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# BRUCE KULICK INTERVIEW

By Arash Moussevian

What follows are parts from the interview conducted with Bruce backstage at The Orange Pavillion in San Bernadino, California on Dec. 19, 1992.

*What adjustments did you make to your guitar following the car accident (during the recording of H.I.T.S.) in which you broke your collar bone?* "Well, that's like over three years ago, but it's not easy to be up there running around and playing for two hours. I just make sure the guitars are light, and I try to keep them in decent enough shape which is sometimes not easy on the road. If you're smart you try to get worked on with a massage, and a chiropractor to straighten you out. It's never really stopped me from playing. It's sometimes just a little more painful to play, and it's very common. A lot of guys that have never had a broken bone in their body get some soreness. It's my little Achilles' heel, but I deal with it. You don't have to have very heavy guitars to get a great sound. I make sure that when I buy guitars, or when ESP makes me a guitar that they are of a reasonable weight."

*As far as a Bruce Kulick model guitar, do you have any plans on releasing that at any point?* "Right now I've gotten into the Explorers a lot which I can't really make my model, because that's a Gibson trademark. With regards to some of the ESP that I like to play, I like a certain stratocaster shape body, a certain style neck and I do like some features. But in some ways it's very generic, and close to a lot of other things. That's why I haven't been so anxious to do it. If I had one out, and if I do it will probably be like one of my favorite touring guitars. I don't know if that's different enough from the things that are on the market to make it a Bruce Kulick guitar. But I'm gonna talk to ESP about it at the N.A.M.M. show coming up. I'm sure if I did it, it would be a small limited run and then see how it goes."

*As far as a follow-up to your initial instructional videotape, do you have plans to follow that up with any?* "That's a good question. I've been approached, but we were real busy. It's possible. I felt real good wehn I did that one, because it was an opportunity for me to show that besides playing that I can also explain what I play. Some people can't. I used to teach before I joined KISS, and I used to enjoy teaching in fact. It's possible, but I'm not sure what new things I could really show. But I'm not planning anything right now."

*In my personal view you're a very talented guitar player, and I would really look forward to seeing you release an instrumental album at some point. Do you plan to do that at any time?* "It's possible. I've always looked at my guitar playing as being something that takes a song to the next level as opposed to just being mister virtuoso whose just flying riffs everywhere. Certainly on my home tapes I like to overplay a lot, but I'm not adding all the lyrics and vocals at that point. I did one song for the *Guitar For The Practicing Musician* album. That was fun to do. I had a very short amount of time to do it, and it was very limited budget. But I was real proud of that. I could see myself doing eleven tracks, but

it's not smething I'm burning for. I'd rather focus on KISS, but it's possible."  
*(At this point in the interview Eric Singer walks into the dressing room. He looks pale and sick. I soon learn that he has the flu. Below is the conversation that transpires during Eric's short visit. Eric: "What's happening? I just blew lunch." Bruce: "I know." Eric: "Did you hear me puking?" Bruce: "Yeah, this is going on tape too." Eric (laughing): "Oh sorry." Bruce (laughing): "I don't care.")*

If I can ask you about the Smashes, Trashes & Hits record, it was released as a single LP and is nowhere near representative of the history behind the band. Could you please state the reason for which it was released only as a single LP as opposed to a double LP as Double Platinum was. Was that the record company's decision? "There were two new songs on it regardless of that. Especially during the Crazy Nights Tour, we realized that there were a lot of people we were playing for that were new KISS fans. We didn't really think they could have possibly been old enough to buy the older albums. So the idea was to put it out, remix it and remaster it which was a good idea because some of the tapes were almost at the point of deterioration. So they were able to transfer everything over. Thus, we were able to not only update and make sure the catalog is preserved on digital, but at the same time we had Eric Carr sing *Beth* which was something interesting. I don't think it was any record company pressure, and it actually did very well which showed that it served a purpose. There were a lot of people who maybe didn't know some of those earlier songs, but who were turned on to the band in those couple of years."

When Smashes, Trashes & Hits was released the promotional t-shirt had "Live Tour '89" printed on the back. Did the band originally plan to do a club tour subsequent to the release of the album, and then opted not to do so? That I don't remember."

I showed the shirt to Paul and Gene, and they found it amusing that it had that on the back. But they said that you didn't have any plans to tour. "No, we didn't. Maybe whoever made it thought, 'Well they have a new record out, obviously they're gonna tour'."

So you had no say on it? "No, unfortunately we sometimes get these t-shirts a little later than we care to get them."

I think the Animalize Live Uncensored videotape is a classic. If you had not released that would you have released Alive III at that point, because Animalize has been your biggest selling post-make up album? "I don't think so. I think *Animalize Live Uncensored* was more related to the fact that a home video market was exploding. The video cassette recorder market really took off around 1984, and now it's so common that everyone has got a video cassette recorder. I think to be able to have a whole hour and a half concert of KISS on video was special. If you noticed a lot of bands did it then. Now the long-form live concert video is not as popular, because it is a little boring unless you're doing the one-shot pay-per-view which is like an event..."

Which you're going to do in January. "Yeah, but I don't think any of us have really even seen it." [It still hasn't been aired yet - ed.]

Could you elaborate on that? "All I know is that Sebastian Bach is going to be

hosting it. I'd say that maybe three quarters of it is exactly what *X-treme Close-Up* is, and there is that other quarter that is different. But like I said, I haven't seen it. But it wasn't the time to do *Alive III*. It was a great tour, and we had this pod coming down..."

*That stage set up was great. In a lot of ways it reminded me of the stage production for Cats. "Oh yeah, I know what you mean. I never saw that, but I've seen pictures of it, and they do have something like that."*

*Maybe Gene saw something... "Who knows, maybe he did."*

*Talking about the Animalize Tour, during the east coast dates Mark St. John played a couple of gigs... "One and a half to be exact."*

*Okay, Baltimore being one of them. How was the rapport to have five guys walking towards the stage with you and Mark both in costume? How was that worked out? "When I was first asked to fill in it was only for a temporary situation. I realized I was going to do the best I could, because I consider myself a professional. Of course I was hoping I would be asked to join the band. But when I got involved my mind was set to just do this to help them out, and then I'm going to go out and work on my career. So there was no presumption on my part, and I respected Mark as a player. So when they still wanted to give Mark a shot I was very clear that I wasn't going to be negative about anything, because it was either going to work out for me or it wasn't. In fact we used to jam sometimes. So I kept it as cordial and friendly as possible because the gig was actually his, and I was just helping out. As it turned out, his health didn't improve, and I knew that they were really*



happy with me at that point. So the most important thing wasn't so much the contract they had with Mark, but what's going to be best for the band. That's why they wound up going with me. I got to admit that the show that he did I was jealous..."

*What shows did he do?* "I know that one was Baltimore, but I don't remember the other one. He only did some of it, because they wanted to just try it out a little bit. Then it was to see what would happen if he did a whole show, how he'd perform and sound on the songs. I got to say that I already had the gig down so far I was at a big advantage and he was at a big disadvantage..."

*Because you already did the European leg of the Animalize Tour.* "Yeah, I was real confident with the songs and the stage. Not as a full-time KISS member..."

*But still much more than Mark.* "Absolutely, they heard tapes of my playing with the band, and it sounded good. So at that point he was at a disadvantage. I felt bad about that, but that's what it goes down to. They didn't want to take a chance, and they were happy with how I worked out. So that's how that all worked out."

*Could you please explain the difference in production styles between Ron Nevison as compared to Bob Ezrin?* "They're both engineering type of producers. Nevison was always engineering records, and then he became a producer. Ezrin came from a more creative musicians's background and he happens to engineer. So they're different in that way. Also, Nevison can't help with songwriting, whereas Ezrin is certainly a good songwriter. But Ezrin doesn't sit home and write songs, he'll work with the band he's working with. So that's real helpful. Besides being the babysitter, and the one who has to psychologically psyche up everyone to do the best they can, all the famous producers have different strengths to what they can bring to a band. They all have their different styles. In some ways I really like Nevison, but I thought Ezrin was probably the most talented producer I've worked with in my whole career."

*He certainly did a terrific job on Destroyer, (Music From) The Elder and now with Revenge.* "Yeah, (Music From) The Elder maybe just wasn't the right kind of thing for KISS at that time."

*Well it certainly has some classic tracks on it.* "Yeah, there's some good stuff on it. I also think the band was stretching. But that's okay, because if you're a real fan you can get into that. But the masses were saying, 'Huh?'."

*The pranks that Eric Carr used to pull on Gene have been well publicized. Can you recall any that Eric pulled on you that you can vividly remember?* "I can't think of one on tour, but I remember he was a real character at my wedding. We were videotaping the wedding, and as people are being interviewed he's buys making faces behind them, mimicking them and things like that which was very funny. Eric was a very, very funny guy."

*As far as keyboards, Gary Corbett did the European leg of the Revenge Tour, but now you have Derek Sherinian. Could you please state why you made that transition from one keyboard player to another?* "Well, Gary wasn't even sure that he was going to come to Europe. Although we felt that he was part of the family and he certainly did his job real well, his intention was never to be the fifth KISS member. Then it came to whether or not he wanted to do this. Due to commitments

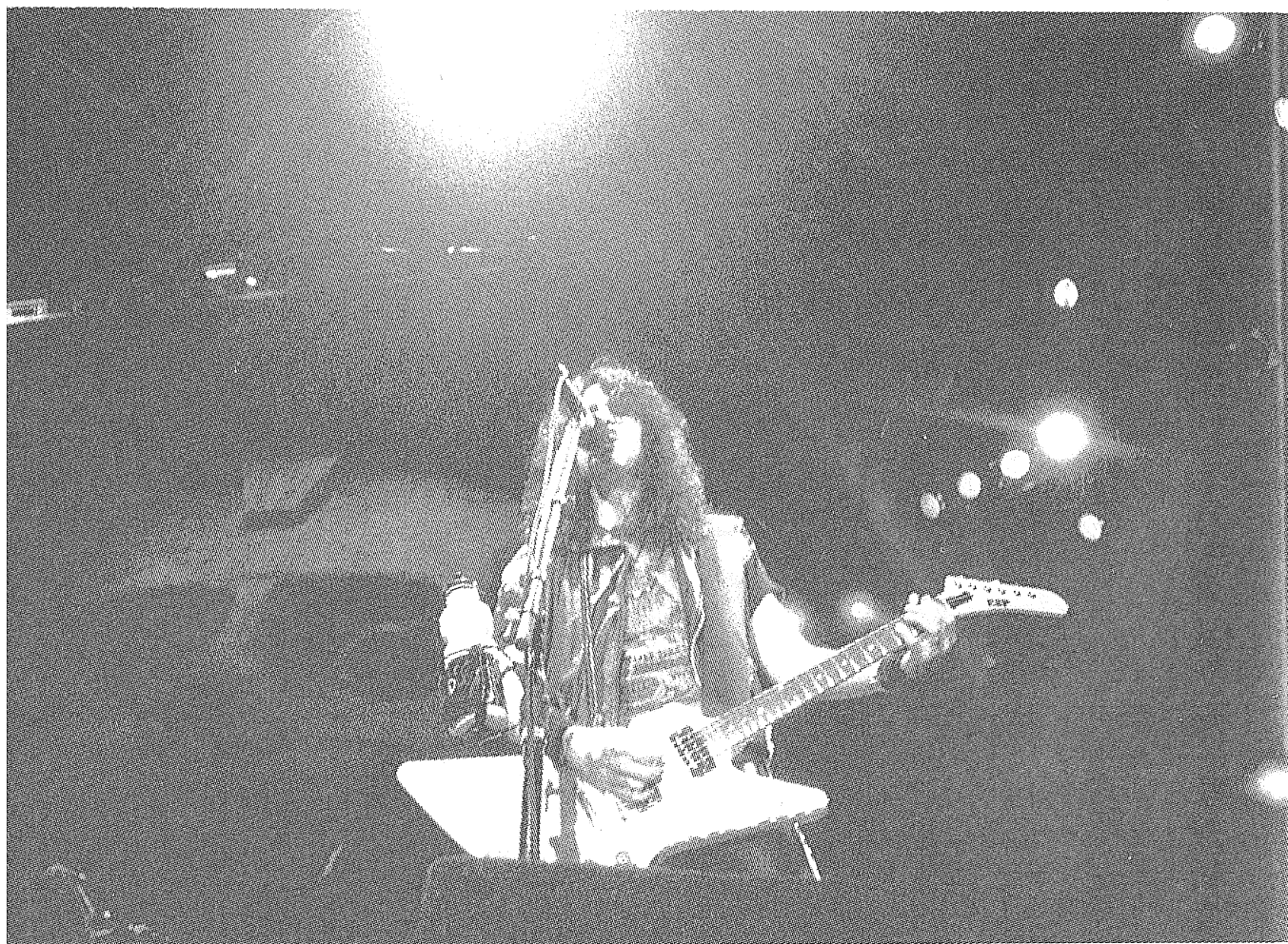
with other things it turned out that it didn't work out. Fortunately Eric Singer knew somebody that did the Alice Cooper which is similar enough. So it worked out real well. We originally had some other guy that no one really knew..."

*During what part of the tour?* "That was just at rehearsal for two days. We realized that this isn't the right guy. It was not that he wasn't a nice guy, but just that there is a certain style of playing that we need. The other guy was also a good keyboard player, but not in the style that we wanted. So Derek was the guy. I know he got it at the last minute, but he's a professional and he got it down. He's doing a great job, and I know the guys are real happy with him."

*As far as I can recall, since the first tour that KISS did the traditional logo has been made out of steel and it has had the lighting fixtures in it. But this time you opted to go with a fabric of some sort...* "Yeah, it's like a printed thing which is lit from behind..."

*Right, which certainly has some illuminating effects. What is the reason for which you decided to go with this one at this point in your career?* "With the statue it was just something different to do with a big centerpiece. We don't always have a huge centerpiece. We had the sphinx, but we don't want to use the same sign every year. This time it was brought to our attention that we could have this backdrop which from afar gives the stage a three-dimensional look. So it's not so much a preference, but just something different to try and it works. We only use it for the end, but it looks cool. The first time I saw it I thought it was something out of *Batman*, but I enjoy it."

*How do you exactly go about deciding what to choose for the set list? How is it*



exactly done? "Well that's real tough. A lot of times we look at the year before. Certainly on the club tour we had a really long set that we were real happy with. On the club tour we realized we could take some liberties that you can't on a big arena tour, because it's more intimate and you don't have to rely on the show to move it along or anything. So we'll look at that then we'll weed out this song, add that song, change this and change that. Eventhough we enjoy getting feedback from our fans we can't always trust our fans. Let's say some diehard fans say: 'I want to hear *Christine Sixteen*'. We did it for a week and a half and the applause is mild as compared to *I Just Wanna* or *Deuce*. Then we realized that maybe it's not the right song to do."

*There are two things I wanted to mention about the set list. First, the Allentown show had the longest set list you ever had.* "Yeah, we always start out with a really long one. Then we'll lose a couple of songs. With a three act bill like we've been having this tour it gets to the point that we can't be as ambitious as we want to be. If the promoters felt confident with two bands, then we'd have the extra liberty of the time if we really needed it. But we wound up cutting out a couple of tunes which are usually the ones that don't go over as big."

*The second thing I wanted to mention is the fact that a lot of people seem to have grown somewhat tired of two song in particular. One of them being Lick It Up and the other one being Heaven's On Fire. They are good songs, but I've read fanzine reports where they say: '...the somewhat redundant Lick It Up is next..' or '...the overdone Heaven's On Fire is played...'* Have you heard anything along those lines from the fans? "No, but I'm telling you that we know there are certain songs that the fans may be tired of hearing. But you have to consider that if we get an average attendance of 5.000 to 10.000 a night and if we see 50.000 or so in a month, there is no way that there's 50.000 fans in fanzines. We appreciate all of them but that's probably ten percent of our fan base. So to change our set when we see the way *Heaven's On Fire* and *Lick It Up* go over every night would be foolish, and is cheating the other ninety percent. Although some fans may have seen every show for the past eight years, ten years or fifteen years, there are other fans that may have only seen the *Hot In The Shade* Tour. Also, *Heaven's On Fire* was one of our hits, and *Lick It Up* was a bit hit...

*Right, some of the fans that are not hardcore are accustomed to those songs through seeing their videos.* "Right, and those two songs go over big all the time. That's what people got to realize. They may be tired of them, but if it isn't for the audience feedback how do you think we feel? We do get tired of playing them. I'm real tired of playing *Love Gun* which I've done almost every tour. But the crowd reaction you get is what keeps you into it, and that's what makes us realize whether or not a song is working. So the fanzine base is not a fair barometer of what workds in a concert."

*With respect to Heaven's On Fire, how come you don't have the flames going off right at the beginning?* "Since it is a winter tour the change in temperature from one place to another isn't easy on everyone's health. all of us have gotten bad colds and sick on this tour. Of course that's real devastating for Paul. Gene can sing even when he's sick, because he sounds like an animal. But Paul's got a big

range, and he's got to be able to sing. Also, there was a period when certain pyro things were affecting him. We realized, at least on this tour, that that was one of the worst things for his voice. Sometimes it's just the powder gun mixture, the way the stage is set up and the way the fans are blowing. We did the best we could with it. Then we realized that if we want to continue with his voice strong we should save a lot of the shit until the end of the show. You also notice that it's not a lack of podium torches which we used to use. So maybe we should go back to that on the next tour which will be a little easier on him."

*With respect to your brother, he recently came and toured the west coast with his new band Blackthorne.* "Right, in fact he'll be here tonight, and you can ask him some questions."

*Okay, do you plan to do any projects with him?* "Well I wrote two songs that are on that record." [Over And Over and We Won't Be Forgotten - ed.]

*Now was that an LP he released? What he's working on now they're not finished yet.* The real members of the band you've heard about, Blackthorne, are him, the keyboard player, Jimmy Waldo and the singer, Graham Bonnet. The bass player and drummer keep switching around."

*It was James Lomenzo on bass for a while.* "Yeah, and Greg D'Angelo on drums. He'll tell you about that. They're in the studio now. They should be finished by the end of the year [1992 - ed.], but I'm not sure when it will be out. You should ask him tonight. You can't miss him you know. Introduce yourself and he'll be glad to talk to you."

*One final question, I know Gene and Paul are big bowling fans. Are you also...* "I enjoy bowling. I don't enjoy doing it too much on tour, because I get a little sore in my hand from playing. Nothing ever hurts Gene, and Paul enjoys it. Paul is not doing as intricate stuff on the guitar as I am so I'm a little more sensitive to it. But we've had lots of bowling parties, and it's a fun thing to do."

*Is Eric Singer into it also?* "Yeah, we're all into it. It's not like we're professional bowlers, but it's a fun thing to do."

*Well Bruce, I would like to thank you for granting me permission to do this interview with you.* "Okay, no problem. Tomorrow you'll get Eric, and you'll be all done."

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals: Bruce Kulick, Andre Augustine, Ken Jones and Lasima Pinkney.

