

ACE FREHLEY



FINALLY BREAKING HIS SILENCE, THE GUITAR GOD TALKS ABOUT HIS UPS AND DOWNS WITH ONE OF THE GREATEST BANDS IN HISTORY.

SPEAKING EXCLUSIVELY TO US, the “Space Ace” discusses KISS’s glory days, getting screwed by bandmate Gene Simmons and the ax-slinger’s rockin’ new CD *Anomaly*.

HUSTLER: Why are you no longer working with KISS?

ACE FREHLEY: There’s not one reason. I first left the group in 1982 because I wanted to pursue a solo career, and I just tired of the bullshit that was going down. Then in 1995 I was on tour with [former KISS drummer] Peter Criss in Canada, and I got the word that Gene [Simmons] and Paul [Stanley] wanted us to do the MTV *Unplugged* thing with them. There was also talk about a reunion tour.

I had mixed emotions about it, but I finally decided to sign on. We [the original KISS lineup] did a couple of tours, and the same kind of bullshit that happened toward the end of my first run with KISS started happening again. So in 2002, 20 years after I left the first time, I quit KISS again.

Does it piss you off that someone else is out there in your costume pretending to be you?

I’m not thrilled about it. The fans are more pissed off about it than I am. When I go online and read the comments, some of them can be pretty brutal. Tommy Thayer, my replacement, is a friend of mine. He used to be KISS’s tour manager when I was in the band. He’s a nice guy and a good musician. Paul and Gene tell him what to do, and he does it.

I think it’s weirder for the fans than it is for me. In the long run it hurts the band’s legacy. One of the fans said, “When Ace left the first time, they got a new guitarist [Vinnie Vincent], and he created his own makeup. How come they didn’t create a new look for Tommy?”

Do you think they are trying to trick fans?

I know they’re trying to trick people. Remember when KISS was on *American Idol*? I didn’t even know they were on because I don’t watch TV. I was at the Rainbow [a Los Angeles rock hangout], and this couple came up to me and said, “You were so great the other night on *American Idol*. Can we have your autograph?” KISS tries to play down the fact that Tommy Thayer is in my makeup, and I think a lot of people still aren’t even aware of it. It’s kind of deceiving. The hard-core fans are pissed off because they know immediately.

Do you get paid when the Ace makeup and costume are used?

I get a percentage whenever they use that makeup.

When you were in the band, how long did it take you to get stage-ready?

The makeup alone was a good 45 minutes to an hour. Then there is the costume and doing the hair. It took about an hour and a half to two hours to do it right.

Were the space boots heavy?

My boots weren’t that bad. The platforms were made out of cork. Gene’s were pretty heavy.

Did you ever have sex while in-costume?

Yeah. Just a couple of times. The makeup is so messy. A couple of girls wanted to do it with me still in the makeup. What I usually did is go back to the hotel, shower and get fresh first.

What do you remember about filming *KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park*?

It’s funny that you ask that. I was just at Magic Mountain [a Southern California amusement park] the other day. They closed down the park when we filmed it, and I rented a moped. I remember riding around the park on it between takes. I crashed it a couple of times.

What was the 1996 reunion tour like?

That was fun—at first. It started off great with good vibes. Let’s all kiss and make up. No pun intended. *(Laughs.)* It was the most successful tour that year. It grossed \$250 million. Everyone was riding high. I only signed on for that one tour. After that I hoped to get back into the studio and work on my solo record. Then they convinced me to do the *Psycho Circus* CD.

I submitted a bunch of songs for that record and had to fight tooth and nail just to get one song, “Into the Void,” on that record. All that internal bickering and bullshit and doing stuff behind my back started happening all over again. When the deal was initially proposed to us, we were working off a percentage. Then all of a sudden all these outside deals started coming in. I said, “How come I’m not getting a piece of that?” And they would say, “Oh, you’re excluded from that.” We were playing the Tokyo Dome, and they filmed a video from that. Made a lot of money. “Sorry, Ace, that wasn’t part of your deal.”

They just tried to screw [me and Peter] any way they could. When that started happening, I got pissed off. But I was working with the guys, so I didn’t want to have a blowout fight. So then I started getting self-destructive. I started using alcohol and chemicals, and we know where that leads. They know how to push my buttons, and I’m sure I pushed theirs as well.

Do you talk to the other KISS guys now?

I speak to Paul every now and then. I speak with Peter and his wife, Gigi, all the time. Gene has called me a few times, but I have never gotten back to him.

Have you seen his reality show?

I saw it once or twice about a year and a half ago. I thought it was funny as shit. A lot of people don’t know how funny Gene Simmons is. He’s really a fucking funny guy. More power to him. He’s got a hit show.

Any chance you’d ever do reality TV?

I’ve been offered a couple of shows, but I declined. I’m not a big fan. The biggest problem with reality TV is it takes away the rock star mystique. The most exciting things about a famous person is what you don’t know, that mystery. Once you get into somebody’s home and see how they are off the stage and out of the spotlight, it’s gone. Most of the people that do reality shows find when the show goes off the air a few years later, their popularity wanes. Because you know everything about them, so there is nothing to get excited about.

Is Simmons destroying the KISS mystique by showing himself as a bumbling dad instead of a rock star?

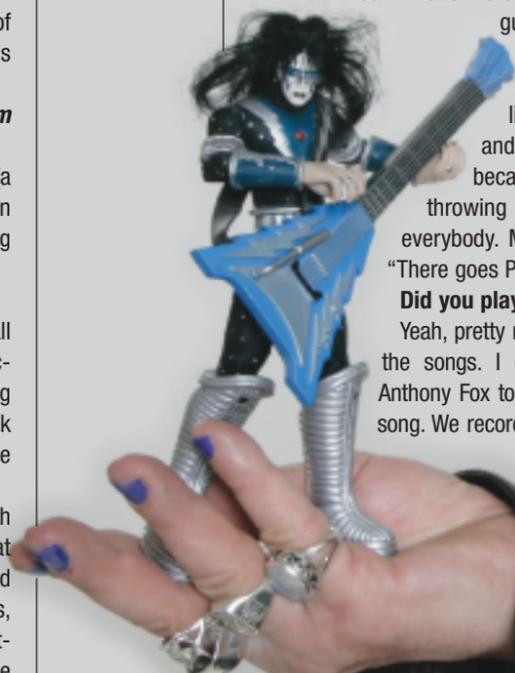
Yeah. That’s the other side of Gene: the bumbling, silly, funny guy. Then there is the Mr. Businessman side.

He’ll do his stage antics as “The Monster” and then transform into this guy talking like a professor. We [Paul Stanley, Peter Criss and Frehley] used to call him “Professor Dope” because he would be in an interview and start throwing around all these big words to try to impress everybody. Me, Paul and Peter would just laugh and say, “There goes Professor Dope sounding off again.”

Did you play everything on *Anomaly*?

Yeah, pretty much. I produced it. Wrote all the songs. I got Marti Frederiksen and Anthony Fox to mix it. Marty produced one song. We recorded a cover of the Sweet song

“Fox on the Run.” That will probably be the first single. Marti and Anthony know how to take something that is good and make it great.



PHOTOS BY LADY VON JANSKY

“KISS This!”

(continued from page 45) They took it to the next level. I give them a lot of credit.

How is your sobriety going?

It's great, but I'm not one to preach to other people: "Don't drink. Don't do this and don't do that." Who am I to fucking tell somebody don't drink? I drank most of my life and had a lot of fun doing it. I just got to the point where it wasn't working for me. I'm okay with other people drinking. Drink all you want. Just don't get drunk slobbering around me. (Laughs.) Everybody has to figure it out for themselves. If I could get sober, then anybody can do it, right? (Laughs.)

A couple years back there was a rumor that you were dead. Where did that start?

I got a phone call from KISS's old manager Bill Aucoin actually. He said, "So I heard you were dead." (Laughs.) I said, "Well, I guess I'm not." I have no idea where that came from. It wasn't a publicity stunt, believe me.

Do you have any good groupie stories from the '70s?

Crazy fans? Groupies? I have no memory. Champagne bottles? There were a lot of champagne bottles that were inserted in girls. It happened more than once. I remember being at the Ramada Inn rehearsing for an upcoming KISS tour in the late '70s, and I had a case of champagne. I decided I wanted to have a wine rack, and there wasn't one. So I started smashing the bottles into the wall. Just knocking holes and sticking the bottles in the wall.

Is that the worst thing you ever did in a hotel?

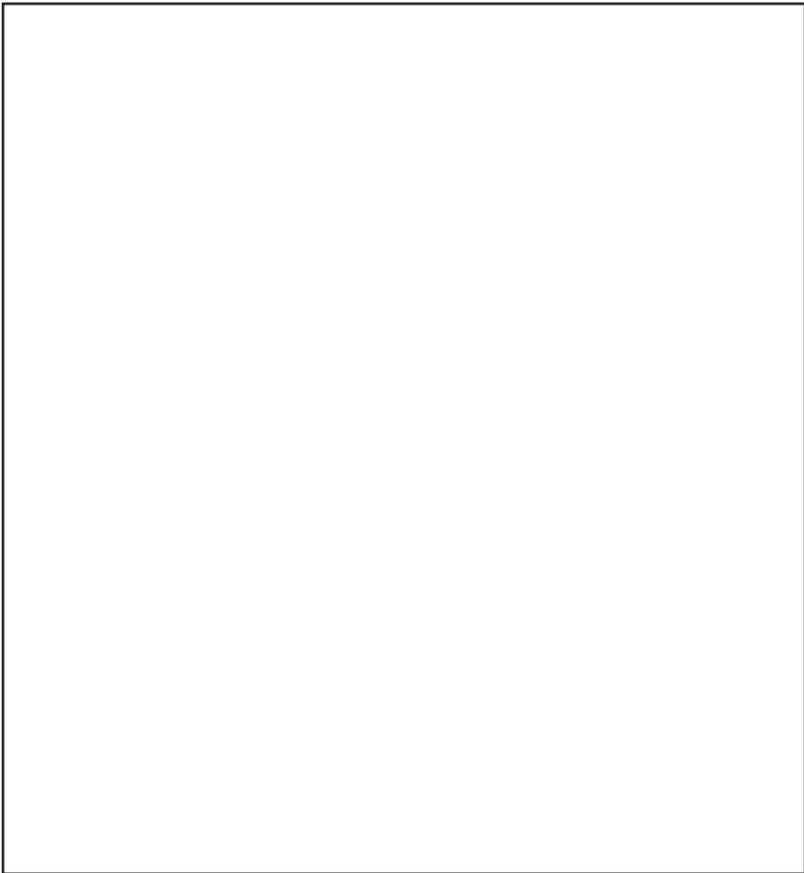
One night I decided I wanted to piss while standing on the TV. I pissed into the back of the TV, and sparks went flying. Later somebody told me, "You know, Ace, the electricity could have come through and electrocuted you through your (points toward crotch)." I wasn't thinking about it at the time. That would have been a bad way to go out. Talk about a rush. (Laughs.)

Do you think you'll ever work with KISS again?

I certainly hope not! (Laughs.) If Gene Simmons wants to write me a check for \$25 million, then maybe I'll reconsider. (Laughs.) It's a bad marriage. I like to work with people that do what they say, say what they are going to do and keep it aboveboard. I don't like shady stuff.

What is the best part of being Ace Frehley in 2010?

I'm just happy to be alive. (Laughs.) I seriously mean that. Some days I'll still wake up and can't find my ass with both hands. There are other days I wake up and feel I can ponder the inner workings of quantum mechanics. I never know how it's going to be. Today is a very good day. My ability now to write, produce and create is much better than it ever was. I think I'm going to stick with the plan. (Laughs.) 🍷



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