



ROCK & ROLL
BALL

with

KISS

DOORS OPEN 10:00 PM ON TIME - (PREFERRED) - \$ 5.00

HOTEL DIPLOMAT

101 WEST 43 ST
FRI. JULY 13



KISS 1972-1975

BY RICHARD ROBINSON

It was one of the great moments in rock & roll.

An unearthly procession pulled up to the edge of the football field behind

Cadillac High School. Along the side of the field, wooden bleachers sagged with a capacity crowd full of excited fans, straining to get a good look. The eerie Army ground to a halt, and, like some intergalactic ball team in leathery black and silver, the members of KISS descended to the field



This rare picture is the first publicly placed one (copyright © 1975). From the head behind (left) to the background and to the right: Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, Ace Frehley, and Eric Burdon.

as the crowd roared.

KISS ran to the fifty yard line. A helicopter appeared overhead in the blue afternoon sky. It floated down onto the field near the band. The fans continued yelling and shouting in the stands as KISS climbed aboard and was lifted into the sky. The helicopter banked to the right and was about to fly out of sight when one side door slid back and thousands of leaflets burst into space whirling and twisting towards the ground. In the crowd hands shot up to catch at the papers as they came to earth. On each, one line was printed:

Cadillac High, KISS Loves You.

The day before, at noon on Thursday, October 9, 1975, the citizens of Cadillac, a small town in Northern Michigan, were visited by KISS. The Cadillac High School football team had had a winning season with tactics they called their KISS Defense. The team's assistant coach, Jim Neff, wrote to tell KISS. In response, KISS suggested they visit Cadillac on the school's homecoming weekend.

During the 24 hours from KISS's arrival to their departure, strange



Approximate date they welcomed KISS to celebrate their first visit to a high school.

things happened in Cadillac.

They landed at the local airport, where a police escort met them and took them to Cadillac High. There they were greeted on the front steps by the school cheerleaders, the school orchestra, the homecoming queen, the principal, and 2,000 students. They met with the football team, then watched a film of the student KISS name show; meanwhile, the school cafeteria was jammed with hundreds of students putting on make-up for a school picture with KISS.

That evening Gene Simmons went to the school rally and blew huge blasts of fire from his mouth to light

the ceremonial bonfire. The flames leapt into the air, illuminating Gene as he danced around the bonfire followed by the painted faces of the boys and girls of Cadillac. Later KISS gave a concert that noisily blew the roof off the school gym, to make it a homecoming Cadillac High will never forget.

The next morning at 10:30, there was a press conference in the Grenadier Dining Room of the Hotel Caberine Motor Lodge with the

Mayor of Cadillac, his wife, the City Manager, the Superintendent of Schools, the school principal, and the Cadillac High football coach. All of whom wore KISS make-up.

After KISS accepted the key to the city, they boarded their float for the KISS parade down Main Street; except during the night the street signs were changed, and now it was KISS Boulevard. Many townspeople wearing KISS make-up lined the street to watch KISS go by and catch the candy



File Photo Editor, Michigan: The only school high school homecoming, shopping, dancing KISS Army??



They offered KISS tickets and Gene recorded the album.

kisses KISS throw from their fleet.

Then KISS vanished into the sky from the middle of the football field.

Four neo-American boys leather their bodies and paint their faces to become a space man, a large cat, a super star, and a hell-fire monster. They play rock & roll music loud enough to destroy an entire building. They take over a small town in the mid-west and the Mayor and his wife paint their faces and present KISS with the key to the city. A touch of Fellini between Big Mac's? No, just

another moment in KISS's extraordinary career.

KISS got together in 1972. Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley, and Peter Criss found each other through an ad in the "Musicians' Free Classified" section of *Rolling Stone*, the same way Elton John found Bernie Taupin through an ad in the back of *Mobley Maker*. Ace Frehley joined shortly thereafter.

They first plugged in their amplifiers in a loft on West 23rd Street in New York City. "It was hell," says Paul Stanley. "We had egg crates on the walls to absorb the sound. We lived there. We only went home to sleep. It was so cold in the winter we passed a bottle of wine around to keep warm."

In the winter of 1972 Alice Cooper, David Bowie, and The New York Dolls had effectively disrupted the advance of late 60's rock. The four members of the newly formed band were impressed with this new direction in rock & roll. It influenced their thinking and their music. But from the start they were confident that given the chance they would take the music

and the theatrics further than any of their early heroes dared imagine.

"First we got the sound down. Then we came up with the name," says Peter Criss. "Paul had this old car he used to drive us around in. Gene, Paul, and I were riding in the car one day, going over to Paul's house, talking about what we wanted to name the group. Paul suggested KISS. Everybody liked it right away. We said, 'KISS, it really means a lot. Man, I mean it's the first thing you do to a chick, or anybody. It could also be the kiss of death. I mean it's a really strong word. It's easy to remember'."

Make-up was part of the basic concept which Gene emphasizes was there from the moment they formed. "We knew we had to wear make-up. We said to each other, 'We're going to be bigger-than-life stars. Real live rock and roll legends right before your eyes! Just like Kong, we wanted to be the eighth wonder of the world.'"

KISS made its first public appearance at a club in Queens called Coventry on January 30, 1973. It played Tuesday, Wednesday, and



They opened Coventry on the night that they were named KISS in NYC.

Thursday night for \$30. "Only two people showed up for our first set," Gene remembers. "My girlfriend at the time and her brother's girlfriend."

Gene kept a diary during the early days. After KISS played at Coventry, they played at a club called The Daisy in Amityville, New York, and the Blocker Street Loft. In June they

went into Electric Lady studios and recorded five songs for a demonstration tape with the assistance of engineer and producer Eddie Kramer. The songs on the tape were "Watchin' You," "Deuce," "Strutter," "Black Diamond," and "Firehouse."

During July and August they appeared at the Diplomat, a tired old hotel located just east of the Broadway theater district. These performances at the Diplomat with other local bands like the Brats, Pinsets, Lages, and Street Punk proved vital to the band's fortunes. At these concerts, they were seen by Fred Kirby, the *Variety* reviewer, who gave them an enthusiastic first press notice. At their August 30th appearance at the Diplomat, they were seen by Bill Aucoin. Aucoin had been involved in a number of theatrical projects including the film version of "Oh! Calcutta" and the popular syndicated rock music tv show, "Flipside," which he produced in association with Joyce Birwitz, Howard L. Marks and their Marks/Aucoin Productions. He liked KISS, appreciating the concept they'd developed

and seeing their potential. KISS accepted his offer to assist them in staging their show and managing their affairs.

One of the first things Aucoin did was to send a copy of their tape to Neil Bogart, president of Casablanca Records in Los Angeles. Bogart played the tape for Kenny Kerner and Richie Wise, two hot producers who'd had hits with Stories and Gladys Knight and the Pips. Kerner



Neil Bogart (left) with Neil Bogart (right) and the band KISS.

and Wise were excited by what they heard.

Bogart flew to New York to see KISS perform. "When I first saw them, their music hit me like a bolt of lightning. Their sound—their image was something I had waited seven years to find. Here finally was a group whose music and visuals came together in perfect harmony."

By October 1973 Bogart had KISS under contract and in the studio with Kerner and Wise to record the first album, "KISS." When they finished the album, they went into intensive rehearsals, as Aucoin helped them build their live show.

I'd heard of KISS during my forays into the New York rock & roll night, but I hadn't seen them perform, when I got a call from Bogart inviting me to come to a rehearsal. It was about 7:30 on a freezing night in December of 1973, when my cab pulled up in front of the building. Six stories above, the elevator let me out into a large, dilapidated looking room. In front of me six folding chairs were set out. On the far side of the room were amplifiers, a drum kit, and



The band KISS performing on stage.

microphone stands. I took a seat as the overhead lights flickered, then went out.

The room was pitch black. There wasn't a sound. An electric guitar

chove! suddenly crashed through the silence, shattering me with its intensity. The speakers pumped out a breeze that blew my hair back, and I was about to check to see if my chair had a seat belt when another surprise slammed my senses as a yellow ball of flame whooshed out at me from across the room. The music grew louder as drums, bass, and guitars charged forward into "Strutter." Four small spotlights snapped on to reveal the faces of KISS. For the first time I saw the demonic majesty of KISS. Red lights flashed, sirens wailed, fire belched, and rock & roll rocked and rolled. It was like a night in hell. It was wonderful.

The next day Neil Bogart sent me a tape copy of the first album. As "Strutter" roared through my living room for the first time, I knew the newly founded Casablanca Records had their first big act. I called Bogart to tell him how much I liked "Nothin' to Lose," "Firehouse," and "Black Diamond" among others.

At the stroke of midnight on New Years Eve, KISS brought in 1974 at the Academy of Music on a bill with

The Blue Oyster Cult, Iggy Pop, and Teenage Lust. "We wore light make-up, we had a KISS logo. In fact, I still use the same bass guitar as I did then," says Gene who also remembers that he set his hair on fire with his pyrotechnics that first night. 1974 proved an eventful year for KISS. In their first full year as professionals, they toured the U.S.A. and Canada from one side to the other, playing rock & roll like their lives depended on it. They released two albums: "KISS" in February and "Hotter Than Hell" in October. They also met the press with a special concert at the Fillmore in New York City and a lavish performance and press



The band (The NE Punky Band, Chicago, Illinois, April 1974). KISS makes its entrance (Paul of Records).

party at the Century Plaza in Los Angeles.

Their grueling schedule of live performances passed only momentarily when Paul Stanley collapsed on stage in June during a concert at the Electric Ballrooms in Atlanta. Stanley and the rest of the band cured their exhaustion with more hard work.



KISS stage on the electric ball room, the Electric Ballrooms, Atlanta, Georgia, June 1974. Stanley collapsed on stage during the performance. The band, the rest of the album, the album.

eventually playing a phenomenal 300 concerts in 1974 and 1975. This constant touring brought KISS and their music to the attention of the rock & roll audience. No matter how the press and radio reacted to KISS, those who bought the concert tickets and albums were listening, and they liked what they heard.

It was in 1974 that KISS made **The Guinness Book of Records**. Radio station WSHF in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida started a kissing contest just after the first "KISS" album was released. The kissing contests started to spread and soon radio stations across America were sponsoring couples for a national kiss contest.



California, Williams. The album made KISS the King of the City. KISS spent several hours of preparation in the major and professional studios.

How long could two people kiss? That question was answered at The Great Kiss Off at Woodfield Mall in Chicago where Vinnie Torro and Louise Heath kissed for 96 hours as KISS watched.

Although KISS was growing rapidly as a live attraction, success on records remained moderate. Many radio stations refused to believe a band could become big without airplay to sell the audience. A KISS army grew up in America as KISS fans joined ranks to alert their local radio stations they were slighting the finest band in the land. The band had achieved some success on the charts with a single—a KISS rendition of that old favorite from Cameo Parkway, Bobby Rydell's "Kissing Time." But, KISS wasn't at all satisfied. In February of 1975 the group flew to Los Angeles to record a third album, this time with Neil Bogart as producer. The result was "Dressed To Kill."

Towards the end of almost two years of constant touring, KISS recorded the first live album. It was called "Alive" and featured cuts from their performance in May of 1975 at Cobo Hall in Detroit. All the dams broke,

VARIETY
 Wednesday, January 2, 1974

Blue Oyster Cult (15)
Iggy & The Stooges (12)
Tawana Brazier (8)
Kiss (4)

ACADEMY OF MUSIC, N.Y.

... Kiss is getting around the industry, though the Academy of Music...
 ... Kiss is getting around the industry, though the Academy of Music...
 ... Kiss is getting around the industry, though the Academy of Music...

A first press picture for Kiss... (KISS)...

"ROCK AND ROLL ALL NIGHT!"

KISS

"GETAWAY"

KISS... (KISS)...

KISS fans across America swelled in number to give KISS their first platinum album which signifies the sale of over one million albums. When "Alive" went platinum the rock magazines began featuring KISS on



Original Kiss... (KISS)...

their covers, and radio stations suddenly shouted out their affection for KISS.

I've watched this competition for the rock heavy weight crown for ten years now. Every so often a band

gets so big in this country they attract 50,000 to 80,000 fans to a single concert. KISS is, as I write, the biggest live band in the country. It pulls the largest single audience of any rock & roll band. Like it or not,



The great ones. The KISS, Fretterliph-wajong letters in Bristol for the touring press.

it's the equal of the big British bands. It is a golden moment for them. But even as they head out across America with three tractor-trailers pulling the equipment they need to knock your socks off, there's every indication they're something more than the biggest live band in America. They've taken their rock & roll fantasies further than any other band. They've painted legendary characters for

themselves to play. Time will tell if KISS will take its place in the script of American legend like Paul Bunyon, Johnny Appleseed, and the Headless Horseman. Meanwhile, we have these three albums of classic KISS. These lps trace the progression of the band's music from the first demo tape—Gene says the versions of the songs on the demo and on "KISS" are identical—to the third album.

This is the music of KISS's formative period. Music that in three years took them from the loft on West 23rd Street to their platinum album. I asked Ace Frehley about KISS.

What he said to me gives an excellent summation of the KISS phenomenon. "It's fun," he said. "The kids like it, I like it. It's nothing profound."

Because KISS has created a total experience with the imaginative use of live performances, it's difficult to separate the group into its various parts. Who and what KISS is is part of what and how KISS does it. But I think it's important that hard rock & roll is the base on which KISS built its legend. The first three albums show how much they love to rock.



KISS

A **rock
steady**
PRODUCTION INC.

AUCOIN
HONGKONG INC.



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