

D i s c l a i m e r

In a work of this scope and type there is always the possibility, and probability, that errors and/or inaccuracies have slipped through proof-reading and the continuous revision process. Misinterpretation of comments made by various parties is also possible. While I have tried strenuously to avoid these pitfalls, in using a wide variety of source material, notably quotations from the band members themselves, I have not been with anyone in the band through every minute/event of the past 30-plus years.

It is critical to remind the reader to keep in mind that this work is **AN UNAUTHORIZED AND UNSANCTIONED WORK**. It does **NOT** claim to represent the views of the band, people associated with band (past or present), the management (past or present), nor anyone other than the author. The author has no connections whatsoever with any of the above, and is nothing more than a fan of the band. The reader should also keep in mind that the author is not a KISS “insider,” and with any written work there is always a matter of perspective.

Few bands actually “like” unsanctioned work, for various reasons including their dislike of being misrepresented, or others appearing to profit from their work. As the experience of the author dictates, the band has little to worry about concerning the latter point. As to the former, this work draws on what the band members have said in the press and media, or what the press/media have said about the band. Naturally, that leaves room for (mis)interpretation and other errors. Also, the band members may have been misquoted, quoted out of context, or simply no longer agree with their previous statements (that’s their prerogative)...

The author has approached this work with objectivity in mind. There is no agenda to promote. There is no desire to make anyone look “good” or “bad.” There is simply the hope to tell the story of a band, and its music. For the author it is music that

is inspiring and enjoyable on so many levels. Nothing more, nothing less, just a fan celebrating the work of an incredible band with an amazing story. Any errors executed within this work are done so without malice, and should any be found the author apologizes categorically in advance. Any errors or corrections can be emailed to ***webmaster@kissfaq.com***.

Any necessary corrections and/or clarifications for this work can be found in the online corrigendum at:

<http://www.kissfaq.com/ed41corrections.html>

History of the “KISS Album Focus”

The “KISS Album Focus” began as a feature written for the KISS Asylum website. It premiered in January 1999. The webmaster of that site, at the time, Chris White and I had started discussing the project in June 1998. In fact, I had been planning a long series of articles for use on my own website. I had written three substantial articles that appeared under the “Through The Past Darkly” series banner. However, using a Rolling Stones title ultimately seemed pretty silly, and the connotation of such a title suggested a negative or revisionist interpretation.

The original articles, “Art Or Arrogance: The Elder,” “Carnival Of Souls,” and the “Eric Carr Tribute 1997,” – were actually conceived well before I had even heard of Dale Sherman and the publication of his excellent “Black Diamond” book. Those original articles still provide a framework for the respective chapters they represent in the “KISS Album Focus,” even if they have been revised substantially in the years since they originally appeared.

It was Dale’s work that served as inspiration for the “KISS Album Focus.” The objective of the work was to look into the history of KISS on an album-by-album basis. With the colorful history of the band there were many challenges the members faced during their path down the rock ‘n roll road to legend. It was that and other minutiae that I wished to document. Ultimately it was the depth and minutiae that I wanted to pack into the articles and stories that would never make it into a mass-market properly published work!

When I started writing the online feature it was never my intention to write a book. I didn’t realize that I was doing so. However, I eventually reached a point after writing a couple dozen chapters where it just seemed to make sense to collect all of the completed articles in one solid format work. I never stopped revising the articles even after they were posted online, so this work represents the corpus of the material as it currently

stands. In some ways I still do not consider this work a “book.” Whereas fanzines are fan magazines dedicated to a particular subject, I see this work as taking that concept to the next level: A “fan-book!”

With the band embarking on what was then billed as a “Farewell” tour, it seemed to be an ideal time to publish the work. Little did I (or anyone) know that the “Farewell” would not be the end of the band as anticipated. When the book was first privately published in May 2002, only 500 copies were printed – these quickly sold out. The second edition of December 2002 added a further 752 copies. The third edition split the work into three volumes containing additional revisions, enhancements, and splits the work into three volumes. It ultimately brought the story of KISS into 2007. This work is not a fourth edition, it is really just second printing of Volume 1 though it contains even more revisions and enhancements.

Introduction

In the context of KISS perhaps it would be most appropriate to begin this story with the following words: “Before there was light there was darkness (and Alice Cooper)...” The band’s story was never fully a fairytale, so “once upon a time” won’t cut it. Yet, the band’s story contains elements that seem fairytale, part nightmare, part epic, and even as if they could have come directly from the pages of a comic book. The magic that is KISS is certainly a concoction that could have come from witch’s cauldron, an amalgamation of so many ingredients, many highly reactive!

Exploring more deeply the band’s history often appears to be more of a comic tragedy! In some ways a fairytale beginning seems to be a more suitable introduction for this story, for there are more than a few fairytales along the way. Seldom does a band come along with a vision that changes the face of music indelibly, creating something that can really be considered unique. The legacy of KISS has provided more than a few bands something to imitate, borrow, and further develop. The band’s emergence was a musical epiphany of sorts, leaving a scar on the music industry and providing more than a small kick in the ass.

The Beatles were one such band, perhaps the ultimate for changing the face of pop culture. Elvis alone opened up the whole world to the then often-unappreciated R&B style that a then-segregated society could not separate because of skin color. KISS is another of the acts to really have innovated and added something tangible to the entertainment industry. KISS in many way became The Beatles for a whole new generation who could say, “I became interested in music when I saw KISS on TV...” In other words, the equivalent of The Beatles’ Ed Sullivan appearance in February 1964 became KISS’ 1976 Paul Lynde Halloween Special appearance.

KISS redefined what it meant to be a band and to entertain. They took elements previously explored by Alice Cooper and

the New York Dolls to whole new levels as a package that extended past the confines of the stage. In essence they defined themselves to be more than just music and were more about the whole entertainment process: The music, the personalities transformed into characters, the show, and the merchandising and business. Anything and everything was possible, no idea ignored, and nothing was sacred for exploitation in the name of the band. There was an evolutionary process and the people who surrounded the band were the sort who didn't live by any conventional rule-book, they were perfect for a band who didn't want to be like any other.

By the late 1970s KISS were earning more from merchandise than from their music, taking to a whole new level the market first explored by The Beatles. From bubble-gum to record players to clothing to dolls, KISS covered all sectors of possible merchandise licensing. They eventually had sales topping 1500 companies on the stock exchange! The band had transformed itself into a brand that maintains a sales power even to this day. And for those who complain, do you think you continue to see so much merchandise because the licensing is a failure? Nope, people are apparently still buying it no matter what anyone else thinks.

There are few other bands which can describe themselves as brands, let alone measure themselves in the same league as KISS. Even the makeup designs were trademarked to protect the use of the highly visible identity of the band, and the brand became more powerful. The exploitation of marketing and licensing added a whole new revenue source to a band's income. In the past band's revenues had been based on record sales percentages, publishing and performance royalties, and touring. None of which provide major money unless the act is a major success, something few attain.

Through all of the challenges and successes the common problem of personal strife and addictions ultimately pulled the band apart, not only from within. These changes resulted in an alienation of the original members from one another on both

personal and professional levels. The problems within the band also alienated the band from their fans. These addictions were not limited to those of substance abuse of various descriptions, but included those of ego and power. It is easy for some members to describe the band as being a family, but inappropriate in the context of the business that is a band. As goes the old saying, “it’s business, not personal.”

Vastly different characters, Gene and Paul imposed themselves as the core of the band from its very beginning and pursued their vision throughout the band’s history. However, it would be unfair to simply suggest that only Gene and Paul fought for the band. Both Peter and Ace had, in their own ways, tried to push their own agendas and ideas for the band, though not as successfully as Gene and Paul. As a result it is not surprising that they departed the band. While the attempt to diversify and compete with other bands ultimately failed, the post “Classic Era” period saw bands that were often imitating what KISS had once been overtaking them in terms of popularity and commercial success.

KISS’ past was a double-edged sword, and while they struggled with identity following the removal of the makeup and the results of poor investment advice, they could never escape their past or stand side-by-side with their competing bands. This trip of redefinition and attempts at originality ultimately ended with the reunion of the original members in 1996. Some might argue that the band’s attempt at originality ended in 1983, but that will be explored later.

The “KISS Album Focus” builds a picture of the history of the band chronologically, through each of the band’s album releases. You’ll be able to find out the logic behind the releases, and what was going on in the band during the recording of albums. In general this work is about what was going on inside the band in the period leading up to and surrounding the release of each album. Hopefully, there will be lots more information of interest to the diehard fan (and hopefully others too)! Some of the album focuses use reference material never before available

plus some of the best interviews with the band and other material already available from a variety of sources dating back to the band's inception.

In piecing together all of the evidence in a readable manner, the author is going for accuracy in an attempt to provide a completely clear and objective picture of the history of the band and its members. What you'll find is details on stuff you may have only heard about, new information you perhaps didn't know about, or assorted other interesting vignettes of KISSStory. Tangents are happily investigated, in the broad scope of this work, to help build up the whole picture of the history of the band and its members.

Many KISS rumors that have become urban legend will be killed off once and for all (well, that's probably too much to ask for, since so many are so ingrained in the social conscious), and others will be validated! Obviously, some additional features will be required to "fill" out the complete picture, rather than just give the history of the band album by album. This includes the supplemental articles on a variety of subjects including "Pre-KISSStory," "It's a Chicken, It's A Hawk, no, it's Rusty Blades!," "1978, The Intermission," "Curiosity Killed The Cat...," "Lost In Space," and more. Those titles should provide some hint about what the respective articles will deal with.

Hopefully, what we end up with is the presentation of a complete and objective picture of the band, and its whole history, and of those supporting characters that comprise the KISS family. Read on, friend, and enjoy. And remember, "It's The Music, Stupid" (attrib. Simmons)...