. There was some fear of: 'Will our fans like us if they know we're not partying any more?' And then we thought: 'Hey – are our fans going to stop listening to us because we don't stay up until four in the morning drinking beer? Don't be ridiculous!'

"As for the creative process, that comes from here [points to heart] and some people even believe it's God or whatever you call it – the spirit. When you get out of the way and set the subconscious spirit free, that's when things start to become creative. Because everybody has creativity. So drugs were used by shamans and freaks as a shortcut to that spiritual place. The first experience you have with these substances, it kind of cuts you off from the neck up. Then all of a sudden you think: 'That's it, it's the drugs and alcohol that are are writing the songs.' I know for a fact that I used to believe that. I can remember one afternoon lying on my back and writing a specific song when I was high on heroin."

But that method stopped getting results?

"I knew when it wasn't working. We had the studio booked and we were going to get plenty buzzed and write something. It didn't come out that way. We woke up the next day, listened to what we recorded and it was a piece of shit! That's when we knew we were suffering artistically. And there were other things in my personal life that weren't doing me any good. Anyway, I was in a rehab for a short amount of time and at one of the rehearsals I came up with some riffs for a song and I liked it and I thought: 'I can do this!' We started rehearsing again and that's when I figured we could play; it wasn't the Jack Daniel's. And as I said, we all took our own slow time getting there. But as they say: 'It takes 15 years to walk into the woods and 15 years to walk out.' I don't know if it was that long but that's a pretty good analogy."

Since those first baby steps, the newly

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LUNACY, LUGERS AND LUPINS

Aerosmith through one man's lens.

Words: Malcolm Dome

Veteran American photographer Neil Zlozower has fond memories of working with Aerosmith in the mid-1970s.

"I first saw them in 1973/4 at the Santa Monica Civic, and they blew me away," he recalls. "I'd been shooting rock bands since 1969, and was still only 20 years old. I was very much a fan getting the chance to photograph my favourite bands. In those days, I mostly shot them backstage and also live. There wasn't such tight security as now; if you had a photo pass you got to hang with the band. I got a lot of stuff of them goofing off in the dressing room, before going out in front of 18,000 crazy fans at the Forum in Los Angeles."

It was at this venue that Steven Tyler pulled a gun on the surprised Zlozower.

"Steven was an insane, OTT kinda guy. I did this shoot backstage with him at the Forum and he was messing around with a gun. I've no clue whether it was real or plastic, but he pointed it at me, which was kinda freaky. I also did some photos with Steve at the Beverly Hills Hotel. He saw some flowers with long stems and decided to straddle one of them; it looked like his dick was hanging out, and Steven made the most of that!"

Zlozower wasn't averse to following the band around to get good shots...

"Once, I even drove out to San Diego where Aerosmith were doing a radio interview, and caught them both there and doing an in-store. It was a different world back then. Did I see much debauchery? They had a reputation for drugs and groupies, but I saw very little of that sort of stuff. Maybe I was being naïve, and being a fan didn't wanna see it."

However, the man hasn't worked with Aerosmith since 1988.

"Things changed. They had different managers and were all cleaned out. But I remember the good times, and how they were one of the few US hard rock bands in the 70s who excited me."

NEIL ZLOZOWER

reborn Aerosmith have of course enjoyed multi-platinum successes they couldn't have imagined in their wildest hallucinations. This is in no small part thanks to successful collaborations with outside songwriters and the ballads that in recent years have become a staple feature on all the albums. Aerosmith have literally came out of an institution and then become one. It was noticeable at the Hard Rock show that the young models in the front rows only came to life when the band played power rock anthems like *Crazy* and *Don't Want To Miss A Thing*. These babes weren't even swinging in their daddy's sacks when *Walk This Way* was originally released. Now it's even been resurrected as an anthem for Red Nose Day, covered by Girls Aloud (in the role of Aerosmith) and The Sugababes (playing Run-DMC) – a contentious subject among some of the old-skool fans who feel that the band has abandoned their heavy rock roots.

Perry disagrees and cannot see a conflict of interests: "I learned as I grew as a musician that I enjoyed playing the ballads more because it gave me room to stretch out. But y'know, we always had ballads. Steven wrote *Dream On* before he was in Aerosmith. Way back then we knew that ballads were the way to get on the radio for a band like ours. So to put one ballad on a record that was going to get 10 of your other songs heard seemed like a small price to pay. And it wasn't too hard to do if the ballad was R&B-based. People ask us if those songs changed our lives. Well yeah, they opened our audience up to a million people. But it's not like we said: 'We're not going to play rock songs any more.'"

Another controversial area is the band's recent recorded output – the last two albums of original material, *Nine Lives* and *Just Push Play*, weren't major successes in Europe (although in reality Aerosmith very rarely did much damage to the album charts over here) and since they left Geffen they have become in danger of transforming into one of the plethora of heritage acts who trawl the never-ending stadium cabaret circuit. Have they hung up their creative boots or will they be pushing new boundaries on the next album?

Perry looks up to the ceiling and then scratches his head thoughtfully. He does think that the band may have a challenge ahead of them. "Well it certainly is daunting," he says, "because I feel I've already written the best rock song I can write with, say, *Draw The Line*. It's got my favourite tempo, uses the right tuning – it hits on all cylinders. Forget about whether it's a hit and all that stuff. It's a great rock song for me. I don't know what it does for the rest of the world."

I remind him that it's also Tyler's favourite tune and Perry laughs: "Well then, I have another convert! But the point is that there's room for another one. It's just getting over that creative hump. There's tons of room for other great songs. I mean, I thought that every great song had been written, every great chord change had been used by 1968 – and look at all the great songs that come out since then. It obviously gets harder and you want to avoid getting sucked into that 'Well, I've already done that' mode.

"That's what I think is the problem with Clapton – with the peaks that he reached I can see him thinking: 'Well, I've done that – why should I try and beat it? Why not try something new?' Being pragmatic I know what my limits are. I know I'll never play like Jeff Beck, but I can be inspired by him. I can learn a lot by listening to him, talking to him, the same with Jimmy [Page]. Jimmy's not just a great guitar player. Jeff is just a guitar player: he writes some good songs but he doesn't write great songs – he's only the best guitar player on the planet. But Jimmy writes songs that show off his talent. Basically he created the Led Zeppelin sound and created a dynasty."

With the night wearing on, I ask Perry what we can expect at Aerosmith's forthcoming Hyde Park show. "Well, I think that people are going to see that we've gotten to be a better band over the last eight years. We're pushing a lot harder and part of that comes with age, experience and partly it comes with just not caring any more – we're just out there to have fun."

Southampton, Friday, February 23, 2007, 5pm. Steven Tyler is ringing my mobile and ranting about his recent trip to London. "I got to sit at the steps of Olympic studios where all the Stones did their recordings, fuckin' Zeppelin – oh my God! I live for that shit. When I went to Jerusalem I walked the walk Jesus walked, it was just like that, man."

Tyler delivers his patois in a machine-gun staccato that reverberates down the transatlantic phone as he relates his rock'n'roll tour of London with Ross Halfin. Still starstruck after all these years…

"Oh yeah, I'm still starstruck, man," he agrees, "I'm still a fan. It's like if Janis Joplin were alive today I'd be hanging out with her, too."

I'm reminded of a past encounter, but quickly brush it aside. It's over a week since the band played their club show at London's poshest hamburger joint.

TYLER MEETS PERRY
Steven Tyler of The Chain sees Joe Perry of The Jam Band as they play *Rattesnake Shake* in local club The Barn.

DEAL ME IN
Music biz mogul Clive Davis sees a New York club show and offers Aerosmith a deal with CBS.

LIGHTERS ALOFT
On their first album Aerosmith inadvertently invent the Big Rock Ballad with *Dream On*.

KING ROCKERS
With third and fourth albums *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks*, Aerosmith reach their balls-out peak.

JOE PERRY QUITS
At a show in Cleveland, after a row with Tyler over wives and some spilt milk, Perry walks out.

TYLER COLLAPSES?
The 'Smiths begin to implode. Tyler feigns passing out on stage. To make it look good he twitches his leg.

PERRY AND WHITFORD RETURN
Manager irons over several very large creases to reunite the original line-up.

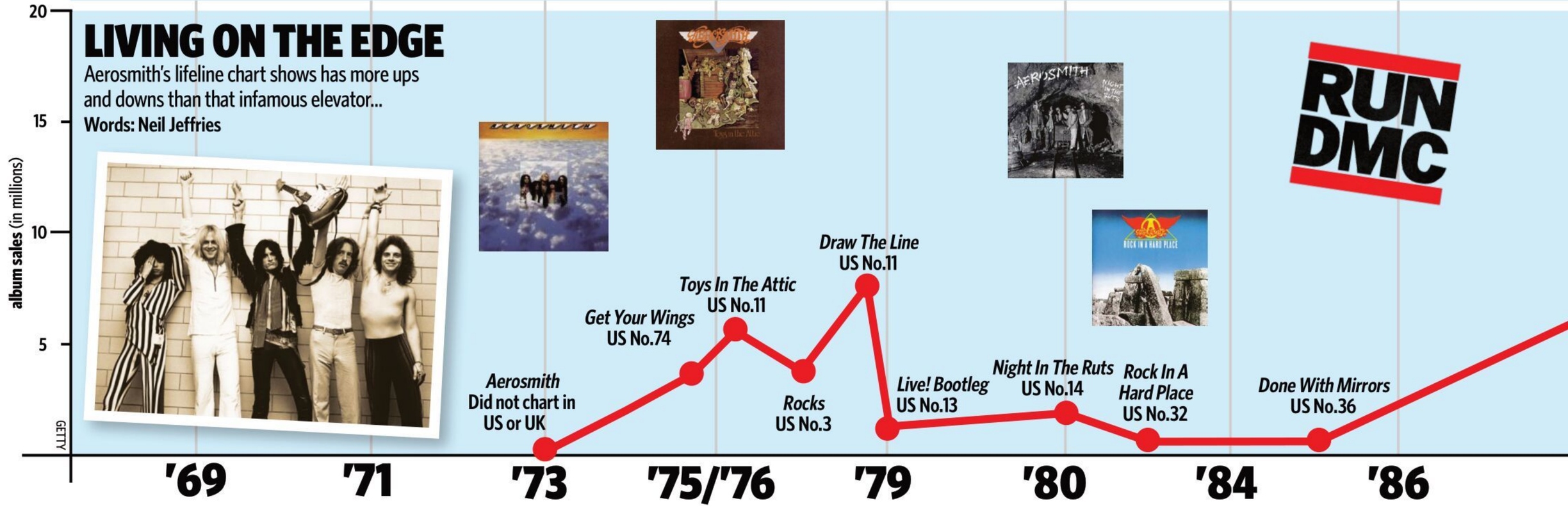
RUN-DMC REVIVAL
Washed-up Tyler and Perry agree to collaborate on rappers' version of *Walk This Way*.

LIVING ON THE EDGE

Aerosmith's lifeline chart shows has more ups and downs than that infamous elevator...

Words: Neil Jeffries

GETTY



Joe Perry, February 2007: "We love playing the UK. This is where it all began."

An hour long, it covered their wide and diverse career, taking in the past classics (*Walking The Dog, Draw The Line, Sweet Emotion, Walk This Way*), the commercial fodder (*Cryin', What It Takes* and That Diane Warren Song), plus a few surprises (*Mother Popcorn, Baby Please Don't Go* and *Train Kept A Rollin'*). Perry later reported that the highlight of the show was seeing Hamilton back on stage, while Tyler looked absolutely euphoric in his natural habitat. Was it enjoyable performing at somewhere smaller than the usual stadium?

"Absolutely! Y'know man, you get so disconnected when you play big places – even though it's a great ego tweak. So if 80,000 people want to see you, you're never going to hit them all by playing a club that fits only 150 like the Hard Rock. So it's very selfish to play small clubs, which I would rather do, but there's not enough time and life. But you do feel good, you really feel connected. The worst time in my life is when they put up a fucking barricade in front of you and you're 60 feet from anybody. You might as well be phoning it in from your basement."

Any chance of the band doing more intimate venues over here? "I'd love to play a club and have Jimmy Page or Jeff Beck come over. I mean, didn't you see Joe Perry play? Don't you wish that Zeppelin were there doing it in that club that night? The reality is that we played for an hour and it cost us $600,000. But we wanted to let London know that we were ready. It's what I live for. What am I going to do? Go to Starbucks in downtown Boston? On one hand it's a little embarrassing that I live for a fucking song, but it's what I'm all about. To write a song and have someone say that they've made love to their wife and had children to it? It means everything and nothing at once. It means all to me at the end of the day."

I ask Tyler what the future holds for Aerosmith as they enter their twilight years. With their recent phenomenal successes, are they in a position to kick back and relax?

"To be honest, I think that the money situation with past management was never really good for the band – we got ripped royally," he replies. "The new management's been beautiful to us and that's one of the reasons the band stuck together all these years. I think more than that we never got fat and lazy or too rich. And more than anything I believe in my heart there's nothing that gets me off more than watching my daughter graduate or standing next to Joe Perry on stage. My children and the band, there's nothing fucking better than that. Y'know what? Call us a bunch of tarts, call us a bunch of cheap Rolling Stones imitations – we're still together and we still love to rock. And it all started because I once went to a show and saw Janis Joplin, y'know what I mean? I know what a good song is and I love to fuckin' shake my ass and it fuckin' gets people off."

Has he ever considered writing a follow-up to *Walk This Way*? And what would he call it? "*Does The Noise In My Head Bother You?*" he replies laughing. "And I'm writing it right now. Listen – I gotta go."

And so he departs. But this time it's not to some shooting gallery down the lower eastside, but a mission far more important and life-threatening: to drive his kids to school. "If I don't do this," Steven Tyler says, "then my life is not worth living…"

> "To write a song and have someone say they've made love to their wife to it? That means everything to me." – Steven Tyler

PERMANENTLY PUMPED!
With *Walk This Way* introducing Aerosmith to a new breed of fans, *Permanent Vacation* ('87) and follow-up *Pump* ('89) make the band a household name on both sides of the Atlantic, recalling the *Toys In The Attic/Rocks* glories of two decades earlier.

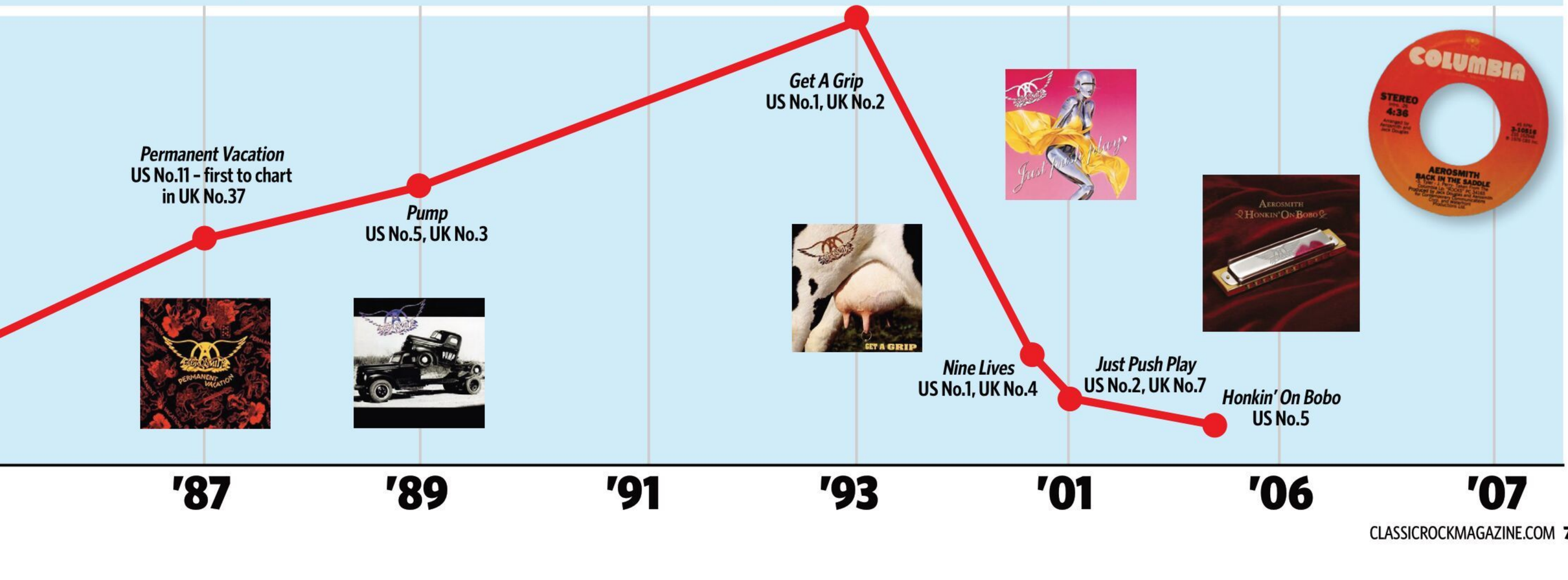
COINING IT
With David Geffen about to sell his label to MCA, the band switch to Sony for an enormous $30m deal.

THE BALLAD YEARS
Get A Grip produces three hit singles: *Cryin', Amazing* and *Crazy*. The ballad years have begun.

UNLUCKY 13TH
Aerosmith get just a little too slick. *Just Push Play*, studio album No.13, is their worst seller for ages.

THROAT WARS
Tyler has surgery for a throat problem. Meanwhile Tom Hamilton is treated for throat cancer.

BACK IN THE SADDLE (AGAIN)
Aerosmith announce plans to tour outside the US for the first time since 1999.



KNIVES OUT

Words: **Peter Makowski** Portraits: **Ross Halfin**

It's 2010: **Joe Perry** has gone solo, **Steven Tyler** is in rehab, and the rest of the band are talking about carrying on with a new singer. In a world exclusive, *Classic Rock* tails **Aerosmith** across two continents to find a band facing its demons – and the end of the road.

"Ego, chicks, booze and drugs have killed more bands than anything else."
– Ozzy Osbourne

'That one last shot's a permanent vacation/And how high can you fly with broken wings?'
– *Amazing*, Aerosmith

It's November 1, 2009. In a backstage compound a good distance from the rest of his Aerosmith bandmates somewhere in the Ferrari Stadium in Abu Dhabi, Steven Tyler is telling *Classic Rock* about his future plans. "I'm going to do something Steven Tyler, working on the brand of myself – Brand Tyler," he says. "I'm not sure what I'm going to do but a bunch of things have come in that will piss the band off real good. We'll see what happens."

This is news. Until tonight, the band and management had limited communications, only revealing snippets of (mis) information indicating that Aerosmith were to take a sabbatical and letting Tyler pursue some vague solo ambitions.

The term 'sabbatical' is usually PR code for a number of scenarios including a drug relapse, a band member going into rehab, the band sacking their manager, the band sacking a member, their record label refusing to release an album, or a member quitting.

All this and a whole lot more has occurred in Aerosmith's chequered history and today a mix of rumour and fact flies thick and fast: Steven Tyler has relapsed. There are worrying reports that his Hepatitis C has returned. Tyler wants to take time off and release a solo album but reportedly the record company won't allow this to happen until Aerosmith deliver a new record – their last on Sony. Tyler sacked Aerosmith's management and went with friend and superfan Jason Flom of UEG (and later sacks them to go with Allen Kovac of 10th Street Entertainment, reps for Mötley Crüe and Buckcherry).

So while Damage Control Inc raise their hands and bleat "Hiatus!" elsewhere in Abu Dhabi the rest of the band are in no mood to gloss over the problems. "We've been putting up with Steven's bullshit for 40 years," says drummer Joey Kramer who in his candid memoirs, *Hit Hard*, explained that "the band was my life, but it was also the source of pain, humiliation, and abuse. Steven could be punishing and critical when his expectations weren't met."

"[Tyler]'s not the easiest person to have a conversation with," agrees guitarist Brad Whitford. "Right now I wouldn't want to talk to him. He's all angry and… I don't know what's going on with him. It's all just very depressing…"

A month later, Steven Tyler admits himself to rehab and Joe Perry announces that the band are looking for a new singer.

So what, exactly, is happening in the world of Aerosmith?

New York, 1986. It's been almost two years since Aerosmith's re-formation and the stench of addiction, resentments and general dysfunction still clings to the tenuous threads that hold this once legendary American rock'n'roll institution together. The entire band have their little peccadilloes and habits but Steven Tyler, as usual, is the proverbial loose cannon. With cancelled dates and embarrassing press interviews – in which the obviously inebriated singer espouses the virtues of his 'new-found sobriety' – it's becoming evident that this once anticipated reunion is going to extinguish itself like some pathetic, anti-climactic damp squib.

Comeback album, *Done With Mirrors*, is done *on* mirrors, sells badly and leaves their new record label boss, the fearsome David Geffen, fuming. Redemption comes when Tyler and Perry guest on New York rap trioRun-DMC's hip-hop cover version of *Walk This Way*, introducing Aerosmith to a whole new MTV generation.

Unfortunately Tyler (and other members of the band) is in no fit state to take advantage of this golden opportunity as he puts all his energies into a burgeoning opiate addiction. As a last resort, the band's latest manager – Tim Collins – decides to organise an intervention (where, in a last ditch attempt, addicts/alcoholics are confronted by family, friends and a professional third party), luring the drug-addled frontman to his office at 6am under the pretence of doing an interview with a British radio station. Suffering from acute withdrawals (it's too early in the morning to pick up his daily script at the Methadone clinic), Tyler finds himself confronted by his bandmates who proceed to air their list of grievances and give him a final ultimatum.

"I had to listen to all my friends – who I just got high with the day before – tell me what a schmuck I am and what a total fuck-up I'd become!" Tyler recalled in the band's autobiography *Walk This Way*. "I'm grateful because I got sober. But I'm resentful to this day over the way it happened."

Walk This Way, which charts Aerosmith rise, fall and miraculous resurrection, had a significant part to play in the band's restored credibility and subsequent role as poster boys for sobriety. Tyler was the first member to go to rehab and clean up (bassist Tom Hamilton was the last) and when the band returned to touring, Tim Collins did everything in his power to ensure that they were kept away from temptation (mini bars in hotels were emptied and the road crew were not allowed to drink or take drugs in front of the band).

When Guns N' Roses (protégés both musically and in chemical consumption) came on as support due to the insistence of the record company, Collins quite rightly feared the worst and ensured that GN'R were out of the venue and long gone before his charges arrived. Aerosmith garnered a reputation as recovery Nazis. (To add a bit of levity to the situation, the band made up some t-shirts with a list of all the rehabs they had been through instead of tour dates.)

Was the whole 'sharp as a thistle, clean as a whistle' image foisted upon Aerosmith to win back the trust of industry peers? Was *Walk This Way* just part of an elaborate PR campaign? "You'll have noticed that I contributed hardly anything to that book," says drummer Joey Kramer today. "That's because I was really unhappy about it. It was Tim Collins' idea."

"Making our problems public was about proving that we were back," counters guitarist Joe Perry. "We were one of the first bands to come out and say we burnt out. Now people could see that you could actually go through some pretty horrible times, come back and have some sanity in your life again. But it started to wear pretty thin after a while, it got to be old news and we just wanted to be known as Aerosmith."

Joe Perry: "It's official: Aerosmith are looking for a new singer..."

Having survived four decades of fights, fallouts and fateful accidents, in recent months Aerosmith's 'old news' has become headline news. Steven Tyler has, again, fallen off the wagon (as well as a stage in Sturgis, North Dakota, last August) in spectacular fashion and in many ways Aerosmith seem to be pretty much in the same place they were in 1986. This time round Tyler has checked *himself* into rehab and, instead of celebrating their 40th anniversary, the band seem to be going through another midlife crisis.

Are Aerosmith finished?

Los Angeles, NOVEMBER 23, 2009. Joe Perry removes his black 'Mad Max' style goggles. "OK," he says, "so it's official: Aerosmith are looking for a new singer."

A gaunt figure, attired in a stylish junkie chic that involves a copious amount of scarves, antique jewellery and muted colours, Perry appears to be a shy, humble and intense man who only talks when he has something to say. And tonight he wants to talk.

We are sitting in a space cruiser of a limousine gliding effortlessly down the West Coast freeway towards Fresno, where the newly revived Joe Perry Project will play a show at the House Of Blues as a part of a mini-tour to promote his new album, *Have Guitar, Will Travel* (released in October in the US and available for the first time in the UK and Europe free with this issue of *Classic Rock*).

When I say 'we' I'm talking about me, Joe, photographer Ross Halfin, tour manager John Bionelli and Mrs Billie Perry, the lady whose exquisite torso is displayed on Joe's 'Billie' guitar. Ross and I were initially assigned to cover Perry's solo outing but since then the story has become inextricably linked with the Aerosmith drama that seems to be unfolding around us by the hour. Over the last couple of months the internet has been ablaze with gossip, rumour and even some hard facts about Steven Tyler's rapidly fracturing relationship with his bandmates, kicked off by the "Brand Tyler" story on *Classic Rock*'s website in November.

Although Perry is currently focused on promoting his new album, he accepts that media focus will be on Aerosmith. "That band has been my life for almost 40 years so I'd expect you to have some Aerosmith questions," he sighs. And then a smile spreads across his distinct chiselled features: "And to be honest: all the current media attention and bullshit hasn't done any harm to ticket sales for my band."

The seeds of the *Have Guitar, Will Travel* album were sown early last year when Tyler called off pre-production sessions for a new Aerosmith album, leaving two and a half months studio down time. Originally Perry was planning to put together an all-star production calling upon the services of a vast array of talent including Jimmy Page, Slash, Scott Weiland, Lil Wayne and Snoop Dog (something he still plans to do at a later date). "I envisioned doing that after the Aerosmith album was done," he explains, "but I didn't have time to call people up and get it together. I knew I could do *Have Guitar*... if I really put pedal to the metal."

The aborted Aerosmith album is one of the key factors responsible for the current split. Perry had been dissatisfied with recent releases, wasn't happy about using outside songwriters and felt that the band had lost direction and needed to return to their roots and recapture past glories like *Toys In The Attic* and *Rocks*.

"I don't think we've made a decent album in years," he snorts. "*Just Push Play* is

Tyler onstage in Abu Dhabi, November 2009. Below: with Jimmy Page at the *Classic Rock* awards, 2007. Six months later he secretly auditioned for Led Zeppelin.

my least favourite… When we recorded it there was never a point where all five members were in the room at the same time and Aerosmith's major strength is playing together. It was a learning experience for me: it showed me how *not* to make an Aerosmith record."

In an effort to pull things together, Perry called upon the services of über producer Brendan O'Brien (Pearl Jam, Rage Against the Machine and Neil Young), a man who had first impressed him as a fledging engineer on the sessions for their 1993 album *Get A Grip*.

Perry: "I've always wanted to work with Brendan. He's recorded some of the best rock'n'roll in the last 10 years. After we did *Get A Grip*, both Steven and I wanted to work with that guy. Steven was supposed to come down to my studio. The two of us hadn't written a song together for over 10 years and I just finally just said, 'Steven: c'mon let's get down and do it the way we used to y'know; you play drums [Tyler began his career as a drummer with a band called The Strangeurs], I'll play guitar and we'll write some songs.' I was expecting him in the studio and then suddenly didn't hear from him."

Tyler resurfaced a couple of weeks later and cancelled the sessions, disrupting the recording schedule as Billie Perry recalls: "It was devastating,we were all set to go.We all made arrangements at home: the kids, the crew, everything was fucking booked! It's a big process."

"Moving Aerosmith – it's like an ocean liner, y'know what I mean?" agrees Joe. "It's difficult to change direction."

It was early in the summer of 2008 that rumours began circulating about Tyler auditioning for Led Zeppelin (six months after their 02 reunion gig) – a rumour that Joe, who normally deals with the press by the code of Omerta, confirms. Perry: "When Steven disappeared I called around and somebody said that he was in London trying out for Led Zeppelin. It's something I've never talked about before outside of the family, so to speak, and kept out of the press. It's a kind of window into how hard it's been to keep the partnership together. It's certainly not the first time things like that have happened. That's the downside of our relationship."

The Led Zeppelin auditions came about through Henry Smith, a childhood friend of Tyler's who'd worked with Zeppelin (in fact Tyler invited Smith to accompany him to the Classic Rock Roll Of Honour in 2007, where they sat at a table with Jimmy Page). From various reports it transpires that Tyler came to the rehearsals unprepared and under the impression that he would be writing new material with the band: resulting in some shambolic sessions, embarrassed awkward moments and the Plant-shaped lead singer post still vacant.

Perry recently managed to catch up with Jimmy Page at last year's *Classic Rock* awards to get the full SP on the situation: "[Page] said he felt really awkward about the audition, but ultimately it was a group decision."

Tyler returned to the States thinking that Aerosmith were oblivious to his recent escapades and things carried on as normal until the tumble in

➔

"Steven and I haven't written a song together in ten years..."

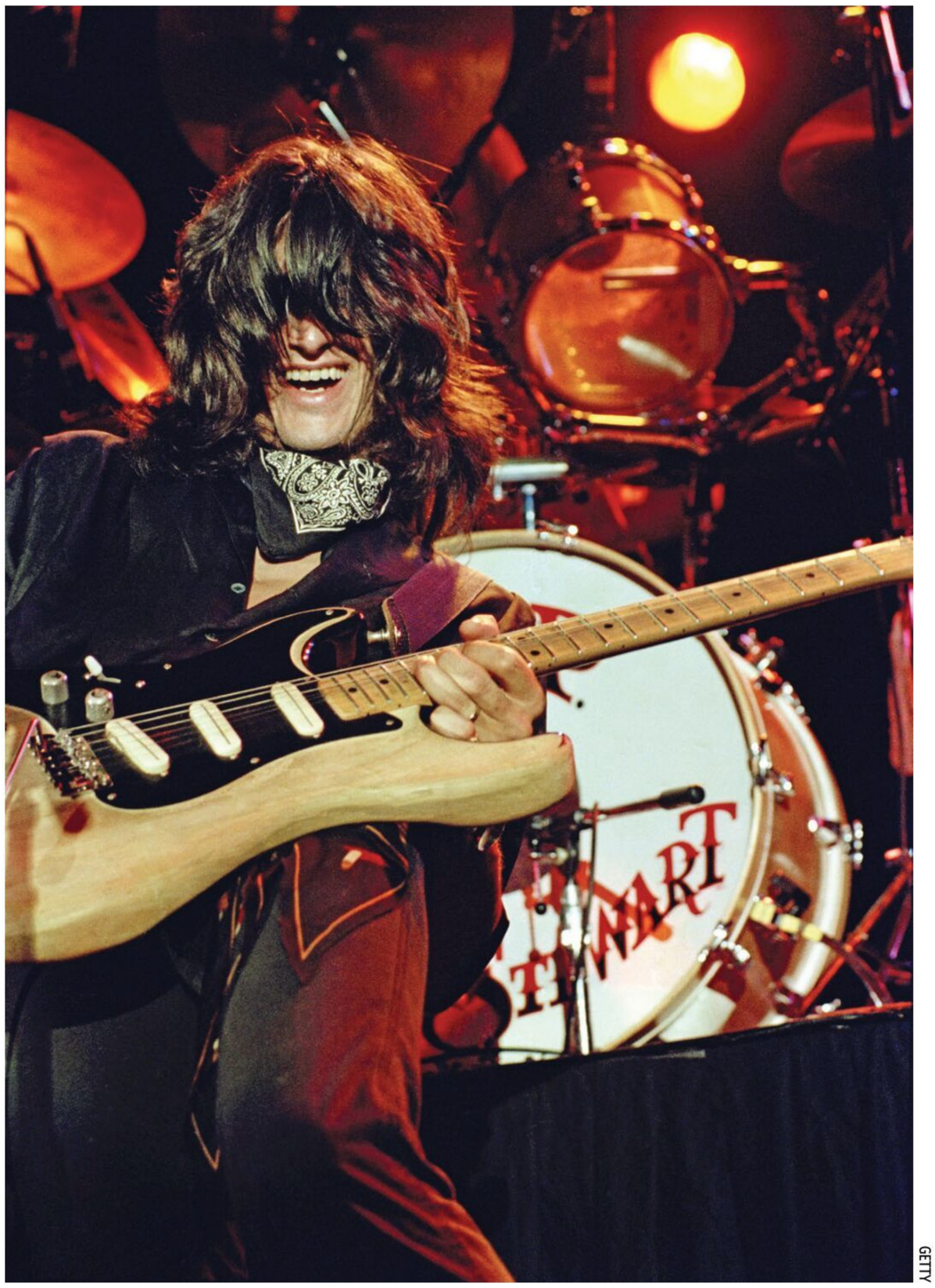
– *Joe Perry*

Dakota, after which it gradually became apparent to Perry that his cohort was working to a different agenda.

"After the Jimmy Page thing happened, Brendan, who was waiting for us to get something together, ran out of time and went off to produce Pearl Jam who got a number one record," Perry says with a grimace. "Steven didn't want to work with him – that was the vibe I got. It was like, 'Let's go into the studio and we can finish the record in a month with Marti Frederiksen, then we can be off Sony and take two years off.' I wanted the last record on Sony to be at least as fucking good as it could be, so why wouldn't you want to work with a Brendan O'Brien or Rick Rubin? We hadn't done a studio album for about eight years and I felt it was time to make a real Aerosmith record. Steven just wanted to get off Sony so he could do his solo album."

Despite the fact that Aerosmith completed their postponed dates, this was the last time the Toxic Twins communicated, with the exception of a brief telephone call and Tyler's bewildering guest appearance with the Joe Perry Project in New York in late November. Appearing from out of nowhere (and leaving as soon as the song finished) he said cryptically from the stage, "Joe Perry, you are a man of many colours. But I, motherfucker, am the rainbow!" ("I wonder if Steven knows that the rainbow is the symbol of Gay Pride?" says Perry today.) Since then they have only liaised via their separate managers and Joe can only surmise what his other half is up to.

Perry: "I think Steven wants to go off and do other projects and that's unfortunate. I've had to put things on hold many times. I've wanted to say, 'Look guys, I need three months off' to do this or that. But to be viable, Aerosmith needs to record a new studio record and do a tour behind it. We need to deliver to the fans. I know Steven wants to an album, write a book and go on Fantasy Camp. He's never told me to my face that's what he wants to do. He's never come to me and said, 'Look, I wanna do this, so if we do this we can get to there' – I just pick up everything second hand. I know he loves to play with Aerosmith or at least I know that's what he used to love to do. But now I guess he wants to do other things, which is fine as long as it's planned out, so the rest of the band can plan their lives around it."



GETTY

Joe Perry onstage in 1982 during his hiatus from Aerosmith.

With the new solo album under his belt and a touring outfit (making their debut in the UK as guests of Bad Company in April) Perry has at last been able to put his personal ambitions to the fore. "I've wanted for years to find some guys that I could work with because I realised a long time ago that I can do other things alongside Aerosmith. When the band first got back together it was 24 hours Aerosmith, rebuilding the band, because we had burned so many bridges. I didn't have time to explore anything else. In the past I've had to turn down a lot of things that would have been fun to do. Now that Aerosmith are on an indefinite hiatus, everyday I'm getting requests to do stuff, it's just great."

This is the first time the Joe Perry Project have been on the road since the early 80s and with the exception of the guitarist and bassist David Hull features an all new line-up; Marty Richards (drums), Paul Santo (keyboards/guitar) and Hagen Grohe. Like Hull, both Richards and Santos are grizzled veterans of the local Boston scene with CVs that include stints with J.Geils and Ringo Starr. Grohe, hailing from a small village in Germany, is the new kid on the block, having been discovered by Billie Perry. After hearing about Journey finding their new singer, Arnel Pineda, via the internet, Billie decided to scour the sites for new talent. "I saw this group called Hagen and decided to check them out for a couple of days," she explains. "He was doing covers and there was something about him. I told Joe and he wasn't sure. I said, 'Joe: it's once in a lifetime you hear someone like that – what do we have to lose? A plane ticket?' He's been in the business for 10 years and is the nicest person you could meet. So after Steven blew the friggin' Aerosmith record we got on a bus and headed down south to play Brendan the new material and he said, 'Yeah, the kid has pipes.' So we thought, 'Fuck it, let's just put out our own record. We can't count on Tyler anymore, he's a fuckin' burnout.'"

"Steven Tyler doesn't act like a sober person. I'm not hanging out with the guy, but his history of drug abuse is well documented and, like many people in this position, the prospects aren't good."

– Brad Whitford

'I kept the right ones out and let the wrong ones in.' –

Amazing, Aerosmith

FERRARI STADIUM, ABU DHABI, NOVEMBER 1, 2009.

Aerosmith are about to close the World Grand Prix at the newly built United Emirates venue and Steven Tyler is getting ready to perform what at the moment looks like being the last ever show featuring the classic line up. The flamboyant if not slightly eccentric singer is ensconced in a compound a significant walk away from Aerosmith's dressing rooms (he is also staying in a hotel a three hour drive away from the rest of the band and crew's accommodation). Located on top of a man-made mound, it consists of two large white portakabins with exotic interiors that are draped in sheets and colourful cushions, accoutrements one would expect to find in a local opium den rather than a band dressing room. It's typical Tyler: high camp, low rent.

He is accompanied with an equally ostentatious entourage that includes manager Tim Heyne, who has the gracious but ferocious manner of a sedated Rottweiler (and whose services will be dispensed with a month later). Feisty and fashionable girlfriend, Erin Brady, is also on hand. My most memorable encounter with Erin occurred at a hotel in London a couple of years ago. It ➔

"We thought, 'We can't count on Tyler anymore, he's a fuckin burnout...'"

– Billie Perry

The Joe Perry Project 2010. Singer Hagen, second from right.

Have Guitar, Will Travel

Joe Perry breaks down his 2009 solo album, track by track.

WE'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO"I had most of the album on demos with my vocals on them, but I wrote that one with Hagen in mind. Usually I stockpile lyrics over the years for songs. Usually it's a phrase or a line and it will gel and I'll thumb through my lyric book. Sometimes I'll go down to the studio and I won't leave until I have some lyrics, even a chorus, just something to get it started. In this case, it was one of the ones I had in the notebook and the whole line about '*give me something real*' was all about listening to conspiracy stuff and the bullshit that goes on with the elections."

SLINGSHOT"The sound at the beginning is an instrument called a Waterphone and it inspired something in me that brought a whole *Fear And Loathing In Las Vegas* thing. I can remember reading that and actually doing it when the Project played Vegas. We went from gig to gig in a van, we'd picked up some stewardesses, and it was just three days of madness. I admire Hunter S. Thompson from a distance and I can definitely relate to his need for isolation and space so you can blow up things if you need to. That probably explains my fascination for explosives, although I didn't fool around with that stuff back in the days when I was fucked up."

> One of the reasons for doing a solo record is that you can get out there and do whatever you want and you don't have to answer to anybody...

DO YOU WONDER"Marti Frederiksen and I wrote that for *Just Push Play* about 10 years ago. When I played to Brendan O'Brien he loved it and said we should consider it for the next Aerosmith album but Steven never came up with any lyrics for it. And when work on the album went down I thought, 'Fuck it! It's been almost 10 years, Brendan thinks it's got potential, I think I'll put it on my record'."

SOMEBODY'S GONNA GET (THEIR HEAD KICKED IN TONITE)"It's pretty well known that I'm a huge Fleetwood Mac fan. They probably influenced me the most as to what a band could be. It's a song I've always wanted to cover and I can remember playing it to the guys about 15 years ago but it never went anywhere. I knew it was a song that needed a band to play it, which is why I didn't consider it for my last solo record. But this time around it was a no brainer. It's also a tribute to Gene Vincent. If Elvis is the polished diamond ring, Gene Vincent wears the brass knuckles."

HEAVEN AND HELL"That's the one that articulates the feelings on what's going on out there. We're fed bullshit through the media and all the world's leaders are puppets. That's why the lyrics are a little darker than you would find on an Aerosmith record. That's another reason for doing a solo record, because you can get out there and do whatever you want and you don't have to answer to anybody."

NO SURPRISE"It didn't occur to me that there was an Aerosmith song with the same title until much later. Basically I wanted this album to be a soundtrack for a live show. I wanted to play songs that people hadn't heard before that they would remember. So I kind of simplified things. I've boxed myself in many times with weird tuning and things like that. On this one I was determined to be able to play the whole album on one guitar and I pretty much got away with it. When I was originally thinking about doing this album I was going to bring in a bunch of different singers and getting some guest players. Obviously Jimmy Page is someone I would have called, Slash. As for singers I was thinking about Scott Weiland, Robin Zander, and Lil Wayne. Maybe I'll do that next time."

WOODEN SHIPS"This one has to be about 12/14 years old and it was one of the first things I wrote when I built my new studio, The Boneyard. I went guitar crazy on it and in the end it was really hard to find places to sing on it, so I decided to turn it into an instrumental and throw a few more guitars on it!"

OH LORD (21 GRAMS)"That's one of those songs that's more like a poem. I've always loved Jim Morrison and the way he approached rock'n'roll. I always looked at his stuff as poetry with music under it. Even though he was a rock singer who wrote rock songs, he always thought of himself as more of a performance artist, he was always very impromptu and never doing a song the same twice and I've always admired that."

SCARE THE CAT"We'd had our cat for about a month and he was kind of experimenting, loitering around different parts of the house and finally came down to the studio and started getting used to the music. Anyway we were getting ready to lay down this track, I had set everything up, and he was sitting on top of the amp. I hit a chord to check the sound and he bolted like lightning. So hence the name."

FREEDOM"That speaks for itself. They've been putting chips in animals for years. I have Friesian horses that are pure bred and they put a chip in under the skin that has all the information that proves they're legitimate. Then I saw some pictures of people having them injected under their skin. *Freedom* speaks to that in a very cynical black humour kind of way."

was cold, crisp winter evening and Ross Halfin and myself were sat in her room waiting for Tyler. Erin was wearing a gossamer wisp of a designer skirt and when Ross pointed out that it was freezing outside, she just smiled, lifted up her dress, and stuck a couple of fingers between her legs. "It may be cold outside boys, but it's hot in here!" she said as Tyler emerged from the bathroom to observe our paralysed expressions with a conspiratorial grin.

Today Tyler seems slightly edgy, especially about my appearance in Abu Dhabi. "Once the band hit the final note and the show is over, then I'll tell you the whole story," he promises. It never happens: all further attempts to interview the singer are rebuffed, with management telling us that, "regretfully, Steven has had to return to the East Coast quickly to immerse himself into some time sensitive endeavours that require his full attention."

Outwardly Tyler looks OK. He has the beginnings of a beer gut that is at odds with his scrawny gait and with his hyperactive mannerisms and speed jive-talk that bounces off at surreal tangents, it's difficult to tell if the man is out of it or his normal crazy self. The fact that a couple of months later he put himself back into rehab suggests the former.

At the time of the interview, Tyler was enthused about the break from the band and was still finishing his autobiography (entitled *Does The Noise In My Head Bother You?*). "It should be coming out in March/April," he says. "It's been a difficult run. The original transcripts were done while I was on tour with the band. It's kind of hard writing a book between dates."

Still recovering from his fall, the dressing room is kitted out with exercise equipment and Tyler admits it has taken a couple of months to get well enough to do this show, which gave him more time to work on the book. But even with the current rift, he says he's elated at playing in the United Emirates and has noticed that Aerosmith seem to still be capable of pulling in a new young audience. "Holy shit! Because of *Guitar Hero* there are 12 and 13 year old kids coming up and telling me the lyrics they like," he enthuses. "And they know I wrote the lyrics, whereas on some of the albums it says 'Tyler/Perry' and people thought that Joe wrote the lyrics. I am the lyricist of this band. Joe's got a tech to change his strings. I don't have one to change *my* strings [laughs]. Some of us have to work a little harder, write the songs – but that's what I love to do the most. I've got eight songs written for the solo record, whereas Joe has his own solo record out with some German guy singing on it. I wish him the best of luck. I'm not sure how it's going. I don't think the radio's playing it. I haven't heard it. "

As a lady behind us makes gestures that it's time to wind up, I ask a by-now-animated and communicative Tyler about his future with the band. "No matter what I do I am looked upon as the vocalist of Aerosmith," he says. "So I can use that to my advantage. We don't speak much anymore. I know Tom [Hamilton] is working on health issues and I just say my prayers for him. I've nothing but love for Tom. The band is so fucking great. It's still the original guys, we're still kicking ass and taking names."

'And I'm saying a prayer for the desperate hearts tonight.'

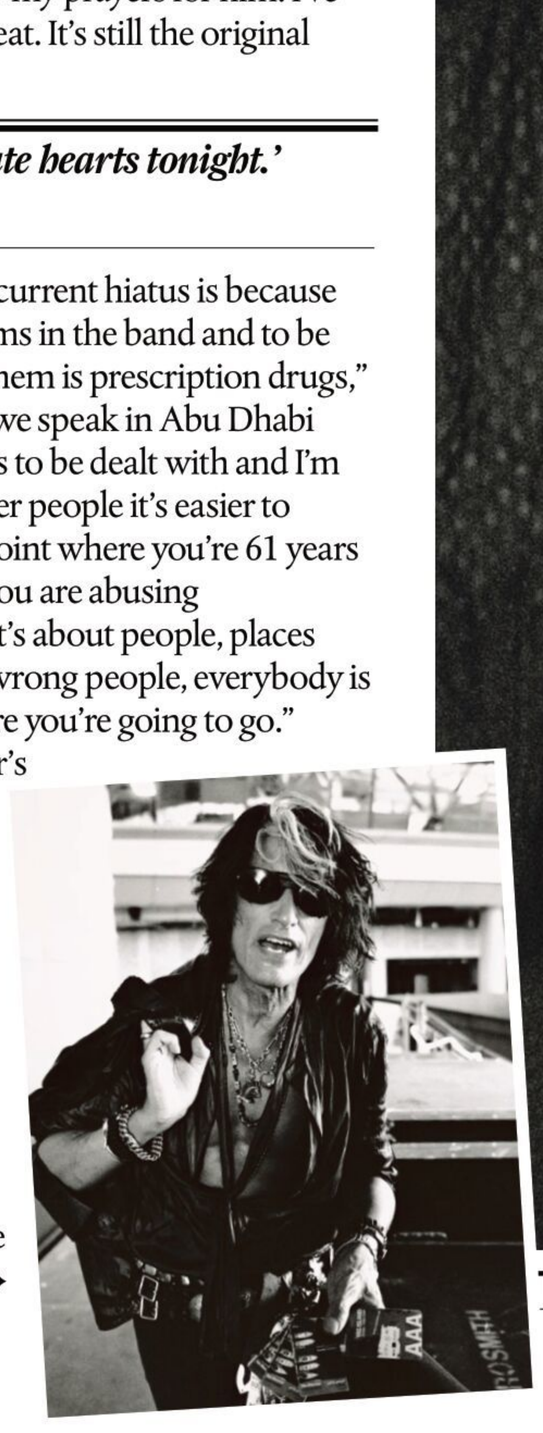
– *Amazing*, Aerosmith

"One of the reasons for the current hiatus is because there are internal problems in the band and to be perfectly honest one of them is prescription drugs," says Joey Kramer, when we speak in Abu Dhabi before the show. "It needs to be dealt with and I'm sure it will be. For younger people it's easier to come in and out of using. But when you get to the point where you're 61 years old [Tyler was 61 at the time of this interview] and you are abusing prescription drugs it's much more difficult to stop. It's about people, places and things. If you're surrounding yourself with the wrong people, everybody is enabling you and you are weak- minded, that's where you're going to go."

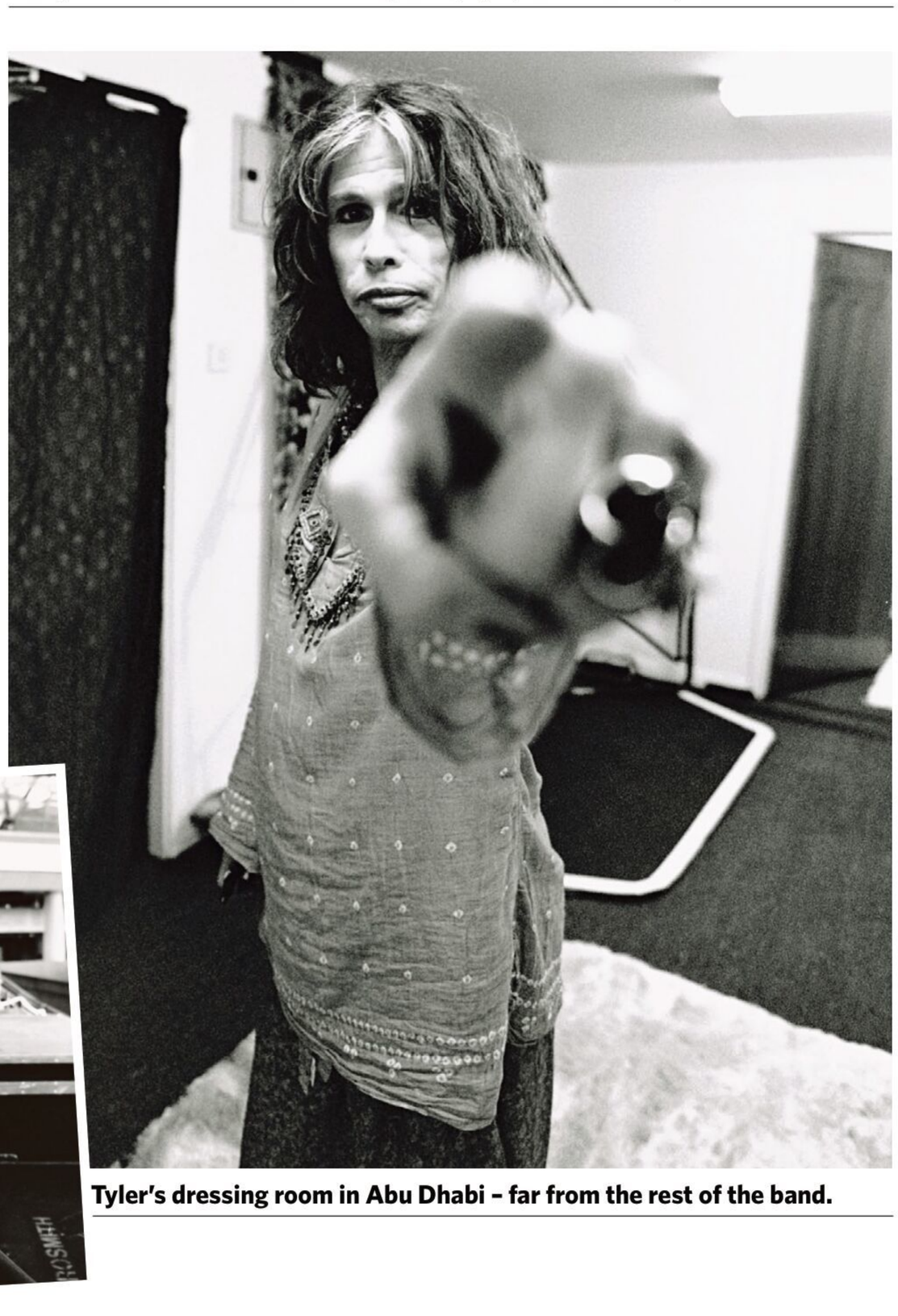
There have been quite a few stories querying Tyler's state of health in recent years, one of the most famous being his appearance at the MAP awards in May 2008 giving Slash an award for sobriety. As one onlooker observed: "He was so wasted that he didn't know where he was and completely incoherent."

Meanwhile, some of the singer's friends in recovery have come up to the plate to confirm that there was a time when the troubled singer took his recovery very seriously.

"I remember when I played with Aerosmith at the Marquee and Donington in 1990 they really ➔



Perry at soundcheck in Abu Dhabi, and (right) with his wife, Billie.



Tyler's dressing room in Abu Dhabi – far from the rest of the band.

> Tyler seems edgy about *Classic Rock*'s appearance in Abu Dhabi. "Once the show is over I'll tell you the full story," he promises. It never happens.

"Nobody could replace Steven – but if someone was willing to do it, why not?"

– Brad Whitford

LIVE SHOT: MICKHUTSON/GETTY

Sober reflection: Perry backstage and, right, the band at Donington, 1990. "Inspiring to be around," says Jimmy Page. Below: Tyler with girlfriend Erin Brady.

embraced their sobriety," recalls Jimmy Page. "This is before I got clean and it was inspiring to be around."

"I'm the only sober member of the band at the moment," one of the group tells me off the record, and it is hard to gauge the band's current state of health. One of them openly drinks and there are suspicions that it's not only Tyler who is indulging in a bit of self-medication, which would seem to make their current hostility towards him a bit hypocritical.

As Tim Cain of the *Illinois Herald* pointed out: "It's interesting to watch Aerosmith throw Steven Tyler under the bus, then man the wheels of the bus to back over him a couple of times to make sure that he's down. Is the pot calling the kettle black here?"

It seems that in an effort to win back the trust of the industry, Aerosmith painted themselves into a corner with an image that was championed by an over-zealous manager and not totally supported by the rest of the band. It's a sorry state of affairs that they have recently hit the headlines not because of their stunning live shows or a number one album but due to the fact that their frontman took a dive from the stage and then a few days later was captured on YouTube buying booze. For the likes of Keith Richards this sort of behaviour is mandatory. For Tyler it's a faux pas that seems to have sent them spiralling into another personal rock bottom.

REX FEATURES

"It's so sad that the breaking up of the band is due to the same things as before: drugs and girlfriends," laments Billie Perry. "You would think that people would learn from past mistakes. I guess history just repeats itself. It's so selfish because it involves four other mates."

"We can't sit around waiting for Steven," Joe Perry says firmly, sounding like a man losing his patience. "It's not fair to the rest of the guys. This is an important year for us and we need to get out there, tour and celebrate our anniversary."

The rest of the band has already put out the feelers for potential frontmen. *Classic Rock* can confirm that Billy Idol, Chris Cornell and Paul Rodgers have all been approached. Lenny Kravitz, meanwhile, has already publicly turned down an offer out of apparent loyalty to Tyler, a family friend.

"It would be great to find some fresh talent but in all honesty we need to find someone with a track record or we wouldn't be able to get decent-sized venues," admits Perry. "If we got someone like Chris Cornell then we could do some of each other's material, put on a great show and go out for a respectable fee."

So would Aerosmith *sans* Tyler work? Judging from the postings on the

Abu Dhabi, November 1, 2009. Could this be the last live shot of Steven Tyler with Aerosmith?

internet most fans are totally appalled at the thought. "There is no Aerosmith without Steven Tyler!" seems to be the unanimous verdict.

"It's big shoes: nobody could replace Steven, he's one of a kind," agrees Whitford, adding, "but if somebody was willing to do it and the chemistry was right, why not?"

Perry is also aware that the band's career is time-limited, some members are totally dependent on money made from touring, and as he so eloquently puts it, "the end is closer than the beginning".

"I grew up in an era when a band lasted two or three years and then died – literally. Janis, Jimi, and Jim…" Perry reflects. "Five years after Aerosmith got back together I realised how fragile we are as humans. There was a time I thought we were bullet proof but then things happened and I came to a realisation that I had to play every gig as if it was my last show."

Perry admits that the door will always be open for Tyler: "It would be great to do a special concert to celebrate our 40th anniversary and if Steven wants to show up and sing a couple of songs, he will always be welcome."

"My ideal scenario would be to put to put Aerosmith back on track," agrees Whitford. "We're in the twilight of our career so it would be nice to do it right. No one person in this band is going to make anything as big as Aerosmith," he adds, laughing. "It's not going to happen."

At the time of going to press there has been another strange twist to this ever-evolving story. According to certain sources, Aerosmith will be regrouping in the spring to rehearse for a series of large shows in 2010. This coincides with when Tyler completes his stint in rehab. To add fuel to the fire it seems that Perry has cancelled some mooted European and Japanese dates (just leaving the UK part of the tour intact). If this is true then the first date for the re-formed Aerosmith, with or without Tyler, will more than likely be in April at the forthcoming International Show Of Peace Concert in China at Beijing's famous Bird's Nest Stadium (the venue for the last Olympics). Perry has claimed that, in fact, he – not Aerosmith – will be playing, but the rumours persist. Certainly, Aerosmith still appear on the event's official website as one of the 'invited' artists .

(The thought occurs that perhaps all of this is just another form of intervention – a way of shocking Tyler into action and rehab – but *Classic Rock* doesn't think so. Apart from anything else, that would happen behind closed doors, not with knives out in public.)

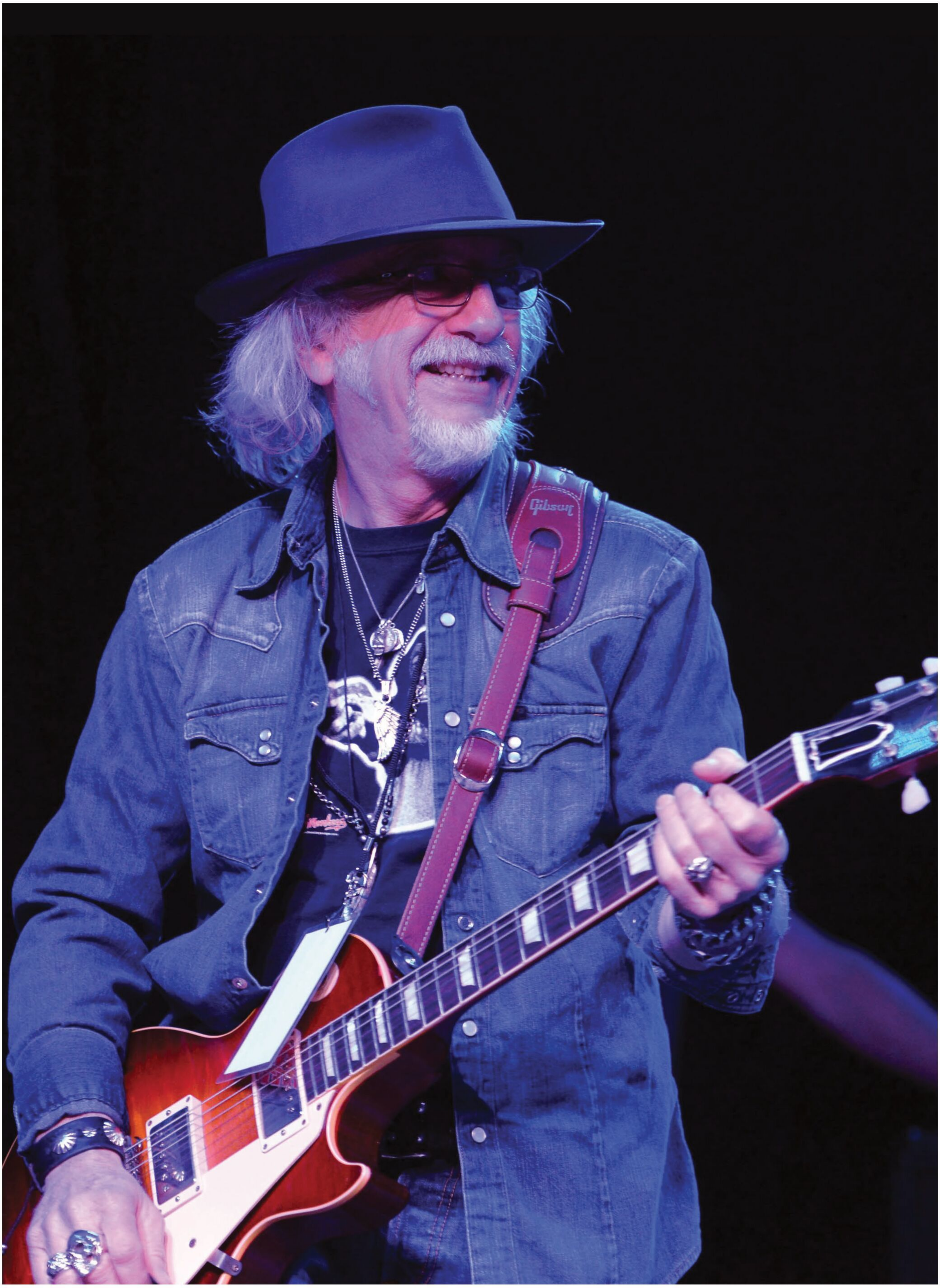
Of course, for Steven Tyler to front the band in China is dependent on him completing rehab, which is not a given (success rate for people completing treatment is between 30-50 percent) and wanting to rejoin the band. This does, at least, seem to be the case as Tyler confirmed in his most recent press statement: "I am eager to be back on the stage and in the recording studio with my bandmates."

"I think that over the years we've learned that the magic is in having five guys that work together, make music and put personalities aside," says Perry. "We may not be the best musicians in the world but there's a certain thing that meshes together and it gets stronger with time. We're at our strongest when we're playing together. We're kinda like a family by choice and as with most families you're not always on the best of terms. So you've got to figure out how to make it work because you're bonded together. Families are bonded by blood – bands are bonded together by the magic of being able to make music."

"It's like a marriage," concludes Tyler. "Some of us don't get along but when we're on stage we sure as fuck do and that's all that really matters. Right?"

"Some of us don't get along but when we're on stage we sure as fuck do..."

– Steven Tyler


Gibson

Q&A

Brad Whitford

In 2016, Aerosmith's guitarist reunited with Derek St Holmes for the first **Whitford/St Holmes** album in nearly 40 years. The pair sat down talk about rekindling a musical partnership.

Words: **Malcolm Dome** Portrait: **Scott Dudelson/Getty Images**

In 1981, Brad Whitford and Derek St Holmes teamed up and recorded the *Whitford/St Holmes* album. Given the two guitarists' pedigrees with Aerosmith and Ted Nugent respectively, it was a highly anticipated collaboration, and the album was packed with commendable anthemic blues rock. But the project quickly faded when Whitford rejoined Aerosmith in 1983 and St Holmes returned to working with Nugent. Recently the two guitarists re-formed Whitford/St Holmes and released the melodic, energetic *Reunion*, a record which shows they've got a contemporary streak.

Why have you reunited now?
Brad Whitford: That's down to geography. For years the two of us have lived in different cities. But now we're both just outside of Nashville, so it seemed only natural to hook up. We began hanging out, jamming and playing around town.
Derek St Holmes: It was never our plan to restart this band. But we were coming up with so many great song ideas that we thought we should go into a studio and see what happened. So we did a few songs, and some worked, others didn't. But we were inspired enough to get a line-up together and take it seriously.

What do you see in each other that makes this work?
BW: Working with Derek is so easy. He puts the music before anything, and is very encouraging. On this album, for the first time I have written lyrics. And he really pushed me to do it. Derek took what I had done and has literally made it work. He wants to bring out the best in me.
DSH: We are both Pisces and our birthdays are one day apart. And it's amazing how much we think alike. We'll turn up both wearing the same colour clothing, or with the same colour guitar strap. We have that sort of close relationship.

Will the band be a long-term thing?
BW: I think it will be. I have a lot of time available now Aerosmith are working less and less. We want to tour not only in the States but also in Europe, and we've been in the studio already doing tracks for a new album.
DSH: I see this as a new band for both of us, and one we want to make work in any way we can. Ted Nugent is very excited by what I'm doing. So much so that when I told him I wouldn't be available to tour with him later in the year due to Whitford/St Holmes commitments he was completely supportive of what I am doing. We are already working on the next album. And we desperately want to tour in England. We never got there first time around. A lot of our sound comes from English bands.

"Being in Aerosmith has opened doors, but it's been a collosal pain in the ass." – Brad Whitford

Why did Whitford/St Holmes last for just one album the first time around?
DSH: When we got to the end of our touring schedule, Brad was asked to return to Aerosmith and Ted wanted me back. We felt we had to do those things. Brad has lasted a long time with his band, because they're smart guys. Ted… well, he was and still is very self-centred, which is why I have been in and out of his band.
BW: It kinda imploded. We did a US tour, and then Derek got the call to rejoin Nugent and I went back to Aerosmith. Maybe that's why it feels so fresh now, because we were only together for such a short time.

You've both worked with mercurial characters. How do you cope with that?
BW: Ha! It's not easy. I have had to deal with massive egos in Aerosmith, and arguments about who is more famous than who. To get anything done you have to find your way through a minefield. Sometimes I wonder how I've coped. Part of it is the money I've earned, which has been very big. And also being in Aerosmith, the doors have opened. But it's been a colossal pain in the ass.
DSH: I suppose I know how to keep my mouth shut around Ted. I have learnt over the years to let him have enough rope to hang himself, and then come in to try and rescue him. Ted is a lot kinder to me these days, but his ego is still enormous. However, let's not forget that Ted is a very strong guitarist, which makes it worthwhile. Well, partly worth it, anyway.

Brad, do you have any plans to wrote an autobiography, like other members of Aerosmith have done?
BW: Everything that can be said about Aerosmith has already been written, so I won't do another book like that. However, I am working on a science-fiction novel. As a kid I was fascinated with UFOs, and I began to write a screenplay based around this interest. But now I think it will work better as a book. And I also have plans for a second one.

Derek, how do you feel about David St Hubbins in Spinal Tap being named after you?
DSH: I love it. The guys behind *Spinal Tap* came on the road for a week when Ted was out with Kiss, and then they came for another week when we toured with AC/DC. They made lots of notes, and got some of the ideas used in the film from us. And why do you think the bassist is called Derek Smalls? I'm sure they decided to call him Derek after me.

You've both already done a lot musically. Do you still have any unfulfilled musical ambitions?
BW: Being in Whitford/St Holmes again is enough for me. This is the best band I've ever been in. But I am constantly getting fresh inspiration from young bands like Rival Sons. They prove rock'n'roll is still exciting. And that spurs me on.
DSH: Brad and I are planning to do a contemporary blues album after the next Whitford/St Holmes one. Our idea is to pull in people like Buddy Guy and Walter Trout. And those are the sort of musicians I would love to work with. Walter has already says he'll do it.

American Idol. Led Zeppelin. Brand Tyler.

HAS STEVEN TYLER GOTTEN TOO BIG FOR ROCK'N'ROLL?

Words: **Ken McIntyre**
Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

In 2012, *Classic Rock* flew to California to get the latest chapter in the career of **Aerosmith**, America's biggest rock band: a story of splits and reunions, drugs and sobriety, rock'n'roll and bad feet...

"Is this article about me on drugs again?"

I'M

sitting with Steven Tyler in a white-walled function room in a hotel on the Sunset Strip. The room has been hastily decorated to give it a thrift-store psychedelic vibe: Afghan rugs are tacked to the walls; a grand piano is littered with topless anime figures.

Like most people in Los Angeles, Tyler looks at least 10 years younger than he should. He's wearing open-toed sandals that give a gruesome glimpse of the horrors that lurk below his ankles: his toes wrap around each other at crazy angles, in clear defiance of their natural order. It is these toes, mangled beyond recognition from decades of athletic stadium derring-do, that have got us here today, in more ways than one. Tyler's left foot was operated on a couple of years back. They straightened some toes, got him walking without blinding pain again. They also gave him fistfuls of high-powered painkillers, the kind of pills that can send an addict back into the fevers of full-blown fiending. The kind of pills that can make a man fall off a stage and break his face. The kind of pills that can break up a band.

All of this happened and more, including the inevitable high-fiving reunion. The result is *Music From Another Dimension*, Aerosmith's first album of original material since 2001's *Just Push Play*. That's really the story here. Unfortunately you have to wade through mountains of gossipy Hollywood bullshit to get there.

Since the 70s, press coverage of Aerosmith has always focused first on the druggy antics of the Toxic Twins, at the expense of the music. It's so ingrained in them at this point that Tyler automatically spews facts and figures about who got sober first.

So, is this article about Steven Tyler, millionaire drug addict? That's up to Steven Tyler, really. In fact I never even asked him about drugs.

I had to travel 3,000 miles to talk to a bunch of guys who live in my neighbourhood. If you live in Boston and you want to talk to Aerosmith about their new record – or anything else – it's remarkably easy to do. They're around. Everyone I know who grew up here has an Aerosmith story, but they're small, human stories: tiny conversations in line at the movie theatre; impromptu games of touch football on lazy Sundays; sharing a burger at the diner.

About 20 years ago, I ran into Joe Perry at the grocery store at 3am. I felt compelled to tell him that of all the Aerosmith rip-off bands, Smack were the best. He nodded and grabbed his bag of Fritos. All the big rock'n'roll shit – groupies, rehab, TV shows, open-air festivals – they do all that somewhere else. In Boston, like the rest of us, they take it easy and mind their own business. So I can see why they'd want to hold a press junket in LA; complimentary bottles of Voss water and interviews conducted on director's chairs would just seem stupid back home.

It's my first trip to Los Angeles so, naturally, I fuck it all up. My hotel room is half an hour away from where Aerosmith are, so on the morning of the interviews I walk there. This is a perfectly sensible thing to do in Boston, but in Los Angeles it's a fatal error. Everything is so far apart that 30 minutes soon stretches to 60. And despite being mid-September, it's one of hottest days of the year, peaking at 106 degrees.

By the time I get there, a sweaty, broiled mess, I'm just in time to meet Ross Halfin, *Classic Rock*'s photographer for the story and one of Britain's most legendary rockarazzi. I sip Diet Coke and nibble on bacon at a table headed by Ross and flanked by two Japanese stewardesses, Joe Perry's 'right-hand man' and a blonde Sony executive. I am mostly ignored, unless I'm getting grilled by the notoriously prickly Halfin. It goes like this:

"So, you call yourself Sleazegrinder?"

"Yep." (Confession time: on more frivolous engagements, I do indeed call myself Sleazegrinder.)

"That's a ridiculous name."

"Okay."

"Where are you from?"

"Boston."

"Ugh. I hate Boston. It's like England, only more boring."

"You know, this is my first time in LA."

"How the fuck is this your first time in LA? Was it your first time on an aeroplane, too?"

So, that was breakfast.

"I was in hospital and no one called. It really hurt."

Steven Tyler

Suave and sober: "I'm on fire right now," Tyler says.

Steven Tyler and Joe Perry: the De-toxed Twins.

Later on I'm led into a waiting room deep within the labyrinthine courtyard of the hotel. It's International Press Day, so I spend the next four hours making (very) small talk with Japanese journalists and two friendly Germans who write for heavy metal magazines. A lifetime later, when I'm finally ushered in to talk to Joe Perry, I'm so relieved to be talking to another local that Boston is, naturally, the first topic of conversation. And for good reason, really. There are very few bands in operation so closely identified with the town they're from. For decades, they've been the pride of Boston, along with the Red Sox and our ridiculous accent. To this day, on the streets of our city you can get punched for uttering a discouraging word about the band, or get laid for a righteous 'Smith logo tattoo.

"The funny thing is, we always felt like outsiders in Boston, even though we had lots of friends in local bands," says Perry, describing Aerosmith's early club days in the late 60s. "We never played there that much. We didn't want to play five nights a week, we weren't a cover band, and there was no real rock scene at the time. There just wasn't a place for us. You covered rock songs on the radio or there just wasn't any interest."

It wasn't until the band broke through nationally with their 1973 debut album that their home town finally took notice and Aerosmith became Boston's new favourite band.

"That's true, even though there was a band in town called Boston," Perry grins. "I always thought that was interesting. They were never really a band. And I think that speaks volumes about that underground energy we had. Even though they were from Boston and they were all Boston guys, people knew it was really Tom Scholz. He wrote the songs and found a few talented guys and put these incredibly successful pop records out, but they weren't a 'band' to speak of. But with us, we *were* a band. We weren't looked at as a Boston band, though. By the fans, yeah, but not by the media. Not for years."

Perry, like most of Aerosmith, still has a home in Boston. More importantly, he still considers it home. But he's still pissed off about the club days.

"I grew up there, and I've lived there my whole life. But I don't feel like we're part of Boston's musical history, no. I just feel like we were always considered the outsiders. Again, by the media. The fans have always been there for us. But we were selling out 5,000-seat halls in Detroit long before we were selling houses half that size in Boston."

Perry – who still looks like the square-jawed, guitar-slinging bad-ass from 1975 – is Aerosmith's most disarming member. Thoughtful and introspective, his quiet, cool demeanour belies the decades of physical, chemical and financial wreckage his band have survived through these past 40 years. He just doesn't seem like the lizard-in-a-bottle type. I have a note in my pocket that says: "See if Joe is sober." I don't bother to ask – he looks pretty bright-eyed to me – but I do wonder out loud why people still care.

"Well, we kind of opened that door," he says. "I think a big part of it was people had to know we were on the level, because we had to cancel so many shows when we were fucked up and we weren't playing great. The last shows before I left the band [in 1979], some nights would be great, but some nights just weren't. Every night has to be great, and we just weren't living up to our own standards. So the band just had to rethink everything. We'd reached a certain level, and it's like, what do we do now? There's only

"The secret to this is that we love playing together."

Steven Tyler

American idols: Tyler and Perry in the 1980s.

GETTY X2

a handful of bands that have stuck together as long as we have. Everybody else died or broke up, and that was it. So when we came back in the 80s, not only are we going to get back together, but we're going to tell everybody we're sober. We had to. We'd burned a lot of bridges. So that part followed us around. And the tension between Steven and I, all through the 70s, that followed us too. And it made for good press. 'How could they be that way? How could they be on stage and make records together and still be at each other's throats?'"

Well, that *is* a good question.

"It's pathetic. We just can't find anything better to do," laughs bassist Tom Hamilton. "Really, we're just five guys that love playing with each other. It's worth all the trouble."

Hamilton, guitarist Brad Whitford and drummer Joey Kramer are the unsung heroes of Aerosmith. The fact that they're doing their interview together, in a tinier, colder room, during their lunch hour, no less, stands as a testament to that. These are the guys who deliver the goods, without pageantry or complaint.

"That's our job," Hamilton shrugs. "In any band, someone's got to fill that role, and somebody's got to be the peacock."

"I was angry at the guys. I wanted to kill them."

Steven Tyler

It's been a very eventful few years for Aerosmith's preening peacock, Steven Tyler. In August 2009 he fell off the stage in Sturgis, South Dakota, breaking his shoulder and cracking his skull. It was assumed his mishap was drug-related. Maybe it was, and maybe it wasn't. Even he's not sure.

"Yeah, I fell off the stage during the ZZ Top tour. I only went on that tour because I thought the band was over. Six months before that I was at Las Encinas [rehab centre] and I couldn't walk. I went to a pain management clinic for my feet and they said: 'Here, take this.' So I was taking that stuff, it's true. But I think I only had a beer before that gig, and I fell off the stage. My girlfriend said: 'You weren't even high that night! Why'd you tell them that?' Well, I had to tell them *something*."

The incident sparked rumours that Tyler was leaving the band to pursue a solo career. Soon after, while the band were on tour in Abu Dhabi, Tyler appeared to confirm people's suspicions.

"It was the last couple shows and we were in Abu Dhabi, and I did an interview with some English rag [Er, that would be *Classic Rock* – Ed.] and I said: 'I need some time to think. I need some time' – and this is the part that the guys obviously heard – 'I need time to work on Brand Tyler.' What does that mean? Interestingly enough, Brand Tyler is what got me *American Idol*. I'm the guy who wrote *Dream On*. That's what I am. But to hear it put in those terms? It scared the hell out of the band, and they said a lot of bad stuff about me afterward. It didn't mean anything, though. I mean, it's interesting: Joe does solo records. Isn't that Brand Perry?"

A day after the Brand Tyler comments went viral, Joe Perry was playing a gig in New York with the Joe Perry Project when an impromptu reunion occurred. Tyler says: "I was living at [daughter] Liv's house. She was off doing a movie, so I was in Greenwich Village, working on my book, doing OxyContin [a narcotic pain reliever] and waiting for some blow to come in so I could spend Christmas there and do cocaine again.

"The thing is, I heard what the guys were saying about me, and I was mad at them. Listen, I fell off the stage, I cracked my skull, I tore my shoulder, and I was in the hospital. And nobody called me. It really hurt me. It hurt me bad. I didn't say anything, but I was angry at the guys and I was still high. I wanted to kill them.

"I found out that Joe was playing in New York, and I got into a limo with a bunch of my friends. I looked on the internet for what songs he was doing, and I figured an hour into his set he'd probably be breaking and going into *Walk This Way*. Well thought out for a guy that was living at my daughter's house, still snorting Lunesta [sedative].

"I went because I didn't like the rumours that were going around that they were looking for another singer. Short of getting a gun and shooting someone, I didn't know what kind of press I could do, or cannonball I could shoot out of, or rock in the pond of life I could ripple out of to let them know how I felt. So I thought, I'll go down, walk in and do the encore. And that's what I did.

"I looked out at the audience and they roared when they saw me and Joe together. I said: 'The ↦

Aerosmith in the mid 70s: warning, may contain drugs.

band is not broken up.' Then I said some fantastic thing about: 'Joe, you may wear a coat of many colours but I, motherfucker, am the rainbow.' I said something like that. I know it was interesting at the time. It was so off the cuff, but I hated everyone thinking that Aerosmith was over. I knew it wasn't."

He was right. But first there was more rehab, a solo pop single (*It Feels So Good*), and a stint on reality TV as a season-long judge of singing competition *American Idol*. By 2011 Brand Tyler had come into full flower. "I went to Betty Ford, and six months later I did *American Idol*. I honestly did it because my feet hurt. But I was doing *Idol*, I was on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, my book was coming out, I had a hit single. That was all from getting sober."

Meanwhile, his band were still scrambling for something to do, and the rumours of a Tyler-less Aerosmith heated up once again. From the band's perspective, though, that was never a real option.

"I was just being practical," says Perry. "At the time, Steven was going through a mountain of personal stuff, and basically he said he wanted to take two years off. He didn't know what he wanted to do, but he wanted to take two years off to do 'Brand Tyler'. So the rest of us are on the phone going: 'What are we going to do for two years? The band's playing great, let's talk about getting another singer until Steven comes back. Would we call it Aerosmith? No, it wouldn't be Aerosmith. Should we even talk about doing that, or should we just take the time off?' I wanted to work on the Joe Perry Project anyway.

"Somewhere in there, a few quotes hit the media and then it exploded. But it was strictly a matter of Steven wanting to take a couple of years off and us sitting around wondering what we're gonna do. It was all just talk, that's all it was. It was never etched in stone, and it just never felt right."

"It never went further than discussion, but we had to talk about it," says Kramer. "The reality is that we have always been at least ready to go, in some fashion or another, crippled, hobbling along or in full gear. We've always been ready: let's go do a record; let's go tour. But now, all of a sudden, Steven had a job. And it was like, he's gonna be busy a lot. So we talked about it. It never went beyond that. But even if it did, it would never have been Aerosmith."

GETTY X3

Tyler's stint on *American Idol* fuelled rumours of an Aerosmith break-up.

Tyler's success on *Idol* propelled him to mainstream fame, but it was clearly not a permanent gig. Tyler claims that he mostly used the experience to promote his autobiography, *Does The Noise In My Head Bother You?*. And when the season was over, he quit.

"*American Idol* made us a household name," Perry says, "but Steven wasn't doing what he was meant to do. He can be really funny at a party, but put him on a panel like that and that's not really what he wants to do. He can do it, but that's not where his heart is. His heart is in singing in front of 10 or 20,000 people. But he did it, and now there's a whole new batch of kids finding out what Aerosmith really is."

"At first I think the band was mad at me for doing *Idol*," Tyler says. "I knew it would be good for us, but I didn't know if I would be ostracised and sent to the cornfield or what. But at the time, I was feeling great. I started writing these songs with Marti [Frederiksen] and it felt so good. But I started feeling pressure from my label, who said that if you want to go solo – and I did – you gotta get off Sony first; you gotta do one more album. So I woke up one morning and I thought, I should call Jack [Douglas, producer]. I had just gotten out of Betty Ford six months earlier, and Jack was sober too, so I thought: 'Call Jack!'

"I remember I was at the Laurel Canyon country store and I called him up and said: 'Listen, Joe's still high, but we've got to do this.' And Jack joined forces. He's the sixth member of the band. I just thought, whatever we've gotta do, whatever we've got, we've got to do this album and get off Sony. And I knew Jack could do it. So I called Joe and Tom and Brad and Joey. I said: 'I promise you, Joey, we'll get a song a day. Brad, Tom, I promise you, and we can start this album off by all of us having songs that we wrote on it.' I knew that would tweak their dial.

"After *Idol* was over, I went back to Boston, Jack joined us and the rest is history. It's that simple. We

"I live for Aerosmith. I need to sing. That's what I do."

Steven Tyler

Tyler and Perry in 2012: "I don't see a time when we all go, 'That's it.'"

got sober, that's it. We were there before, but we weren't *really* there. Now we are. People will see the difference on stage between me then and now. I'm on fire right now. Joe's off the drugs he was on three years ago, the cocksucker, and me too – we're now back in a room talking to each other. I'm not talking to the drugs, he's not talking to the drugs.

"There's another thing I realised: what if this is gonna be our last record, and what's it gonna take to get Joe back and Brad back? I need to get sober first, and the rest will follow."

The *Music From Another Dimension* album really is a patchwork affair. A collection of old songs and half-forgotten licks written by Tyler and Perry, alongside new songs penned by various band members and outsiders like Desmond Child and Marti Frederiksen, who also helped produce several of the tracks.

Production on the album originally began in 2003. The band were still riding the waves of their enormously successful 80s comeback at that point. 2001's *Just Push Play* was a platinum-selling smash anchored by a US Top 10 hit, *Jaded*. Tanned, rested and ready, the band set out to create another radio-rattling monster. But from here on, things got rough.

"This album wasn't like *Chinese Democracy*," says Tom Hamilton, anticipating my comparison, "because it wasn't officially under way all this time. The record's always been in the future. For some of us it couldn't come any sooner; for some of us it was, 'Let it happen when it happens. Let's just hit the road and have a blast.' I'm very attracted to both of those ideas. But finally we got to the moment, and it was great to do it. A new record is a big missing link in our equation."

"We tried to make this record probably three times," says Perry. "When you go to make a record, there are certain protocols that are met. You've got a record deal, and the label gives you a certain amount of money to make it. Money goes out to the producer, goes out here and there, so as soon as you start making it the machinery starts. That happened three times before we actually made the record."

One early attempt involved Rick Rubin. Or "Whassisname… that fat guy," as Steven Tyler calls him. "We went in the studio with him one night to see how it would work," Perry remembers. "That was miserable. We just didn't click."

Because of Rubin? "Because of us. We were still getting fucked up. We weren't in the right place head-wise. We were just realising we were a band again and that we were able to work together, but we were still fucked up. That's why we had to make a big deal of telling the world we were clean, because nobody was buying it at that point. So when we went in with Rick and had this horrible session, I remember waking up the next day and calling Steven and saying: 'This is shit. We suck.' Obviously we worked with him on Run DMC but, like I said, we've known him for years but it just didn't click."

Soon after, the band got in touch with an old friend: Jack Douglas. Douglas produced most of the band's 70s albums and is considered by everyone involved to be the 'sixth member' of Aerosmith. If anyone could rally the troops, it was him.

Unfortunately it turned out that nobody was in the mood for rallying, so instead they recorded an album of blues covers, 2004's *Honkin' On Bobo*. It may have been a fun exercise for the blooze-loving band, but it wasn't exactly what the hard-core 'Smith fans were after.

"Getting into the studio with Jack and doing the *Honkin' On Bobo* record, that was supposed to be this record," says Perry. "We got into a room, turned the tape machine on and it almost happened by mistake. We were playing at my place in Boston, the Boneyard. The five of us got in there with Jack, and by then it became pretty clear we weren't going to be able to buckle down. Nobody was in the right

DID STEVEN TYLER JOIN LED ZEPPELIN?

Rumours abound that the singer and the Zep legends were forming a dream team.

The last couple of years have found Aerosmith swamped by every rumour imaginable: Lenny Kravitz was their new singer; everybody was high; everybody was sober; the band was broken up; the band was back together again. One of the more interesting whispers doing the rounds suggested that Steven Tyler had been asked by Jimmy Page to join Led Zeppelin for a tour and possibly an album. That one is not entirely true, Tyler explains. But sorta.

"I went over and played with Jimmy and the rest of them [in summer 2008]. It wasn't an audition to be in Zeppelin, it was an audition to play with Zeppelin. We were gonna do a couple of stadiums. And then while I was there, Jimmy spoke to me about maybe doing an album. I went home and thought about it for a couple days, and I got back to him and said: 'Look, Jimmy, you're in an iconic band and so am I. I can't, in good faith, leave my band and be in your band.'

"We played all day for a week. Every time we took a break I smoked a cigar and Jimmy smoked a cigarette. We went out back and I spoke with Jimmy about everything on the planet. It started out with: 'Jimmy, you have no idea how grateful I am to have the chance to come over and jam with you guys.' And he goes: 'Well, maybe we can play some shows together.' And I said: 'Stop right there. I'm playing in a band with John Paul Jones?'

"They let me sing every song I wanted – *Black Dog*, *Stairway To Heaven*. But it was just a week. And yeah, Jimmy asked me to do some stuff with him. But I didn't want to be Coverdale/Page. Plus I figured in the time it would take to do that, I could rally my own band together.

"So, was I gonna be in Jimmy's band? No. But what an honour."

"For five months, I locked myself in and wrote songs."

Steven Tyler

Perry: "It doesn't matter if I wrote the riffs yesterday or 20 years ago..."

HALFIN X2

"I don't foresee a time when we'd pack it in."

Joe Perry

headspace. There was family stuff going on here, there was physical stuff going on there, we had just come off the road, the timing wasn't right. But we did have time to do *Honkin' On Bobo*. What that gave us was a chance to work with Jack, and a chance to work on music in a room together, which we hadn't done in years. We had the freedom of not writing anything new, we got to play a bunch of our old favourite songs, we got to be creative in the studio, and it gave us something to tour behind. But it wasn't the record we wanted to make."

"Jack was great," Tyler remembers. "Even though some of us were still using at the time, it was obvious to me that there was a chance. So you know what? Even if we were still high, one of the great things about Jack is, as long as he was sober, even if we were all high, he would have gotten something out of us."

Honkin' On Bobo hit the shelves in March 2004. The rest of the decade, and a chunk of this one, had been dedicated mostly to nonsense, to reality shows and pratfalls and inter-band bickering. There were fitful studio sessions, a legacy tour, some health scares, Brand Tyler, and the Great Replacement Singer Fiasco. But eventually, in 2011, the band got back in the studio and finished the record. Everyone in the band unanimously thanks Jack Douglas for dragging them to the finish line.

"We were all of mutual mind, wanting to do the record," says Kramer. "We had a couple of false starts, but what sealed it for us was when Jack came on board. With Jack back, it's comfortable, like an old shoe."

"Everybody trusts Jack," says Hamilton. "The fact that he's going to be the producer eliminates a lot of what keeps us out of the studio. When everybody is on board with using Jack, it's like, what a relief, now we know what the project's going to be like and everyone can relax and get a chance to have a voice on the record."

"He brings fun to the table, and when you have fun doing something it usually comes out pretty good," adds Kramer.

"We have a lot of laughs with him. We were all in the room together playing. That's how we did the tracks, we did them all live again. That's how we made *Rocks* and *Toys In The Attic*. We did it that way. This time, everything fell into place. Everybody had the same hunger and wanted to do it at the same time. Being in a room together, having a good time, with Jack producing, those are the main ingredients for this album."

Of course, a cynic might say those aren't the only ingredients: that there are also a few reheated leftovers involved and, in classic Aerosmith tradition, a sprinkling of resentment as well. One issue that both Tyler and Perry are clearly sensitive about is how vintage some of the songs are. Sure, they're 'new' in the just-released sense, but a good portion of the Tyler/Perry numbers on *Dimension* were reworked from previous songcrafting sessions.

"I took a couple licks that I knew we had there," notes Tyler. "They were just sitting there. The song *Out Go The Lights* was originally *Bobbing For Piranha* [from the 1989 sessions for *Pump*], but I just never wrote lyrics to it. It was a great Joe Perry lick, and I arranged it with the band a gazillion years ago, but we never added any lyrics and I knew the lick was so good. Jimmy Page would have paid good money for it. All I had to do was finish it. So for five months I just locked myself in and wrote the songs."

"All those times getting started, getting ready to make a new record, there were more and more demos building up," adds Perry. "Songs, ideas, riffs. We went in with all this material, and some of it, it just wasn't the right time. As far as I'm concerned, a piece of music is done when we've finished it, when it's been recorded, mixed, mastered. It doesn't matter if I wrote the riff yesterday or 20 years ago. Some people don't get that. They say: 'Well, it was written way back when, so it must be a reject.' Well, that just isn't true. It just wasn't its time. That's obviously true, or the Rolling Stones wouldn't have a career, because half the songs on their early albums were old blues songs that were written years before. So you're going to tell me that because they were written by Willie Dixon back in 1944 that they're not good? I think the fact that there's riffs that I wrote 20 years ago floating around on the internet, that doesn't mean shit, because they weren't ready to be done."

Then there's the issue with the writing credits. *Music From Another Dimension* was supposed to be a group effort, but Tyler brought in some outside writers.

"Using outside writers is like being married forever and using a sex toy," Tyler explains. "Hello, it helps. Your wife's gonna scream again like she did in the beginning. Whatever it takes. But it's not like I didn't include the other guys too. I mean, I get it. Tom wrote a song with me, *Sweet Emotion*. But that was 40 years ago, and he still needs to feel part of it. You know, he's cried to me, 'No one listens to my songs, no one likes them.' But that's not it, man. It's that Joe and I went on a writing sabbatical and we came back with nine fuckin' slam dunks. But he still wants to feel part of it. Everybody wants to feel part of the band. Do I feel bad I didn't write another song with Tom after *Sweet Emotion*? Probably, but no. It was an era. But this time we came back and Tom had two songs, Joey wrote three by himself, we wrote a whole album together ourselves. Everybody's got a piece of it, and it makes the band feel better. It's like when you let your daughter sing for mom and dad. It seems silly, but it's true."

If that statement sounds dismissive – and it did – there's a good reason for that. Tyler's shadow looms large on *Dimension*. He had a hand in crafting nearly every song on the album, and a few of the album's oddest diversions – like the country-pop duet with Carrie Underwood, *Can't Stop Loving You* – were clearly his idea.

Fly boys: Captain Charisma and the All-American Guitar Hero.

"I don't see anything stopping us, short of one of us dropping dead," says Tyler.

GETTY

"I'm doing a solo record next. I just am."

Steven Tyler

"Steven knows her from *American Idol*," Perry shrugs. "I'd heard her sing, she's got the pipes, she's withstood the test of time. It wasn't like, the person that won last week or anything. And Steven felt very strongly about it musically, he really thought it would work. And I think that it did. Mainstream country is weird, but I just think when those two sing together it works. It sounds natural. Whatever happens with it, that's up to the fans."

"When we were doing this record, no one liked [power ballad] *Could Have Been Love*. Not Jack, not the band, no one," says Tyler. "They didn't like *Beautiful*, which I wrote with Marti, they didn't like the Carrie Underwood song. The band wanted to start all over. Once we got Jack in, they all felt like it was a shoo-in that they'd get their voices heard. But just because I had written all these songs, it didn't mean we couldn't do more."

And they did. Tyler collaborated with Whitford on *Street Jesus*, with Hamilton on *Tell Me*, and the whole band ultimately added to *Beautiful*'s swirly flavours. But in many ways it sounds like Tyler's record – and it probably is. Or at least a precursor.

"I'm doing a solo record next," Tyler casually mentions. "I just am."

How this affects the band is anybody's guess but, for the moment, spirits are buoyant.

"I don't see this band ending," says Kramer. "If we've come as far as we have with the amount of bullshit we've been through, both as a group and individually, I don't see anything stopping us, short of one of us dropping dead from a heart attack. There's no reason to stop. As we've shown ourselves once again, by virtue of doing this record, there's still lots of juice left."

Perry, who is currently working on his autobiography, agrees with his drummer. "There might be a time when the gigs get fewer and farther apart, but we're all in it," he says. "I don't foresee a time when we'd all go, 'That's it,' and just pack it in."

"Listen, I cannot command court in a fuckin' stadium. Because of my feet, I just can't do that any more," says Tyler. "It made me cry when I realised that. But clubs I can do, and we will. The secret to all this is that we love playing together. Or maybe we love building it up and taking it down again. No, it's not that," he corrects himself. "It's miracles. Maybe we just love making miracles."

With the interviews over, racks of shiny rock-star clothes are wheeled in for tomorrow's photoshoot. I'm not invited, nor am I invited to any Hollywood parties, soirees or happenings, with Aerosmith or anybody else. Even the German metal guy rejects me – he's going to see *True Romance* in a graveyard tonight, but you need a reservation, sorry. My day(s) of munching fried pig flesh with Japanese stewardesses has come to an unceremonious end. A lone-wolf Satan rocker friend picks me up and shows me around, pointing out all the impressive rock'n'roll landmarks and where the downtown midnight cannibal gangs lurk.

Once it gets dark we drive to the Griffith Observatory, so we can view Los Angeles in all its profane glory. From the top you can smell the fear, inhale the desperation in greasy lungfuls. All the last cowboys rushing to stake their claims before the whole ugly mess breaks off and splashes into the ocean. Millions of flickering lights, each one determined to shine brighter than the rest, even if it kills them or mangles their feet into mush.

I can see why Steven Tyler likes this place so much. I can also see why the rest of the band like to get on airplanes and fly back home. This is no place for boys from Boston, even notoriously bad ones. From up here, the band's conflict of interest becomes obvious. Blame it on the pills, *American Idol*, Carrie Underwood or whatever you want: Steven Tyler has become too big for rock'n'roll and maybe too big for Aerosmith as well. That might end the band, or it might make it stronger. Either way, you get the lasting impression that things are never going to be the way they were in 1972, or '82, or '92.

But no matter what happens next, they're still the skinny, snarly motherfuckers from Boston who wrote *Dream On* and (successfully) did more drugs than any other band, ever. They're still the best-selling American rock band of all time. And considering that rock is dead – at least as we know it – they always will be. And, most importantly, the fire still burns.

"I live for Aerosmith," Tyler told me, in a quiet, confessional moment. "I couldn't be a mechanic or a cook or even a piano tuner. I need to sing. That's what I do. I have grown these wings being in Aerosmith, and when we are not on tour my wings get heavy. I don't like walking around on earth. Because we've flown for 40 years together, my wings are heavy when I stand on earth."

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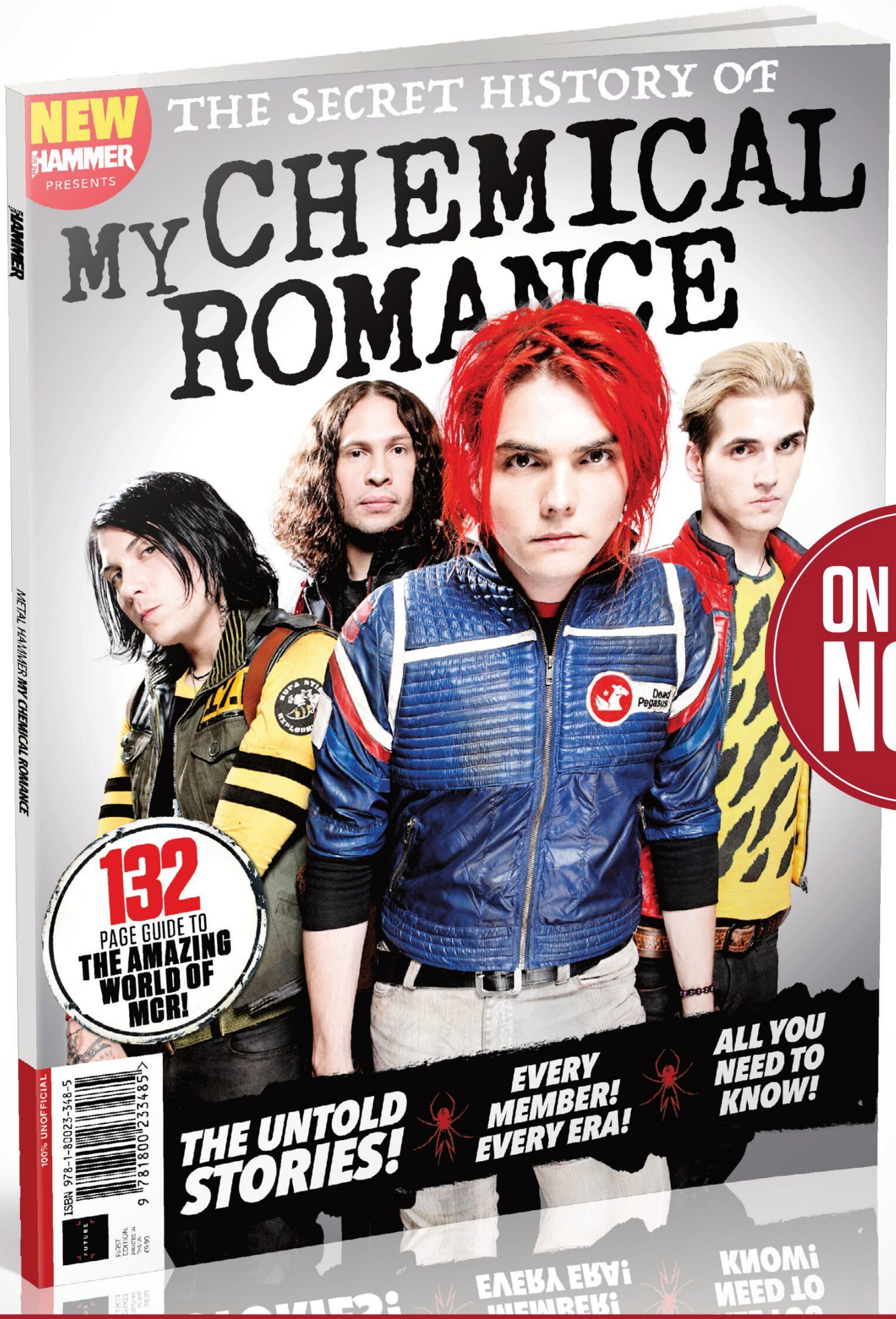

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THE Vampire DIARIES

The original **Hollywood Vampires** were the ultimate 70s hellraisers. Four decades on, Vampire-in-chief Alice Cooper resurrected them with help from Joe Perry and Johnny Depp. As we join them in LA, the trio reveal how this all-star supergroup rose from the grave.

Words: **Kevin Murphy** Pictures: **Ross Halfin**

Alice Cooper picks up a glass of beer, walks to the mic, then pauses momentarily while the packed audience takes his cue and attempt a respectful hush. "Alcohol and drugs killed a whole lot of Hollywood Vampires," he warns, before making a toast. "This is dedicated to our Dead Drunk Friends." Instantly the quiet is shattered by the raucous opening to the song that took its name from those dearly departed dipsomaniacs that inspired it.

It's the second of two sold-out nights at The Roxy for the Hollywood Vampires, an all-star group centered on the unlikely trio of Alice Cooper, Aerosmith's Joe Perry, and Rock City Angels' Johnny Depp, better known as movie star Johnny Depp. The previous night's show marked the live debut for the band that have just released their self-titled debut album. With only two original songs, the bulk of the record is devoted to an illustrious collection of cover versions that includes *Whole Lotta Love*, *My Generation*, *Jeepster* and *Cold Turkey*. The only common denominator among the eclectic selection is that at least one of the original artists who performed them is dead. Indeed death is a central theme for the Hollywood Vampires, who took their name from a legendary group of drinkers that in the 70s frequented the Rainbow Bar & Grill, the club that is within throwing-up distance of The Roxy, on LA's fabled Sunset Strip.

The fluid line-up of the original Hollywood Vampires included Keith Moon, Harry Nilsson, John Lennon, Mickey Dolenz, Ringo Starr and Bernie Taupin, while Alice Cooper was elected honorary president. For some of the original Vampires, the drinking that secured their membership ultimately proved fatal, while others managed to pull themselves back from the brink. Cooper was one of those who survived, and now, with the christening of this new venture inevitably conjuring up associations with the past, he recounts the origins of the group's name.

Big names for a big project: Depp, Perry and Manson.

Alice and Perry

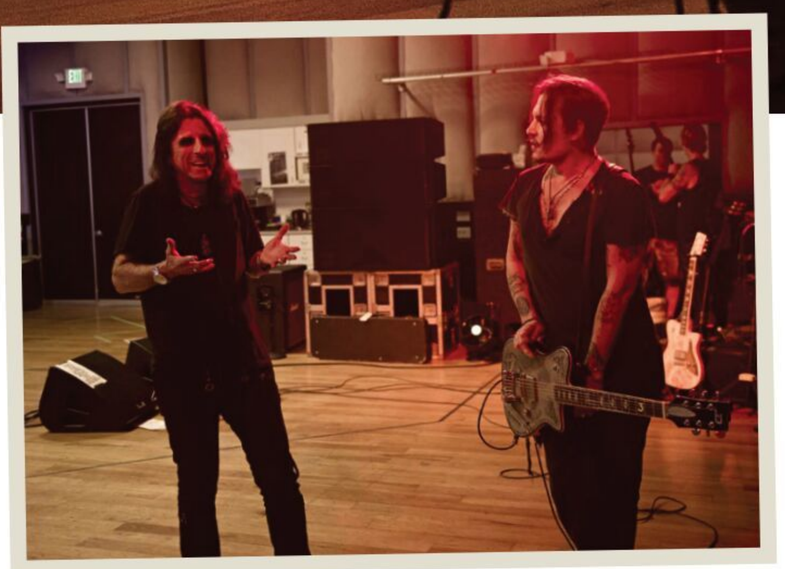
"When you went up to The Rainbow, they put all the rock stars and actors up in this loft, and they gave us the name The Hollywood Vampires because they said: 'We never see you during the day, and all you do is drink.' So it's more like we're drinking the blood of the vine, not the blood of the vein. They put a plaque up there, 'Roost of The Hollywood Vampires'."

The new incarnation of the Hollywood Vampires has a very different relationship with alcohol, one symbolised poignantly when, back at The Roxy, Alice turns his glass upside down and the contents remain in it, revealing it to be a prop of the stage variety, and not the prop that real alcohol once provided him with. Cooper's long battle with alcohol is a battle shared by his bandmates in the Hollywood Vampires; both Perry and Depp's struggles with drink have been well chronicled.

"Well, we're all still alcoholics," Perry admits. "I've never considered myself not. I just don't drink today. I don't know what I'm going to do tomorrow. I could just as easily pick up a drink tomorrow, y'know. It's like, the way I look at it, I have a choice every day: I can either give in to it, or not. That doesn't go away. It's always there."

Looking at the present-day group as they tear up The Roxy, making a mockery of their years and demons, these Vampires couldn't be more alive. As if the nucleus of Perry and Depp on guitars and Cooper on vocals didn't possess enough star power, the trio are joined on stage by Matt Sorum on drums and his rhythm buddy Duff McKagan on bass, plus Tommy Henriksen on guitar and Bruce Witkin on keyboards. And while the tiny Roxy was barely able to accommodate the seven-piece line-up, it would have required the vast stage of the nearby Hollywood Bowl to fit all the musicians who make guest appearances on the album. The impressive list includes Sir Paul McCartney, Dave Grohl, Joe Walsh, Slash, Robby Krieger, Brian Johnson, Perry Farrell and Zak Starkey. One ➢

Even the biggest stars get nervous: Depp, Perry, McKagan and (inset) Alice and Depp in the studio.



> "Back then it was fun being out of control, and now it's fun being in control."
>
> **ALICE COOPER**

other artist contributes to the record, and while not a musician his association with vampires is renowned. In what was his last recording before his death, actor Sir Christopher Lee recites the album's opening track, *The Last Vampire*. The record's pedigree is enhanced by its cover artwork, created by clothing designer John Varvatos, and the eloquent liner notes by Bernie Taupin.

The record and The Roxy shows are the outcome of an idea that was spawned more than four years ago. "I was doing *Dark Shadows* [2012's horror comedy] with Johnny in London," Cooper recalls. "One night we're going to go play the 100 Club, down on Oxford Street. I said: 'Johnny, when do you finish shooting tonight?' He said: 'Around six.' And I said: 'Well, either take your make-up off, or leave it on.' The ironic thing is that the movie *Dark Shadows* was about vampires. I said: 'Come down and play with us.' I knew he was a good guitar player; I mean, I'd seen him play. He came down, and we did a couple of Alice songs, and then somebody would yell out *Brown Sugar*, and we'd do that, and somebody would yell out, *Back In The U.S.S.R*, or something like that. Everything they yelled out, Johnny knew every song.

Hardly surprising, really, considering that prior to his acting career Depp had moved to Los Angeles with the express intention of scoring a record deal for his band The Kids, and he'd later spend time with Sunset Strip regulars Rock City Angels. "I picked up the guitar when I was twelve years old," Depp says. "I conned my mom into buying me an electric guitar for twenty-five dollars. And the first time I picked it up it was over with."

"In the downtime of the filming, we started talking about the Hollywood Vampires," says Alice. "And Johnny was kind of fascinated by the fact that these guys were all in one place at one time."

"So many stick out," Depp says, laughing, about the tales that Alice would tell of his time in the original Vampires. "They were always waiting for Keith Moon to arrive. And Keith Moon arrived as the Queen of England, waving in the same manner, full-on garb. And the next night he'd be fucking d'Artagnan or something, you know? So brilliant."

"It just came up," Alice continues: "Why don't we do a tribute to them? I've never done a covers album. It started out being an Alice Cooper cover. And then I realised that it really wasn't any more, now it was a band called the Hollywood Vampires."

Once the initial idea had been hatched, the two founding members soon found themselves a third member, although Joe Perry's involvement came about more by happenstance than by design, as the guitarist recalls: "Well, as fate would have it, I was living at Johnny's house when I was working on my biography. We were talking, and he said: 'Do you wanna be involved in this?' And I said: "Of course.'"

Perry's close friendship with Depp was preceded by admiration on both sides. "The guys that really were my two huge, main influences I mean, there were a number, but there was Keith Richards and there was Joe Perry," Depp says of his formative guitar-playing years. "I would sit there with my turntable and taught myself how to play. You'd get to a certain part in the song, and you're learning this shit by ear, so you'd have to pull the needle back and then learn it again. Bang! Learn it again. So those two guys had a major effect on my playing."

Many years later, the Aerosmith guitarist was being equally impressed by Depp's own fancy fretwork. "There's a movie *Chocolat* that he's done," says Perry, "and he plays the river gypsy, and he's playing guitar around the fire. And that's really him playing the guitar. He was playing Django Reinhardt stuff that I didn't have a clue about. So I said to myself, some day, if I ever get to meet Johnny I want a guitar lesson. In some ways he's a better guitar player than I am."

That's an admission some may find hard to believe, but it's clear that Perry has enormous affection for Depp, who generously extended an open invitation to him. "He basically said: 'Whenever you're in LA, this is your house.' Which just shows you what kind of a guy he is."

Vampires in the studio: (l to r) Abraham Laboriel Jr, Johnny Depp, Paul McCartney, producer Bob Ezrin, Alice Cooper, Joe Perry.

Mutual respect: Perry and Depp.

In addition to providing a West Coast refuge for Boston resident Perry, and walls covered in guitars, Depp's LA home is equipped with a 72-track studio. With that at their disposal, the Vampires started to chew over which songs they should do. They initially looked to the musical legacies of those original Hollywood Vampires. "What would we do for John Lennon?" Alice remembers pondering. "Well, certainly we weren't going to do *Imagine*. Let's do something that really represented the John that we knew. Which was going to be *Cold Turkey*. Basically it was a little self-serving, because we wanted to do *Jeepster*, we wanted to do *My Generation* by The Who, we wanted to do *Itchycoo Park* by The Small Faces. I said, the difference is, let's toughen them up. Let's put them in perspective to the way our bands play – very hard rock bands. Then it really worked, it just started falling into place. Dave Grohl came in and played on two or three songs, and Zak Starkey played on two or three songs. Paul McCartney walks in…"

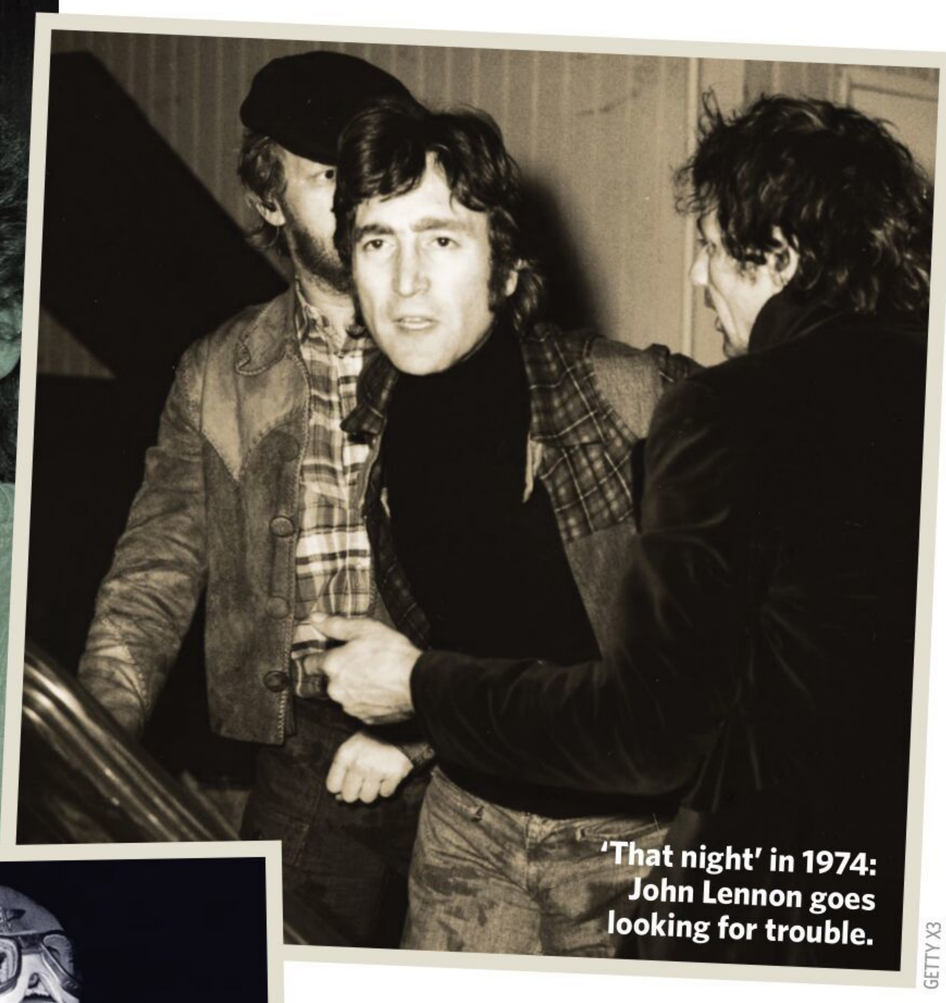
It's impossible to ignore Alice's nonchalant reference to the arrival of the legendary Beatle, whose *Come And Get It* (a UK hit for Badfinger), is included on the Vampires' album.

Paul McCartney doesn't just walk in. How did that happen?

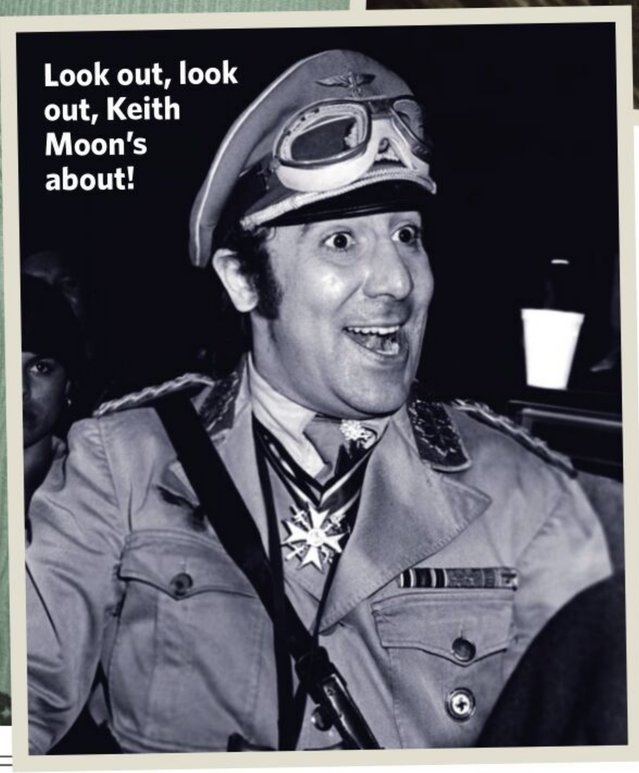
"No, he just doesn't walk in. He's a friend. I've known him for thirty-five years or so. But it's different when you're in the studio with… not just any other guy, this guy is The Beatle. Not just a Beatle, he was the music of The Beatles, the way I looked at it. He sits down at the piano, he says: 'Okay, I wrote this one for Badfinger and I haven't played this since 1968,' or whenever it was. He sits down and starts playing, and everybody just comes in. We cut that track in four takes, live, in the studio."

It's an experience that Depp won't forget in a hurry. "It was mad," he laughs. "I won't ➢

Original Hollywood Vampires: John Lennon, Harry Nilsson, Alice Cooper and Mickey Dolenz with singer Anne Murray at the Troubadour in 1973.



'That night' in 1974: John Lennon goes looking for trouble.



Look out, look out, Keith Moon's about!

GETTY X3

"Moon was the heart and soul, and the fun of the whole thing."

ALICE COOPER

say I was nervous, cos I wasn't, but it was a feeling like a jolt of energy that everybody felt. Paul made us all feel very, very comfortable, he's so down to earth and so, *so* good, so we all sort of just ended up getting into it. Of course, it's Paul McCartney, and he's a genius. We're recording live, and I look over at Alice, and Alice looks at me with this befuddled little look and he's mouthing the words: 'Oh my God, that's Paul McCartney!' to me. That's *Alice Cooper* saying that to me! Then I look over at Joe Perry – one of my guitar heroes from when I was a kid – and he looks at me and he says, mouthing it: 'Jesus… Look, man, it's Paul McCartney!' It was great to see those two huge stars being star-struck.

If stars of the magnitude of McCartney just happen to walk in, then it was clear these Hollywood Vampires had a vast pool of talent to draw upon. So how did they decide who was going to play on which tracks?

"Some of the guys would come in and it was a natural," Alice explains. "If we're going to do *I'm A Boy* you'd get a drummer that knows how to play like Keith Moon. So Zak Starkey, of course. On *School's Out* we got Dennis Dunaway and Neal Smith from the original [Alice Cooper] band. Brian Johnson, we would say to Brian: 'Hey, how about *Whole Lotta Love*? Because we wanted that voice on the verse. And he goes: 'Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I want to do *School's Out* too.' I don't remember it ever being an argument about any song. Harry Nilsson was a ballad writer, so we found *Jump Into The Fire*, which was actually a pretty good rock song. It was all based on drums, so we have Dave Grohl on drums. We had a plethora of great players there to play with. I said, let's take these songs and just rearrange them and really make them great, bar versions. Like a pub band, a really good pub band. And that's really what it was."

Watching the Hollywood Vampires as they opened their show with their self-written *Raise The Dead*, followed by a version of *My Generation* that shook the walls of The Roxy as much as any LA earthquake could manage, it was evident that Cooper had more than succeeded in his desire to form "a really good pub band".

The all-star line-up had attracted a capacity and enthusiastic audience that included such celebrities as Paul Stanley, Chad Smith and Depp's wife, actress Amber Heard, who were all in attendance on the first night. After a blistering take on Spirit's *I Got a Line On You*, in recognition of Cooper's old drinking partner Randy California, Alice dedicated the next song to one of the legendary members of the Vampires. "This one's for John," he said as the band broke into a raucous and rousing cover of Lennon's *Cold Turkey*.

There's more than a little irony in the fact a group of recovering alcoholics have named themselves after a notorious pack of drinkers.

"Well, you know, there were a lot of ironies in this whole thing," Cooper concedes. "I mean, we didn't really recognise the point that there was no alcohol there. That's the amazing thing. Every single person there had been an addict or an alcoholic, that was now not an alcoholic or an addict. Johnny's on the wagon, I'm on the wagon, Joe Perry's on the wagon. Everybody there was, like, on the brink of dying at some point from our abuse, and here we were singing about the guys that did die from the abuse.

Perry is all too aware of the impact that substance abuse can have on a career. "You can get better and better as an artist, or you can be an alcoholic or a drug addict," he says. He goes on to cite a period with Aerosmith when it became all too clear that their addictions were affecting not only their music, but also relationships within the band. "We were in the studio, when we realised we just couldn't get along that way, we couldn't write the way we used to."

Like Perry, Cooper knows that studios and alcohol don't mix. "There was a time, that would have been early seventies, that this album would have taken forever to make because it would have been just an ongoing party. Whereas we would get in the studio and there was no alcohol involved, no drugs. I'm kind of like, you know, that's normal for me, I've been sober thirty-three years. We all had war stories. 'I remember getting up one morning and throwing up blood.' 'I remember waking up in Italy, and I started out in England.' Everybody had their stories of abuse. And then at one point we're there and I went: 'You know everybody is sober here,' and it was just really weird."

In addition to the lack of alcohol, another factor that ensured the recording of the album stayed on schedule was securing the services of renowned producer Bob Ezrin, who has worked on the majority of Alice Cooper's albums.

"Bob is great," Cooper enthuses. "Because Bob comes in not only as a producer, but as a musical director. He's got such credibility that these guys will sit and listen to him during rehearsal. He'll say: 'Okay, you got to take it down here'; 'I need more Johnny on this'; 'I need more Joe Perry ≫

Guys with bite Johnny Depp and Marilyn Manson.

“I would definitely, definitely love to do a second record.”

JOHNNY DEPP

Backstage after the gig: (l to r) Duff McKagan, Zak Starkey, Joe Perry, Tom Morello, Tommy Henriksen (front), Alice Cooper, Bruce Witkin, Perry Farrell (with wife Etty Lau), Matt Sorum.

Geezer Butler joins the Vampires on stage at The Roxy.

here…' He's like a taskmaster when it comes to making it sound great. And I said what I don't want to lose is the looseness. I want it to be like a glorified bar band, because that's what we're gonna be."

Given that the Hollywood Vampires originated at the Rainbow Bar, it's fitting that this new group of Vampires were striving to return to their bar-room roots, even if in sound only. Both in the naming of the band and their choice of songs, it's clear that the halcyon daze of carousing with friends inspires memories that Alice enjoys recounting, with the inclusion of *Itchycoo Park* on the album prompting recollections of Steve Marriott and co. "The Small Faces, you know, those guys we used to party with a lot. They weren't lightweights when it came to drinking."

The poignant fact that every cover version on the album involves an artist that has died isn't lost on Perry, who mourns their passing while also acknowledging how it could so easily have been him. "You do miss those people. But just for some reason they took it one more step, they took that one extra drink, they took that one extra pill."

Many of them were regular members of the original Hollywood Vampires, some had only a passing acquaintance, while the inclusion of Hendrix's *Manic Depression* and The Doors medley *Five To One/Break On Through (To The Other Side)* were nods to two artists who embodied the spirit of the Hollywood Vampires.

"Yeah, every single song had some sort of connection with either us drinking with them or being involved with them on that level," Alice says. "Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix of course were before the Vampires, but they were like, early, early-breed Vampires. They would have been there every single night, I guarantee you that."

One who was there more than most was Cooper himself. "Well, the funny thing is, I was probably the most consistent drinker. I was the one that would get up and start drinking at eight o'clock in the morning. But I was the Dean Martin kind of guy. I was sort of the golden buzz that didn't get out of control, that was never falling down stairs, and you never heard stories the next day about Alice Cooper getting arrested for being drunk and disorderly. I was way too cool for that. I was the guy that was just the smooth operator. Whereas guys like Keith Moon, everybody said: "Has somebody put Ritalin in his drink?' Because he was like an out-of-control child, even though he was the court jester.

"He was the guy that every single night we'd be at The Rainbow going: 'What do you think he's going to wear tonight?' 'I don't know.' He's either going to be the Queen or Adolf Hitler, or a French maid, or who knows what he's going to be? He was the most fun of the whole thing. If I could pick out three of my most outrageous things that I ever did, that would be a Tuesday for Keith, you know, that would be normal for him.

"I always told people: 'Look, thirty per cent of everything you've heard about Alice Cooper is probably true. Thirty per cent of what you've heard about Rob Zombie or Iggy Pop, or any of these guys, is probably true. Everything you've ever heard about Keith Moon is true – and you've only heard ten per cent of it. He was the heart and soul, and the fun of the whole thing."

While Moon provided the comic relief, others brought their own distinctive personalities to the Vampires. "Harry Nilsson was hard-core," Cooper remembers. "The guys that would show up when John Lennon was in town. Of course, Harry was his best friend, so they would show up together. Then that became a political argument. The more they drank, one guy would say black, the other guy says white. One guy would say Democrat, the other guy says Republican. And I'm in the middle, like the referee, going: 'Guys! Sit down, sit down.' They'd listen to me but… If Harry wanted to get out of control, Harry was a big guy," Alice says, laughing, with obvious fondness. "Guys like Mickey Dolenz and Bernie Taupin… Bernie and I were both, you know, kind of the coolest drinkers, where other guys, every once in a while you'd say: 'Sit down.'"

One particular night, however, no one told John Lennon and Harry Nilsson to sit down. The pair's exploits are probably the most high-profile of all the original Hollywood Vampires. On the night of March 12, 1974, Nilsson made the mistake of introducing Lennon to the Brandy Alexander, a heady cocktail of brandy, creme de cacao and cream. "I got drunk and shouted…," Lennon later told Bob Harris on the *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. "It was my first night on Brandy Alexanders. I was with Harry Nilsson, who didn't get as much coverage as me… the bum. He encouraged me. I usually have someone there who says: 'Okay, Lennon, shut up.' And I take it. But I didn't have anybody round me to say 'shut up' and I just went on and on…" Lennon and Nilsson ended up heckling the evening's performers, the Smothers Brothers, and got thrown out of the club.

"It was our return to the Troubadour after being fired from television," Dick Smothers told journalist Bill DeYoung. "It was just packed. Harry and John weren't working on anything at the time. They're ripped, and Harry has told John that Tommy [Smothers] likes to be yelled at up there, it'll really help the show. They were warming up on our opening act, a girl folk singer, and John was saying four-letter words – drunken, rude stuff. And the crowd was really getting pissed off with him."

Security intervened and, as May Pang (Lennon's assistant and companion during his infamous 'lost weekend' – much of which was spent in the company of the Vampires) recalled: "All of a sudden his boyhood I'm-being-attacked routine came out. Of course, Harry's in there, mixing it up as usual, and then they got the bouncers to come and escort the two of them out the door. I'm behind them. There's like ten bouncers. John stumbled and fell on the ground. He was drunk out of his mind by that point. And Harry too. It was just a complete fiasco. And I was just so pissed off at Harry for that."

The incident played on Nilsson right up until his death. In one of his final interviews, he told Dawn Eden that it "ruined my reputation for ten years. Get one Beatle drunk and look what happens! It still haunts me. People think I'm an asshole and a mean guy. They still think I'm a rowdy bum from the seventies who happened to get drunk with John Lennon, that's all. I just introduced John and Ringo to Brandy Alexanders, that was my problem."

Only those who spent time at the Troubador with the original Vampires truly know what it was like. And of those who were, Bernie Taupin captured it perfectly in the liner notes the lyricist wrote for the album: "I'm not completely sure what constituted bad behaviour back then, but in this lair it existed in a bubble, a hermetically sealed dome of fun. It may not have been the round table at the Algonquin, but these were witty, intelligent guys who often got raucous and loud, but ➢

If Carlsberg made bar bands...

Perry, Depp and Morello give it 18 strings.

"We're rocking it as hard as any twenty-year-old band is."

ALICE COOPER

rest assured there were no bystanders or animals hurt in the making of the Hollywood Vampires."

The new incarnation of Hollywood Vampires is rather less benign, as their collective volume is in severe danger of hurting the eardrums of those crammed into the heaving, sweating Roxy. The decibel level is ratcheted up to 11 when Tom Morello and Geezer Butler join the other Vampires on stage for an exhilarating cover of Hendrix's *Manic Depression*. Up until this point, both Johnny Depp and Joe Perry have executed their guitar playing with a degree of restraint. However, Morello is rather more excitable. He jerks and bounces around as if wired to the mains. In homage to the song's composer, at one point he even starts playing the guitar with his teeth. Morello's adrenalin-fuelled cameo takes the show to another level, as those lucky enough to have securea a coveted ticket shout their approval.

Considering the enormous crowds most of the group are used to playing in front of, it's somewhat surprising to hear Cooper confess how apprehensive they were about playing The Roxy.

"One of the great things was during rehearsal," he says. "I loved the fact that everybody was nervous. Here's Joe Perry, who does this every night with Aerosmith, here's Alice Cooper that does it every night, and Duff McKagan, who've played for every amount of people, and here we are going to play for five hundred people at The Roxy and everybody was nervous.

"I said: 'Isn't it great to be nervous again?' You know, it was something I missed, actually having a little bit of butterflies, because we're so used to doing our stuff and knowing how to do it. Here's Alice Cooper going to go up and be a bar band, no props. I'm used to knowing where every prop is and how to work it, and I'm just going to be the bar singer. So it was weird going up there on stage and not having my arsenal of things to go to."

That sense of unfamiliarity was also an issue for Perry: "I realised that it was kind of like 'unlearning' a whole career of playing with the same guys. So when we got on stage it just dawned on me how much influence all those forty years was holding me back."

But they had no need to be nervous. They killed it. Every guest they had on stage nailed their spots. Whether it was Perry Farrell getting to grips with the vocals on Nilsson's *Into The Fire*, Kesha doing her best Robert Plant impersonation on *Whole Lotta Love*, Zak Starkey conjuring the ghost of Keith Moon on *I'm A Boy*, or Marilyn Manson emulating his hero on *I'm Eighteen*, the Hollywood Vampires put on a great show.

That opinion was shared by Perry. "Last night when it came together, that was one of the most exciting shows I've ever played," he enthused.

The morning after the first Roxy show, Alice is up early to talk about his new project. Given his late night, it was impressive that he was even up at such an hour. "I didn't realise vampires got up this early," I tell him. "We're a whole different breed," he jokes. "We actually get up and do stuff during the day."

Clearly, times have changed. Back in the 70s, when they were holding court in their lair at the Rainbow Bar, few of the Hollywood Vampires could have imagined themselves still rocking in 40 years' time. Sadly, too many of them didn't survive the intervening years. But Alice Cooper did. Watching him on stage at The Roxy, it's clear he's still loving every minute of it. Which prompts the question: Is it more fun being a Hollywood Vampire now than it was back then?

"Well it is, because back then it was fun being out of control, and now it's fun being in control," he says. "You've already done a big part of your life as being an irresponsible rock'n'roll drunk. Which was great. When you're young your body can take that, and your brain can take that, and you're basically indestructible. When you're getting to the point where you're over fifty, and some of us over sixty, now it's much more fun to get up and really know that the band is tight. You know how many of us are on borrowed time, and we're up here doing this and it sounds great. I mean, the energy is on twelve, and people are looking at us, they're going: 'Wait a minute. Aren't those guys sixty-five years old? How are they doing this?' To me that's the thing that makes it great – the fact that we're rocking it as hard as any twenty-year-old band is."

And so what of the future? Vampires are immortal, right? Will the Vampires rise again?

"I would love to hear Shep [Gordon, Alice Cooper's legendary manager] walk into the room at some point and say: 'Hey, guys, guess what? I've got six more gigs, or ten more gigs…'" Depp says. "And talking to Joe, talking to Alice, talking to Duff and Matt – those two are the backbone of this thing, they're awesome – everyone's into it. Everyone is into it. So we're ready, I'm ready. I would love to keep it going. I would definitely, definitely, definitely love to do a second, another record. We still have a number of originals that we recorded or we have demos of that we never ended up using on the record, so there's still some material."

Whether or not that happens, as a euphoric crowd spill out of The Roxy on to the Sunset Strip, following an encore that culminated with *Brown Sugar* they were still buzzing from having witnessed the greatest bar band they'd ever seen.

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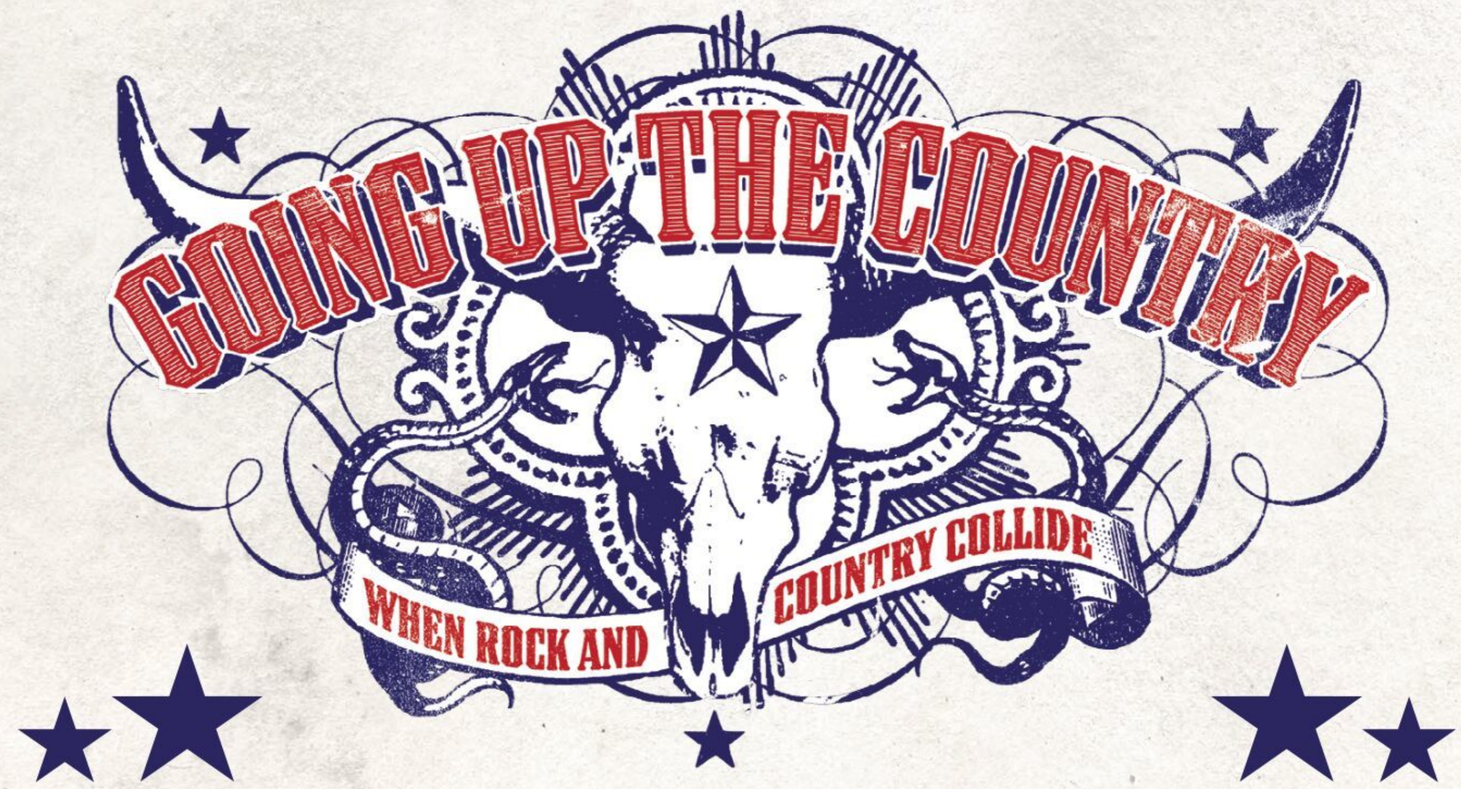

COUNTRY ROADS

From the Allmans to the Eagles, there's always been an alliance between rock and country. In 2016, **Steven Tyler** became the latest rock'n'roller to head to Nashville – but was he just scratching an itch or is it a permanent vacation?

Words: **Ken Sharp**

At the age of 68, Steven Tyler continues to surprise. Long-time Aerosmith fans might be scratching their heads at news that the band's frontman has just made a country solo album, *We're All Somebody From Somewhere*. But on closer listening to Aerosmith's rich catalogue, the DNA of country holds flavour in the group's body of work. From the wistful delicacy of *Seasons Of Wither* and *Dream On* to late-80s mega hits, *Cryin'*, *Amazing* and *What It Takes*, stylistically all of those tracks fit comfortably alongside the pop-country hits of 2016. And adding further credence to that notion, Tyler's new album features his countryfied rendition of one of the group's biggest hits: *Janie's Got A Gun*.

Asked what sparked his idea to go it alone and record his first solo album, he says: "It kind of started when Aerosmith started putting little snippets in the press about lead singers, and I'm not doing this and that, and there were just little things every now and then that people in the band were saying about me doing a solo project. And I love jumping – I've always jumped into things with both feet whether it was an Aerosmith album or this thing. I came to Nashville. I rented a house. Now I just bought a house, so I'm living here full-on. It's a musical Mecca."

He admits it was scary at first. "Scott Borchetta from Big Machine [the country record company] said: 'I want you on my label,'" he recalls. "I said: 'All right. But let's wait two months because I want to see what we get for music. I don't know what I'm going to get. I could get nothing. I could come down here and just…' I didn't know what I was going to get. And I love that place. It's scary. It was risky. It was a case of let's just do it.'"

Accordingly, Tyler started working with songwriters and reaped promising results. "Within two months I got five of some of the greatest songs I've ever written or been part of writing," he says. "I co-wrote with everyone down here, and I think I've done some of my best work through this country head. Whatever it is that runs through Nashville… it's like it's something in the water. Actually, the main route through Nashville is Route 440. And that's what you tune all the instruments on planet earth to. An A note is 440 [Hertz]. A friend noticed it and he brought it up, and ➢

> **"I've never done a solo anything. I got jealous that the other guys in the band did."**
> STEVEN TYLER

“It’s all about melody. If you listen really close to some Aerosmith stuff, like the song *Once Is Enough* is very country.”

STEVEN TYLER

I just went, holy shit, what are the chances?"

"This town still has the passion for music. It hasn't lost it through business and money, which may be big here but the music aspect still has the passion. Artists come here come from all over the world to be part of it, and there's so much music dripping out of the honeycomb of this town that I'm in it. I'm in it neck-deep. I'm going to stay here, I'm going to live here. I love it here."

One wonders if Tyler, working in the solo milieu away from the safe confines of Aerosmith, experiences a new-found creativity and freedom when separated from long-time collaborators such as Joe Perry and Brad Whitford.

"Well, Joe Perry wrote all the great licks," he begins. "Brad wrote [sings *Last Child*] *'Take me back to sweet Tallahassee, home sweet home…'* Whatever he put into *Last Child*, that's his moment. He can take that and that's his forever. *Dream On* is mine forever. When I didn't know anything about anything, I wrote *Dream On*. When that part came and I went, 'Oh shit, I can't do that on a record, it sounds so stupid and goofy.' But I took a chance and just did it. I think that was a moment with Aerosmith. And everyone's had their moments."

Writing a solo record with new faces, however, proved to be a different creative affair.

"I'd go to their house, drink coffee, bullshit for two hours and then get down to the nitty gritty of, 'Well, what would you like to sing about?'" he tells us. "'Well, you know, I had this idea of the good, the bad, the ugly in me, or we're all somebody from somewhere or…' And we actually write a song around it."

Throughout the process, Tyler's keen to stress the collaborative nature of the record – and indeed all his work. "I mean, I can call this a solo project, but a lot of Aerosmith records were that as well. There were songs that I had in my back pocket and I brought it in, but nothing is really a 'solo' anything, it's just going out like that. Steven Tyler out on a limb. But I'm really nothing without that band and I'm nothing without Aerosmith and I'm nothing without my sobriety and I'm nothing without a lot of things. So this whole damn thing is a 'we' thing.

"But those moments, man, when they hit they hit hard. I'd be sitting in my bed at night listening to songs that we wrote that day, and even the demos. I'd have to get out of bed, drop to my knees and just say thank you, God, because I don't even know where the shit came from."

Such is his infatuation with Nashville – and all its country roots – that he even suggests that much of *We're All Somebody From Somewhere* arrived somewhat subliminally.

"I had nothing to do with this shit. It's just Nashville," he insists. "There's something so magical about this town, and me writing with all these people… it was magic. A lot of work went into it and I got to co-produce with Dann Huff [former Giant guitarist turned Nashville session ace] and T Bone Burnett. But we just finished it and I'm on fire."

How does Tyler deal with being a solo artist for the very first time?

"Well it's not like I've arrived as a solo artist," he says. "I think when I came to Nashville, I took a chance. But after two months it just started coming heavy and hard. And I just wanted a record that, as they said in the old days, is 'four or five deep', which means there's possibly four or five singles. And as you know, country music still plays stuff with melody. I have a sorcerer's grasp of melody, I like to think. So I'm a freak for that. And thank God they're still playing it in country, and I think they're going to be all over songs like *Only Heaven*."

The aforementioned T Bone Burnett, acclaimed for his work with Robert Plant & Alison Krauss, Elton John and Leon Russell, among others, is one of the producers on board for Tyler's solo debut.

"I'd met T Bone a couple times checking out at the Four Seasons Hotel in Boston or wherever I'd be," he explains. "I'd see this tall guy lurking around, and he came up and introduced himself, so I met him a couple times. I certainly know the songs and music that he's done."

While in Music City recording a guest spot for the hit TV drama *Nashville*, Tyler met the show's creator Callie Khouri, who also happens to be Burnett's wife. From here he decided to make the call and approach the subject of new music.

"I called T Bone up. I said: 'Listen, I'd love to play you some stuff. Are you here?' He said: 'Yeah, I'm over at the House Of Blues.' So I played him eleven songs and he loved three," he tells us. "And before I walked out he goes: 'I'd love to do these.' I said to him: 'Can we please do them off the demos? I want to keep the demo vocals. I love the feeling and the vibe of the vocals. I don't want to re-record them.' He said: 'Absolutely. I wouldn't do it any other way.' I knew right then and there that he felt the same things I did – the soul of the song. When you write a song it comes from your head, but then if the song is any good it starts talking back, it starts telling you what you meant. And once you get in that place it's pay dirt. T Bone knows that premise. We kept it light and open. It was just such an honour working with somebody like T Bone that has that same feeling of what it is in the song that matters the most. So I love him to death."

For the new album, Tyler reinterpreted *Janie's Got A Gun*, one of Aerosmith's biggest hits, which also carried a strong message.

"I learned about abuse in America, particularly, when I wrote the song," he says. "I wrote *Janie's Got A Gun*, and I didn't know why Janie had a gun. You know, when I was listening to the lyric I wrote, it just came out of nowhere – *'Janie's got a gun…'*" >

LEFT: PRESS INSET: GETTY

Tyler (fourth from left) with Loving Mary.

WHO THE HELL ARE LOVING MARY?

THE BAND THAT STEVEN TYLER CALLED ON TO HELP HIM SCRATCH HIS COUNTRY ITCH THIS YEAR.

Loving Mary are the band that Steven Tyler chose to head out on the road with him on his first ever solo tour. Formed in 2014, the band came together through a collaboration between Canadian singer Suzie McNeil and songwriter Marti Frederiksen whose credits include co-writing most of Aerosmith's *Just Push Play* and tunes for other artists including Buckcherry (*Sorry*), Mötley Crüe (*Saints Of Los Angeles*) and country superstar Carrie Underwood.

What began as plans for a singing and songwriting duo soon grew arms and legs. "One day we thought: 'The world needs a Fleetwood Mac again,'" said McNeil. "So let's start a band..." Loving Mary are completed by country singer Rebecca Lynn Howard, Elisha Hoffman, Andrew MacTaggart and Sarah Tomek. They released their debut album, *Little Bit Of Love*, on July 1.

"Marti has known Steven for years, they're great friends. Marti has written a lot of Aerosmith songs with Steven, including the hit *Jaded*," McNeil told *Music Life*. "When Steven started this new solo country project he asked Marti if he knew any musicians he could hire for a show and Marti said: 'Well... I actually started a band...' and we've been playing with him ever since!"

Tyler, meanwhile, simply calls them a "phenomenal band".

Don't forget the day job: Tyler (front) with Aerosmith.

GETTY

And I thought, 'well, who's Janie and why does she have a gun?'"

Four or five years later, after the song had become a hit and the video had gone down a storm, Tyler learned about the extent of abuse suffered by girls in the States.

"Sexually but also verbally," he says. "And it's not always by parents. It's by an uncle or an aunt or someone. But there's just so much 'hanky-panky' – and that's a nice word for it. But it really is terrible abuse. And I went and spoke about it and got some new management, Rebecca Lambrecht and Larry Rudolph. And I spoke to them about doing something around maybe Janie's House and coming up with something like that." And thus Tyler's charity – which helps abused and neglected children – (www.janiesfund.org) was born.

With Aerosmith on hiatus, there are some Steven Tyler fans who, understandably, have conflicting thoughts over the news of him doing a solo country record.

"I love risky shit," Tyler responds. "And, more often than not, when you feel risk it's because people aren't thinking, they're just doing it and they're willing to take a risk. It's kind of like what I do – and, interestingly enough, I piss a lot of people off. But when it comes to music and jumping in and doing new stuff, it better speak for itself."

Tyler sees a clear corollary between country music and the hard rock songs he performs in Aerosmith. The key ingredient: melody.

"It's all about melody, and melody and I are not strangers," he says. "If you listen really close to some Aerosmith stuff, like the song *Once Is Enough*, it's very country. Hillary Lindsey [country singer-songwriter] turned me on to a part of my voice that I never even knew existed in a song called *I'm Somebody New* on this record. And that's the beauty of coming down here and working with a bunch of country folks. A: I was cut on country. B: I am a country boy. C: it was all about the Everly Brothers to me. Aerosmith's a lot of rock, but I've always had that *Dream On, Angel*; I've been a sucker for melody. And coming down to Nashville and working with these folks, it's more about melody and more about words and carving meaning out of stuff."

The next step will be to transfer his new countrified goods to the live stage. His first tour as solo artist, called Out On A Limb, started on July 2 at the Venetian in Las Vegas, where he was joined by country rock six-piece Loving Mary.

"It's the most phenomenal band that I get to sing with," he enthuses. "We're doing some twenty-five, thirty dates. I'm doing a bunch of songs that I wrote for Aerosmith, like *Janie's Got A Gun* and *Dream On*, but it's more about the country songs and I get a chance to be a storyteller. With Aerosmith, the audience pays a lot of money. You know, it's twenty thousand of them out there. They want to hear the hits, and we go bang, bang, bang, bang, one to the other. And I love it, it keeps me young."

> **"I'm nothing without Aerosmith. I'm nothing without my sobriety."**
> **STEVEN TYLER**

Instead of playing the 20,000-capacity arenas or stadiums that Aerosmith regularly occupy across the world, for his new solo tour Tyler is excited about playing in smaller venues, which allow for a more intimate experience.

"The last time we did small venues was at the end of that first run of Aerosmith, about 1981, '82, '83," he says. "The band started breaking up and there was a lot of drug use and drinking too much. But, interestingly enough, we'd play small venues in '78. We played small venues every now and then in 1997. We've done a lot of small venues. I always love them."

Tyler says he hates hearing the words 'business' and 'money'. "I always went with my heart. But it's not viable to get your crew and load in and do a two-thousand-seater," he concedes. "It's just not cost effective, as they call it. I prefer them. I like playing a small venue where I look out and everybody's close – as opposed to twenty thousand when they've got a gate and a barricade and they keep everybody back. And I'm going: what the fuck? I can't see or feel the people. So it's a very 'living-room' thing to play small venues, and it's a little bit more personal."

Surprisingly, that personal audience experience was rekindled during his tenure as a judge on televised singing contest *American Idol*.

"It feeds the side of me that grew again after I did *American Idol*," he explains. "You can do the large venues, forty to eighty thousand a whack, and you get kind of jaded. And then you do something like *Idol* where they're actually *on* you, a camera, and it's forty million people watching you and you're answering something quietly and thoughtfully and giving your opinion about something."

It's something he's looking forward to replicating on the Out On A Limb tour – albeit minus the TV cameras.

"I get to talk to people and be up close and personal and tell them how the music business is a dark trench; a dark, dirty, money trench. I get to just talk about where I get my passion from, and about the new songs on the record and get to play, the songs that we couldn't because the record will be out by then. You know what I mean? The spoils of war. I get to go through all the shit that we've collected and play it for people [who are] looking forward to it."

Hitting the road without his Aerosmith bandmates for the very first time, Tyler says he's most looking forward to "the looks on people's faces when we rip into either this new version of *Janie's Got A Gun* that I put together for the record – a little bit darker than the other version – and the look on people's faces when I rip into *Only Heaven* and *We're All Somebody from Somewhere*."

In launching his new songs, he hopes to recreate some of the excitement of Aerosmith's first steps.

"I didn't know what was going to happen when Aerosmith first made it," he says. "But I did notice the looks on people's faces when they kind of liked it, and I'm just looking forward to that again. I'm in such a high place right now because Nashville's been so good to me. I'm looking forward to playing all those songs live. The vibe here in Nashville is ridiculous; the passion, the soul. There's still a big soul beating here, whereas in a lot of other places where it used to, it's kind of dead because business took over."

For all of this country talk, though, rest assured that Tyler is not abandoning his Aerosmith duties.

"I love Aerosmith, and I'm looking forward to going on tour in South America this October, November," he says. "But this is a real hoot. I've never done a solo anything, and I kind of got jealous that the other guys in the band did. So I took a year off. It's been a little bit longer, but I think you'll like what you hear.

"This new country record, I got to write with people and co-produce with T Bone Burnett, and everything was open and wild and easy and free. I really took a chance, and it just turned out so much better than I ever thought. So the sky is the limit from here on out."

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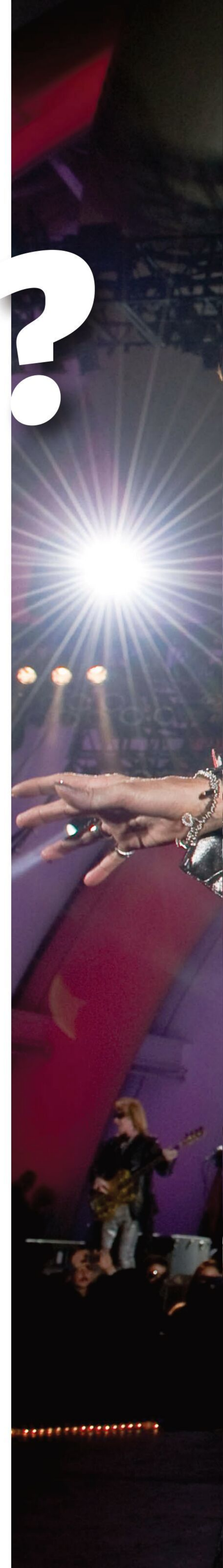


After all the drink, drugs and fighting, 2017 found **Aerosmith** saying goodbye to the road. Or were they? The Toxic Twins reveal all.

Words: **Michael Hann** Images: **Ross Halfin**

On June 11, 2017 Aerosmith will headline Download. The familiar bluesy chug of Joe Perry and Brad Whitford's guitars will drift across Donington Park, Steven Tyler's feral yowl laid on top. And tens of thousands of people will howl along, perhaps not contemplating the miracle that the five men on stage are able to play for them. Leave aside the years of living so fast it broke all speed limits, the fact is Aerosmith don't make life easy for themselves.

Even now, as they traverse Europe on their Aero-Vederci Baby! tour, what would normally be a victory lap comes shrouded in their traditional confusion: is it their final tour? Well, that was the word from Tyler, but then he came forward to say that when he gets in the room with the guys, after all these years, he can't imagine stopping. Will there be another album? First Perry says they're postponing their US tour to work on new material, then he tells *Classic Rock*… well, let's not spoil that. Read on and you'll find out.

That follows plenty of acrimony between the pair over the past few years. Perry was unimpressed with Tyler's country album last year. "Hey, if I didn't know him when I heard the song, I'd go: 'It's okay. Next,'" he said of the single *Red, White & You*. "I'm not going to say anything else about that."

Tyler responded by saying: "You know what? Jealousy runs deep in this family."

The pair's autobiographies weren't exactly glowing about each other either. Perry sniffed that Tyler was aloof, suggesting in interviews he had always been more interested in the trappings of stardom than in making music. "He says that he carried the band for forty years," Perry told one interviewer. "Hey, pal, do you ever look in the mirror?"

Tyler's own book lifted the lid on the years of feuding, and made plain that the Toxic Twins might have got their name from their relationship as much as from their personal habits.

Yet here they are, 46 years on from forming in Massachusetts, back in the saddle for another lucrative loop around huge stages, and willing to talk about life in Aerosmith, what the future holds – although who knows how their plans might change between them speaking to *Classic Rock* and you reading this – and the music that made them fall in love with rock'n'roll in the first place. Tyler, speaking at his home in Maui – a house paid for by his stint as a judge on *American Idol* – is colourful and effusive, opening the conversation with a mockney "How's it goin', me old China plate?" Perry, speaking well after midnight in LA a couple of days later, is less effusive but perhaps more revealing – at least until Johnny Depp arrives at the studio and he leaves to work on tracks with his bandmate in the Hollywood Vampires.

Both say the right things, though they often say the wrong things too. When Aerosmith do finally call it a day, no careers in diplomacy await this pair.

What gets you back on the road with Aerosmith, apart from the prospect of large sums of money?
STEVEN TYLER: I love my band. I love nothing better than my children and being able to say I was in a band that played clubs and made it big as a brotherhood. Unlike the rest of the guys, I don't give a shit if we go on stage and don't make any money at all. I just love playing with the band. I beg of them, I need a couple of days off between shows, just like Zeppelin did or the Stones do. I can't do it like the old days, when I'd do three shows in a row. I need to take some time off and I need the band to respect me for that. Sometimes it's not seen like that, but I think we all enjoy each other's presence, and I think everyone loves the money and I think everyone loves being in this band. Nobody makes any more money than the other guy.

Would you still want to play live if you weren't getting the huge pay cheques?
JOE PERRY: If it wasn't for the audience I wouldn't bother. But when the band starts playing those songs and we hear this reaction, then tonight I'm going to try to play this as best as I can. Yeah, I've played it a thousand times, but when the audience is there with you and they're hanging on every note, it's like you're playing it for the first time again. I think about it, and I go: "I'm going to go out to play fucking *Cryin'* again?" But I know when I get out there and play some of those riffs, the people respond and that brings it into the moment where I'm not thinking: "Well I played that five times in the last month."

What's the hardest thing about playing live these days?
ST: The hardest thing for me is doing all these meet-and-greets. I don't like doing them any more, but they make everybody money. I love going on stage and playing, and taking ≫

a couple of days off and actually seeing where the fuck we are – maybe going to London and going shopping at Harrods for one fucking day – whereas the band just likes to rip through a tour. When you've been on tour for a year, your kids don't even know who you are. It can be rough.

Are your feet up to a long tour?
ST: I've burned them out from running around on stage for more than forty years, so they're a little fucked up, but I'm all right – better living through chemistry, right?

You don't find it odd to be getting on stage with each other, given the things you've all had to say over the years?
ST: I'm just really grateful after all these years to be in Aerosmith, even though these guys are a bunch of crybabies every now and then. And they bitch when I do a solo record. But as I always tell them: "You'll miss me when I'm quiet." They say it's LSD: lead singer disorder. I think it's the opposite: I think a lot of bands are very jealous of the lead singer. How could it not be? Or of the guitar player.
JP: There's a lot of stuff that goes on. There's a lot of acrimony. Stuff that's been done among all the guys. That's the stuff that breaks bands up. It's a private club that no one else can enter. It's still the five guys, and sometimes we've had our arguments that have someone walking out of the room, and people saying: "These guys will never talk again." But the next day it's business as usual. And that's the way it is today.

Pout this way: Steven Tyler in Moscow's Red Square.

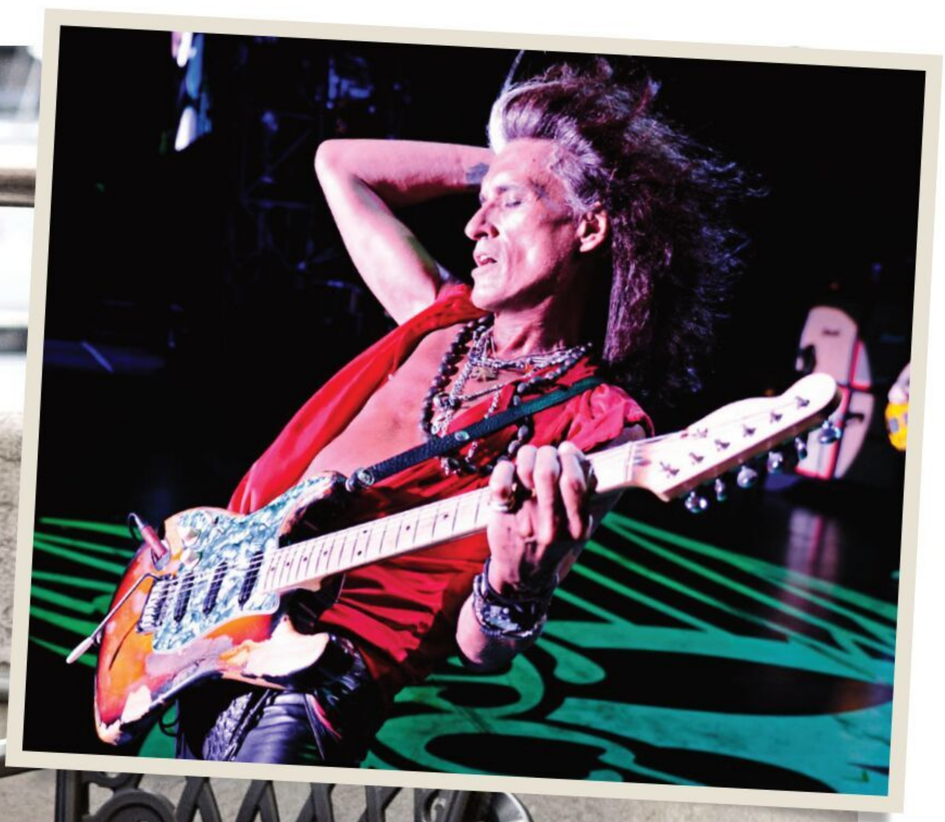
Yes, but most people's arguments aren't in the newspapers for millions of people to read about.
JP: We would never make up. We would just carry on. We would leave it alone, leaving the corpse on the floor. And then just carry on. It wasn't like: "We're all brothers, everything's fine." None of that shit. It was: "Rehearsal tomorrow, we're gonna play." Like I said, we leave the corpses lying on the floor, and they would stack up, but it didn't stop us from playing. Hey, there's no law that says a rock'n'roll band can't get along for fifty years. but it hasn't happened yet. But when the band is in a room together it doesn't change – that feeling that you've got to keep it tight – and that's the ongoing thing that keeps it together.

Steven, you've said that seeing the Rolling Stones in New York in 1965, when you were seventeen, was the moment when you realised the possibilities of rock'n'roll. What was so revelatory about the Stones?
ST: I think the same thing as Janis Joplin: freedom on stage. And there was the way Mick interpreted the English blues, and the way they looked. It led the way to freedom for me, and so did Janis Joplin. I had no idea you could go up on stage with an open bottle of Southern Comfort and smoke a joint and get lit up, you know? I came from an era where passion was terrible: do as I say, not as I do. It was segregation, Elvis Presley only being filmed from the waist up – censorship. I fucking hated it. Then in the 1960s, here comes Carnaby Street! The clothes, the music. So much great music. In '64 there was a record store downtown and we'd go and buy all the English imports. I would go to this one store in Greenwich Village, and Frank Zappa was always in there. He'd be buying classical music, which I'd had enough of because my father went to Juilliard. The Merseybeats, *Tobacco Road* by the Nashville Teens … Jesus, just all of it.

Were the Stones the magic group for you as a kid too, Joe?
JP: Not really. It was hearing the second English invasion. All those bands coming over and playing American blues, like Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, that's what captured me. That's when I fucking felt like there was something here I can do, and I don't hear it so much from American bands. I liked what the English bands were doing so well that I gravitated to that. I tried every chance I could to see every band, because those were the bands that excited me, that gave me life, gave me a window into something. I wasn't hearing that from American bands. But I knew there was something I could throw into that mix if I put the right thing together.

Which shows were your highlights as a teenager?
JP: I got the chance to see the Dave Clark Five. It was probably their last tour of the States, and I thought: "Wow! I finally got a chance to see one of the big three bands from the first invasion." Even though they're not one of the bands people play a lot now, they were a big band at the time. There was one point where they had more singles on the chart than The Beatles, so for young fans in America they were right up there.

Then I got to see a couple of the old-school kinda tours, where the headliner might have half an hour or the opening act might have had one single, and there'd be five bands on the bill. When I got into the local scene and I got to see bands like J Geils and those cats, I started to feel I really loved what they did, but I could add something to it if I put a band together.



Livin' on the edge: rock'n'roll survivor Joe Perry.

Steven, you went to the first Woodstock as a fan in 1969. What was that like?

ST: Wow. I went with a bunch of people I was in a band with. After three days it had rained so much the water got in the gas tank and we couldn't start the car, so I got stuck there another two days, which was terrible, because it looked like a war zone. There were tents, Coca-Cola coolers, miles and miles of that. Old blankets and shitty clothes. But what I remember the most was so many raw, beautiful musicians of the time. I got woken up one morning by Jimi Hendrix playing [Tyler sings the melody of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, imitating Hendrix] on the electric guitar, which no one had ever done before. There were so many great artists, and so many people, and everybody was tripping and walking around naked. It was a very loose and free summer of '69.

Why do you think Aerosmith ended up capturing people's imaginations to the extent that not only have you lasted forty-six years, you're also still headlining shows?

JP: I think coming from Boston, in the shadow of J Geils, we were always trying to prove ourselves. That's one thing I can agree with Steven on: we always felt like we had to prove ourselves every night, and that feeling carries all the way through. Every time I walk on stage I feel like we've got to prove ourselves. I'm still really critical of how the band's playing. Sometimes you know that if we play certain things the audience will get off on it, but I spend half my night listening to the other guys play and see if we can get working, because I always feel like you've got to do a better show. That's really it. It's about taking the songs and not deviating too far from what people want to hear, and keeping up the energy.

I'm totally engaged with the other guys, man. Getting it tight and having it lock in. Experience has shown that if we're there, we usually bring in the audience with us. Maybe it's because we came up in Boston and so we were always trying to impress people, and it was a tough fight.

ST: I think we always took ourselves seriously, maybe to a fault. A lot of the guitar lines and riffs that Joe would come up with, and I would write the melody and the lyric to, became classics. There's a good thing I read the other day about being original. I wrote it down: "Everybody is influenced by somebody or something. But if there's an original, who's the original?" My mom reading *The Jungle Book* to me when I was three, four, five, that helps your imagination.

I think it's lasted much longer than I thought it would and I'm very surprised. I'm a much bigger fan of the Rolling Stones than I am of Aerosmith. It's what I cut my teeth on. And Janis Joplin and the Everly Brothers. Yet there's more Aerosmith on the fucking radio than those guys. It kinda pisses me off a little.

> "We would never make up. We would just carry on, leaving the corpse on the floor."
>
> JOE PERRY

If you had to live the 1970s all over again, would you do it the same way? In other words, to be Aerosmith, did you have to live the lives that nearly killed you?

JP: That's a tough one, because so much of what comes out at one end, you pay for it at the other. I could sit there and go: "Yeah, it would be great if we made these decisions." But then I wouldn't have had the experiences to push the other end. I could go down the list: I could wish we'd had a better manager then, someone to guide us better. We were kids then and we did the best we could. So it's really hard to look back and say: "That would have fixed it", because who knows what that would have done to the next three months? It's like they say about time travel: if you go back in time and fix that one thing, you don't know what impact that's going to have as time goes on.

I believe everything happens for a reason. I wouldn't be the musician I am now if I hadn't gone through the seventies. Good or bad, it is what it is. I don't spend much time thinking about that stuff. Unless you guys ask me.

ST: Yes, absolutely. What do you think Keith Richards would tell you if you asked him that? It was the way it was, man. It was everybody getting stoned. It was peace, love, and if you're not with the one you love, love the one you're ➢

When will we five meet again? Tom Hamilton, Steven Tyler, Joe Perry, Brad Whitford and Joey Kramer.

with. I'd love to tell you I wish I knew better, but I already was kinda living it. I think musicians have a different sense of reality, because of the language of music we speak. I'm sure you've smoked a joint at some time in your life… And that lofty feeling of Jack Daniel's and *'Let me take you down cos I'm going to…'* It's just the way it was, and it took you places you couldn't have ordinarily gone on your own. I definitely travelled Trans Love Airways.

Was there an Aerosmith gig that sums up the band breaking through?

JP: It was after the second record came out [1974]. We'd spent a lot of time touring through the Midwest and into Detroit, so we hadn't played in Boston for a while. When we came back, there was this buzz because *Dream On* had been re-released. The gig was at a high-school auditorium and people were going nuts. Our manager came in and said: "Boys, I think we made some noise." And he pulled a lot of money out of his pockets. Up to then we'd been used to getting three hundred bucks a night. But that night, from the energy of the audience and then him coming in, that was the gig I felt like: "Wow, people are coming to see us, and not just because they're our friends."

That was an amazing time. And that's the case with a lot of young bands. I talked about it with Slash from Guns N' Roses. I talked about it with the cats from the Black Crowes, the guys from AC/DC. There's that period where you go from being a bunch of guys trying to make a crack in the world to having people trying to smash down doors to see your band. That's the most amazing time, and it only happens once.

Steven, do you still get women thanking you for providing the soundtrack to their formative sexual experiences?

ST: Yeah, I get that. I get that from guys too. I heard it from Nancy Pelosi [the former speaker of the US House Of Representatives, and currently the Democrats' leader in the House] that a lot of the songs that Aerosmith wrote and I sang she got laid to for the first time. I love being a part of people's lives like that. I love that Joe and I sat around once and said: "Fuck, we gotta write something," and we got going and wrote *Moving Out*. I'm still honoured to be able to be a musician, that's just a troubadour going from town to town, writing stories about the last town I was in – where the motherfucking dude looked like a lady – and those songs still living. I love it. Although I'm not very partial to that song. I like *Love In An Elevator* a little more, or *What It Takes*.

> **"I just spoke to Joe the other day and told him I'd love to do a Toxic Twins album."**
> STEVEN TYLER

So what comes next?

JP: I've got a batch of songs I'm getting ready to release. I'm just anxious to be able to play them live. We're in the middle of finishing them off right now, and they're really different to anything I've done before. So if Aerosmith wasn't around I would be definitely putting the Joe Perry Project back together so I could go out and tour. I also have the Hollywood Vampires coming up on the horizon and that's going to take a bit of work, too. I'm hoping that all falls together, between Alice [Cooper]'s schedule and Johnny [Depp]'s and mine. Since we postponed the American tour with Aerosmith, I'm hoping we get time to do some of the stuff.

Does that mean there won't be a new Aerosmith album?

JP: Not at all. Steven and I have talked about it. It's just a matter of when. He's got his solo thing that he does. And there's times when he's doing other stuff. But, hey, ultimately I would really like to get in the studio with him and the other guys and do some stuff in the next six months. It doesn't have to be a whole fucking album. We've got enough songs that we could play until 2025 and never do the same set twice. But I still think there's some riffs in there that if the band got together, we could really sink our teeth into.

ST: I don't know how that's going to go. The band want to do a farewell tour in the States, but if we did that we would be out for a year. I don't know when we'd have time to do another Aerosmith album. I just spoke to Joe about that the other day. I told him I'd love to do a Toxic Twins album.

Steven, it's twenty years since you sang that *Falling In Love (Is Hard On The Knees)*. Now you're sixty-nine, is it even harder on them?

ST: It is. Because the more you learn, the more you're afraid to give up. In the beginning you'll fall for anything, if you don't learn what to stand up to. Love can take you down. But it's a strange world now. I'm not sure if I'm falling in love with more things, or just relying on the old things I love the most and trying to get back to them.

THE EPIC SAGA OF THE BAND THAT CHANGED PROG

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"Our music was raunchy and dirty. Hell, our lives were raunchy and dirty."

Getting their rocks off, stuck in a rut, living on the edge, throwing toys out of the pram, nosing the mirror... the five members of **Aerosmith** look back on the finest albums of their stellar career.

Words: **Paul Brannigan**

Aerosmith have made a mockery of author F Scott Fitzgerald's famous maxim: "There are no second acts in American lives." America's greatest hard rock band throughout the 1970s, the Boston five-piece imploded at the end of that decade as egos and drug habits spiralled out of control. The band re-emerged in the mid-80s with a spectacular comeback which saw their raunchy, blues-driven rock'n'roll strike a chord with a whole new generation of fans.

The wheels on the Aerosmith bandwagon have wobbled precariously in recent years, with vocalist Steven Tyler auditioning to take Robert Plant's place in Led Zeppelin in 2008 (he was either rejected or turned it down, depending on whether you believe Tyler or guitarist Joe Perry) and his bandmates threatening to bring in a new vocalist of their own.

The future of Aerosmith, always a combustible outfit, remains uncertain, with both 'Toxic Twins' Tyler and Perry looking to commence solo albums in the coming year. But, whatever lies ahead, there's no arguing with their back catalogue.

Aerosmith

CBS, 1973

The point at where it all started. Even if they did borrow a lot of 'it' from The Rolling Stones and The Yardbirds.

Steven Tyler: Man, talk about raw! That album was the shit. We were living together in an apartment in Boston, and we had to scrape together the songs that we were playing in clubs and write some of our own. It was a crazy period. Joe would sit in his room and get stoned and play guitar with his amp on and, I swear, more great shit would come out of his fingers in one night than we ever collected in 30 years. Joe and I wrote *Movin' Out*, and the next thing I knew everyone was moving out, to live with their girlfriends. In my fear and anger I wrote a couple of songs on piano – *Dream On* and *One Way Street*. And I grabbed a guitar and wrote a couple of songs on that, which I'd never done prior to that. It just shows you what you can do under pressure.

Joe Perry: I had no idea in what was involved in getting the band to sound good. We basically set up ➔

GETTY

Steven Tyler: a rock'n'roll life lived on the edge.

GETTY X2

in a room with our stage gear and just played the set. It was that basic. Steven was a real perfectionist. He'd make us play stuff over and over and over again until it was right to his ears.

Steven Tyler: Did it cross the line into bullying? Well, how the fuck else do you get a bunch of teenagers to stop what they're doing and just focus? It's hard being in a band. But the difference here was that nobody left, nobody went to go to college, everyone dug in. We fucking did it, man. And then we were off.

Get Your Wings

CBS, 1974

The sound of a young band finding their voice, it also marked the start of their long relationship with producer Jack Douglas.

Brad Whitford: Our first record laid the groundwork for our career, but *Get Your Wings* was where we started our lifetime romance with Jack Douglas. He had such great ideas for our songs. We'd hear songs like *Same Old Song And Dance* coming out of the speakers and we thought we were sitting on a mountain of gold.

Tom Hamilton: We were under a lot of pressure on that album. When our first record came out it didn't do very well and the record company was very disappointed. They gave us an ultimatum; they pretty much said: "If your next record doesn't do really well then you're not recording artists anymore." So we all moved back in together, and every single day we just lived the album.

Steven Tyler: On the first album I didn't really like my voice, so I kinda put on a blues voice, but on the second album the songs found my voice. I realised that it's not about having a beautiful voice and hitting all the notes, it's about attitude.

Toys In The Attic

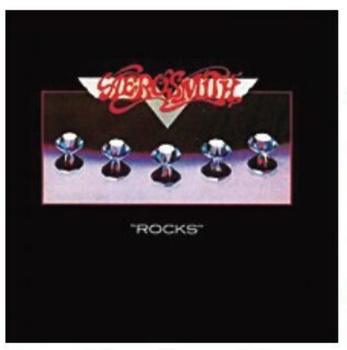
CBS, 1975

The first true Aerosmith classic. *Sweet Emotion, Walk This Way* and the title track have never been off their live set-list since.

Tom Hamilton: Since we'd had so little support from radio stations on the first album, our management realised that we'd need to go out and tour our asses off. It was great for the band in terms of progressing our style and ability as musicians, but unfortunately it progressed our abilities in some other directions too.

Joe Perry: This was the watershed for us in becoming recording artists. It was the first record we had to start from scratch as far as writing goes, but I was really starting to get into the momentum of it, in terms of writing, and really starting to pull riffs from the air.

Steven Tyler: One night we were playing the HIC in Honolulu. In soundcheck Joe was playing the lick to *Walk This Way,* and I came out on stage and sat down at the drums and came up with a beat, and the rest is history. But on the way to The Record Plant to record it I lost all the lyrics to the album in a yellow cab, so that night I had to rewrite the lyrics from memory. The reason it came across as kinda rap more than singing is that I really didn't have time to get into bed with the lyrics, they were hot off the press, so I just threw it down, speaking more than singing. But I think it worked out just fine, didn't it?



Rocks

CBS, 1976

The album that inspired Slash, James Hetfield and Kurt Cobain to pick up a guitar. An enduring stone-cold classic.

Tom Hamilton: We recorded it in our rehearsal space, just outside Boston. We had the Record Plant

"I sat down at the drums and came up with the beat to *Walk This Way*."

Steven Tyler

recording truck pull into the garage, and we had a big room which we dressed with heavy curtains and divided up into a really neat recording room. There was a lot of laughter and a lot of camaraderie. Everyone was at their best on that album.

Joe Perry: There were a lot of drugs around, but if anything it helped loosen us up a little. The music always came first, everything else was just entertainment. The party only started taking over a few years later.

Steven Tyler: Everyone talks about the drugs, but if you want to talk about stuff that has any relevance here let's talk about something else. The drugs were part of our lifestyle then, but sleep deprivation was just as important here. We'd sit down with Jack [Douglas, producer], and get an arrangement in seven or eight hours and go and record it the next day. So, to me, that record is not about 'How much cocaine did you do?' It's got everything to do with me sitting in a dingy hotel in Hell's Kitchen writing the lyrics after a long day at the studio, back when 42nd Street was full of hookers and pimps and shady bars. *Rocks* sounds raunchy and dirty? Hell, our lives were raunchy and dirty. What else would you expect?

Draw The Line

CBS, 1977

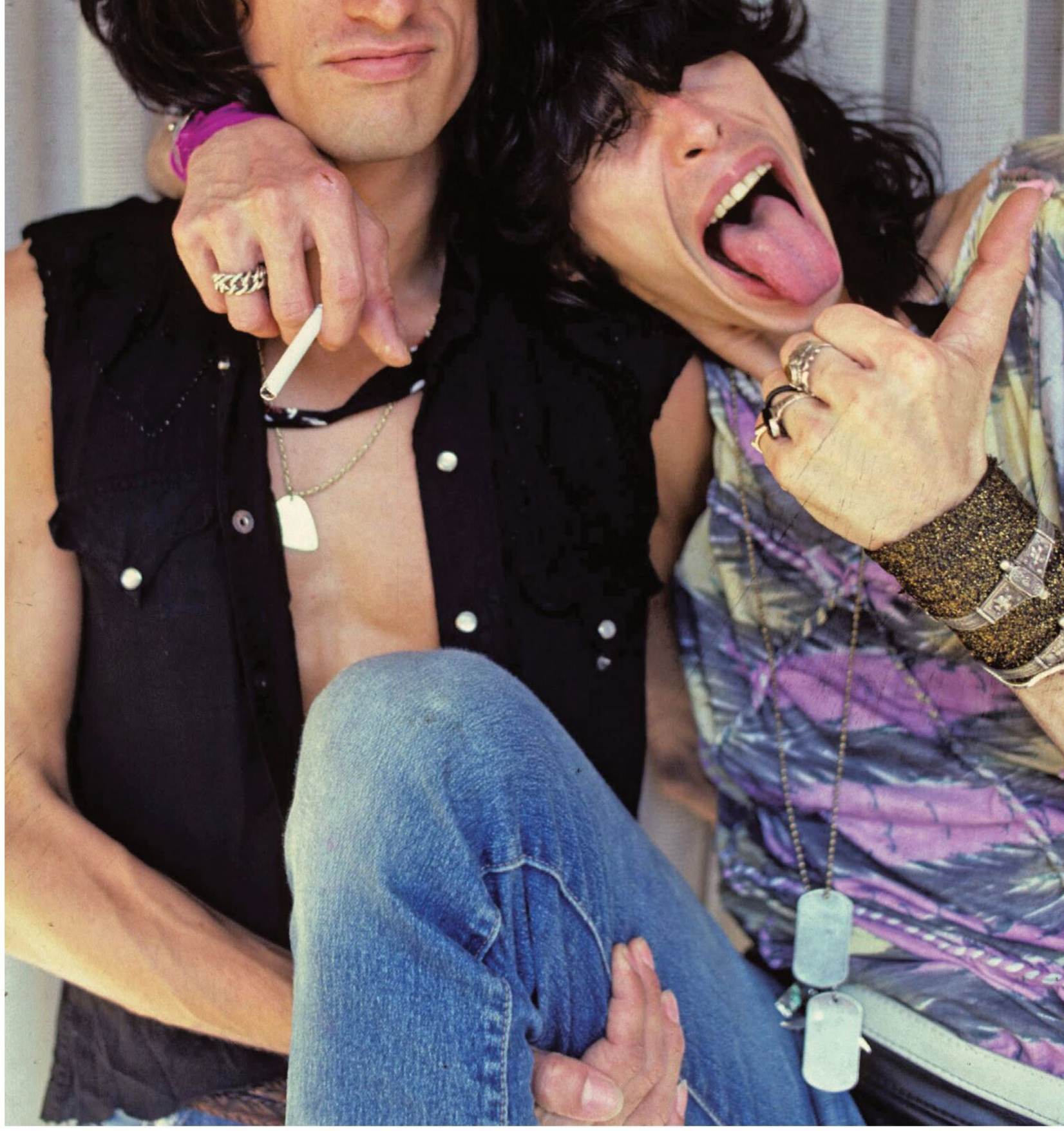
Recorded in an abandoned convent near New York at huge expense. But any remaining holy vibes did nothing to stop the wheels seriously wobbling.

Brad Whitford: We had caterers, we had our cars, and we were getting into all kinds of mischief. We had a great set-up to make the record, but we also had a lot of distractions.

Joe Perry: We were running wild. The whole thing about being in a band was having a good time. But sometimes you can have too much of a good time. We probably should have left some of our toys at home. We were all recording in separate rooms, and that's an appropriate analogy for where the band was at.

Steven Tyler: That album was fucking weird. This was the tail end of the band getting together all the time to write. Everyone was married, we'd toured ourselves into oblivion. I cringe when I look back on it. Apart from *Draw The Line* and *Kings And Queens*, we should have thrown everything else out and started from scratch.

Tom Hamilton: In terms of drug use, *Draw The Line* was the lowest point. There was just too much decadence and destruction going on. We went from being this great up-and-coming band to being this dilapidated shambles. I never liked the album. All I think of is all the pain we went through as a band.



Let the good times roll: the Toxic Twins reunited in 1984.

Night In The Ruts

CBS, 1979

When the wheels came off completely. Joe Perry walked out halfway through the session, Brad Whitford soon after.

Tom Hamilton: *Night In The Ruts* was our chance to get things back on track. But it was frustrating. We took too long to make it, and our management booked a tour, leaving us just enough time to make the record, based on how long it'd taken us in the past, but we actually needed much more time. So we had to go on tour before the vocals were finished, and it was dragging on and on. Everyone was super-frustrated by it.

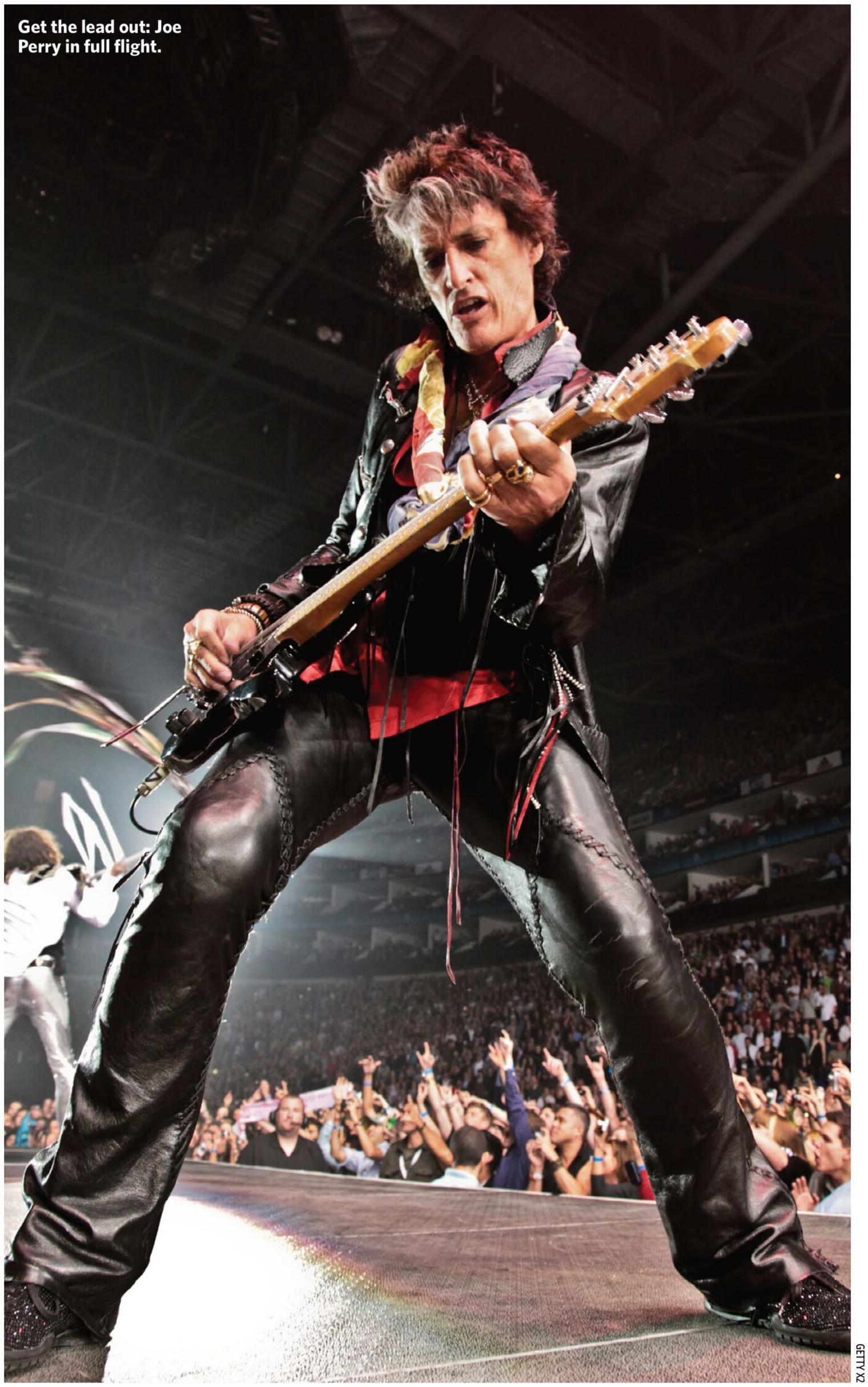
It's ironic, because we were out on the road, playing stadiums to huge amounts of people, and yet the band was getting ready to die. Sure enough, after a show in Cleveland we went backstage after the show and had a big band meeting in one of the dressing trailers, and the result was that Joe left the band. And, to be honest, it was a relief, because it was so uncomfortable on the road. There was so much anger and stress and fatigue that the band couldn't have survived it.

"It'd be nice to make another album, but I don't know if it'll happen"

Joe Perry

Steven Tyler: The songwriting credits alone tell the story of that album. It's not *Toys In The Attic*, where it was all songs written by us, it's got a load of covers. It was a patchwork quilt.

It was tumultuous at best. We'd been wounded by going at such a speed, both on tour and in the studio. And I was definitely getting attitude from some of the members then. Joe decided to not be there, and Tom and Brad also both left during that time, because I wasn't working on the album fast enough for them. I'd say: "Well then why don't you write the lyrics?" Then I was trying to get Jimmy Crespo to be the next Joe Perry, but he didn't have Joe's swagger. I really wasn't sure what was going to happen after this. We managed to pull the album together, but just about.



Get the lead out: Joe Perry in full flight.

GETTY X2

Done With Mirrors

GEFFEN, 1985

Perry quit halfway through 1979's *Night In The Ruts*, and their other guitarist, Brad Whitford, followed soon after. Both returned for this much-touted 'comeback' album, produced by Van Halen associate Ted Templeman. Except it didn't quite turn out that way.

Joe Perry: Aerosmith hadn't really done much for the name in our absence, with Steven passing out at gigs, and that record they made with the other guitar players [1982's *Rock In A Hard Place*, with Jimmy Crespo and Rick Dufay]… Let's just say we don't play any songs off that one. It wasn't a bed of roses when we got back together.

Brad Whitford: It wasn't one of our better albums. We knew we had some work to do to get back to being professional musicians, because at that point we were half musician/half partiers. The party was over at that point, but we were the last people to know. The album title had a certain irony to it, because our drug use was still pretty prevalent.

Steven Tyler: It was a crazy get-together. We looked at Ted Templeman's credits and thought that it might make for a great departure, but the band wasn't quite there at the time. It was a really odd time. We were trying to get sober and we didn't know why. *Done With Mirrors* was rough and raw and corporate, but it had to come out to get us going again.

Permanent Vacation

GEFFEN, 1987

The 'proper' comeback, following 1985's misfiring *Done With Mirrors*, with the help of outside songwriters including Desmond Child and Jim Vallance.

Steven Tyler: As soon as we sat down with David Geffen and [A&R man] John Kalodner, they talked about bringing in some new people to write with us. For me personally that was great, because sometimes Joe and I needed structure. It made it a little easier for us. There were some fucking great songs on there.

Tom Hamilton: As with *Get your Wings*, there was an element of make-or-break to that album. But we worked with [producer] Bruce Fairbairn in Vancouver and he was just the personality that we needed at that point. We needed a strong leader and a coach who would kick our asses and make sure everybody was there and ready to work on time every day, instead of us sitting around all afternoon waiting for people's hangovers to wear off. We aimed a little bit higher than before and really hit the mark, certainly compared to *Done With Mirrors*.

Brad Whitford: This was a good time. We felt rejuvenated, and working with Bruce Fairbairn and Bob Rock in Vancouver was a lot of fun. The music was definitely coming back into focus then. John Kalodner was very instrumental in getting Joe and Steven to write with outside writers, and that developed into some really interesting music. I mean, it's a bit of blow to the ego to have someone say your writing could use some help. At first you don't know how to take it. And it was a definite sore spot for us. But when we stepped back and

Walk this way (again): Tyler with rapper Post Malone in 2018.

listened to what John was saying, it made sense. John said to us: "Look, you guys are in a position here that if you can get some really strong material, you could really expand your audience; getting MTV and radio could really do amazing things for your career." All the writing up to that point was collective among the band, so it was very tough for us guys to get used to it, because we were working separately a lot. It hurt a little, but it made sense to give it a shot. But John was right, and it paid off. If we'd been stubborn, there might not be an Aerosmith now.

Pump

GEFFEN, 1989

If 1987's *Permanent Vacation* put the newly-sober 'Smiths back on top, then this crowned their comeback. Their last true classic.

Joey Kramer: We were fortunate to be able to do the remake of *Walk This Way* with Run-DMC which reignited our career. To follow that up with *Permament Vacation* and *Pump* was a real second coming. Somebody up there was looking out for us.

Steven Tyler: There's some crazily good shit on that record. *Young Lust? What It Takes? F.I.N.E? Love In An Elevator*? Fuck me, we had collected some fine-ass marbles on that record. We actually finished 18 songs for that album, and some of them you'll never hear. We had to bury a lot of good shit.

Working with [producer] Bruce Fairbairn was incredible. He could squeeze blood out of a stone in terms of getting every single last idea from a band. But every day he'd work with us for six hours and then leave. And I fucking hated it, because I might just be getting to the point where the magic is happening for me. I remember everybody leaving one day, and me working on *Elevator* on my own, ad-libbing the front part to it.

Bruce Fairbairn introduced me to this crazy fucking guy who collected all these instruments from all over the world. When I went up to his house, I completely lost my shit. He had everything from nose-flutes to Ethiopian instruments – and he could play them all. And I started jamming with him. And we took those jams and put them between the tracks, and that was the magic that took that album over the top.

Music From Another Dimension

COLUMBIA, 2012

Their first original studio album in a decade had a troubled birth. It still divides opinion among fans – and band members.

Tom Hamilton: It was rough at times. Not all of us were as anxious to get back into the studio as some others.

Steven Tyler: After falling off the stage [in South Dakota in 2009], I wasn't getting any sympathy from the guys. When we talked about going on tour, Joe said: "Why don't you sit on a stool?" And I said: "I will, if you play electric ukele." But when I went to rehab, I realised that the fucking band is the greatest asset I've got short of my children, and I was tired of the fighting. We wound up going to Boston and getting back together with Jack Douglas. It brought everybody to the table with their songs.

Joe Perry: Steven was determined to do those ballads with Marti Frederiksen, because apparently we "needed singles". Some of those songs he wrote with Marti didn't do anything for me. I'd say about 70-80 per cent of the record stands up, but the rest is a compromise. And it did nothing commercially.

We're at a place where not many people are interested in new music from us. It'd be nice to make another record but, practically, I don't know if it'll happen. Steven wants to do a solo record, I have another solo record I want to do, and I'm working on an autobiography. I don't see us taking the time out to do it.

Steven Tyler: Is it the last Aerosmith album? I'm doing a record, but there's definitely another Aerosmith album in us. As long as we're walking the earth there will be one.

Heavy Load

Heavy questions for heavy rockers

Joe Perry on drugs, Ebola and coming back as a porpoise...

Interview: **Henry Yates** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

If Steven Tyler is the lips, then Joe Perry has always been the balls of Aerosmith. Born in Massachusetts on September 10, 1950, the guitarist was key to the Bostonians' mid-70s breakout, the louche swagger of his lead style prompting spiritual successor Slash to dub him "one of the great wham-bam players". Famously, Aerosmith's affairs grew messy, but Perry emerged largely unscathed from the chaos, finding sobriety in the mid-80s, embarking on an enduring marriage, and reaching back through the haze to write a surprisingly lucid autobiography, 2014's *Rocks: My Life In And Out Of Aerosmith*.

Which part of your autobiography did you find hardest to write?
Revisiting the hard times. And then making the decision about whether to include them. Y'know, do I want to air my dirty laundry? The hardest years to address were when our manager [Tim Collins] was with us. We got sober and we saw success… and meanwhile, he was trying to undermine the whole thing.

Do you know how Steven Tyler feels about his portrayal?
I've heard from second-party sources that he's not too happy with the book. That's all. I haven't talked to him since it came out.

What's your greatest fear?
That they're gonna mishandle this Ebola thing. The influenza pandemic of 1918 killed more people than World War I, and the potential for that happening again is right around the corner. I worry for my family and for my grandkids, and I'm not sure politicians have it at the top of their list.

Do you remember being broke?
Oh yeah. That feeling, it never leaves you, even after you've made it and money is not an issue. When the tax people put a note on your door that says you gotta be out of your house in two weeks – I remember those days well.

Where do you stand politically?
Let's just put it this way. I love America. I love the culture. I love the freedom that it stands for. But I don't like the politics. I don't feel the people are represented the way they should be. So many things that made America great have been kinda stepped on by politicians. Politics is a business. First thing they do when they get into office is figure out how they're gonna get re-elected.

What would you have as your final meal?
I really like lobster. Chilli with lobster is really good. There's a great place in Massachusetts where they make lobster rolls, so I'd probably go for that. But I have no intention of eating my final meal for a long time.

If reincarnation exists, what do you think you deserve to come back as?
I'd like to be either some kind of predatory bird, or some kind of whale, like a porpoise or a killer whale. I think they're much smarter than people give them credit for. They have a way of communicating; they have a whole society. They're a lot more advanced in their environment than we are.

Do you think Aerosmith have ever made a bad album?
Done With Mirrors, as far as I'm concerned, is our least inspired record. But I've heard fans really like it, so I'm not gonna stand here and tell 'em: "No, it sucks". We had to do that record to get to the next one, so it served its purpose. I just don't think it's up to the standard of some of our others.

Joe Perry: kecks and drugs and lobster rolls.

"I had the money and I wanted to spend it on drugs. It wasn't wasted."

What were you like at school?
I was pretty much a loner. I wasn't a wise-guy. I didn't cause trouble. I realised early on that the less noise you made, the less attention you'd attract. So I could go off and do what I wanted and be left alone, as long as I kept a low profile. I knew from the start that I wasn't gonna stay in that town. I mean, it's a beautiful little town… but I just knew there was something out there for me.

What was your biggest waste of money?
I suppose I spent more money on clothes than I could have. But what's the point of working for it if you don't spend it? I mean, from the outside, you could say that spending money on drugs is a waste, but it's what I wanted at the time. Steven has said stuff like: "I've spent $64 million on drugs". There's no fucking way in the world you could spend that much money on drugs and still be alive. It makes a good headline, but practically speaking, that was probably a very small portion of where we spent our money.

What's the secret of success?
I think it's being realistic about what you have; what you can bring to the party. Success is finding what you really love to do. If you can make a living doing what you love, that to me is success. Whatever job you have, if you feel you've accomplished something and made the world a bit better that day, that's the most you can hope for. And that makes for a full life, I think.

What's the worst physical pain you've ever been in?
When my right knee was injured [in 2009]. It was an annoyance most of the time, but near the end, when I had to get it replaced, there were times when it was pretty much agony. But I still had to walk out on stage and put on the best show I could. Then the therapy after… that was surprisingly painful.

How do you want to be remembered?
As a good father, having taken care of my wife and kids. After that, as a good entertainer. That people walked away from our shows feeling a little bit better.

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