

Slash dumps 'the whole super-excessive lifestyle' of rock

by *George_Varga*

The differences between perception and reality in rock 'n' roll can sometimes be dramatic, as Slash knows all too well.

The lead guitarist in Velvet Revolver, and a rock icon since his star-making days in Guns N' Roses in the late 1980s, Slash has an image that looms much larger than life. Just mention his name and many fans immediately paint a vivid picture.

SLASH - Slash, guitar hero and happy dad, has cast off the 'whole super-excessive lifestyle' of rock. CNS Illustration by Manny Franco. The trademark top hat. The big hair. The bare chest. The leather pants. The half-smoked cigarette that seems permanently attached to his lips. The pet snakes. The f-words that punctuate his every sentence. The drug addictions. The drinking. The debauchery. But the reality is quite different now for Slash, who was only 35 when he had a cardio-defibrillator implanted after his heart stopped beating for eight minutes. It's just one of the harrowing incidents he recounts in "Slash," his 480-page autobiography.

"Cigarettes are my only remaining vice," said the 42-year-old guitarist.

"Under the circumstances, 35 was probably pretty young. But it was a safeguard that the doctor implanted because, looking at my lifestyle up to that point, he thought it would probably end up saving my life."

A happily married father of two young sons, Slash now enjoys a clean and sober lifestyle. During a recent interview from a tour stop in Austin, Texas, he was thoughtful and articulate throughout. He used the f-word just twice - and then only to illustrate his public persona.

"There is a dichotomy," said the English-born Slash (real name: Saul Hudson). "It's something I didn't really think, or care, about - what the public impression of me would be. It was quite the opposite; in certain

instances I thought it was better just to (expletive) tell everybody to (expletive). I guess I perpetuated that whole image in some ways.

"Some years, I'd turn up for an interview with a bottle of Jack Daniels and be drunk, and I didn't care. Other times, I've been prompted to have a more intellectual conversation."

Velvet Revolver singer Scott Weiland and ex-Guns N' Roses bassist Duff McKagan also both came close to death from their own well-publicized addictions before cleaning up their acts. Slash chuckled when asked if he and his band mates were all older and wiser now, as opposed to just older.

"I think it would be a lot of hard work to not have gained any experience over the years, to try and pretend you still don't know anything," he said. "You hopefully live, learn and deal with everything accordingly, being that I'm in the same business now that I was when I was 19."

His autobiography offers a candid look at his life, be it how he missed a date with porn star Traci Lords because he was coming down from a crack cocaine binge or how a drug-fueled hallucination prompted him to punch out his glass shower door, then run naked in the street, terrified he was being attacked by armed creatures from the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie "Predator."

Slash also chronicles his days as a teenage shoplifter and pays homage to Walt Disney. He devotes many pages to Guns N' Roses, including the time when - after being gently chided by the guitarist - lead singer Axl Rose hopped out of the car Slash was driving. Rose was undaunted that the car was going 40 miles per hour at the time.

"The sole motivation for the book was to straighten out a lot of the myths about Guns N' Roses that are still prevalent on the Internet and in unauthorized biographies," Slash said. "I'd love to sound like the book was sort of a deep statement for me. But, in all honesty, it wasn't. It's really everything that's on the surface; I'm way too introverted and shy to bare my soul."

He's also too shy to address some issues in the book. A key example is the controversial Guns N' Roses song "One in a Million," in which the lyrics (penned and sung by Rose) lashed out at "immigrants and faggots," as well as using an equally offensive reference to African-Americans.

How did Slash, who is half-black and half-Jewish, feel about the song, which was featured on "GN'R Lies," the band's 1988 double EP?

"I was offended," he said. "That was a brash, ignorant kind of statement Axl made. I knew where he was coming from, once he explained it, but that didn't validate it to make it worthy of putting on a record."

"We had issues. But the more issues we had, the more adamant he was about putting the song on there. I was hugely embarrassed that it was on something that my name was on. It was a tough little period."

Life is much more enjoyable for Slash in Velvet Revolver, which also features rhythm guitarist Dave Kushner and ex-Guns N' Roses drummer Matt Sorum. The Grammy-winning band, now on tour to promote its second album, "Libertad," plans to record its third album after singer Weiland completes a summer reunion tour with his previous group, Stone Temple Pilots.

"It won't impact Velvet Revolver," Slash said of the reunion, "not unless something more than that happens. Velvet Revolver is all-consuming."

So for years were drugs and alcohol, two debilitating habits Slash has now happily left behind him. He credits the births of his two sons - London, 5, and Cash, 3 - for inspiring him and his wife, Perla, to get straight.

"I think I was burning out on the whole super-excessive lifestyle," Slash said. "At some point, my wife and I really both took it to the hilt. Around the same time she got pregnant, I realized there were certain indulgences I really wasn't having as much fun with anymore.

"I wasn't the 'rehab type' of guy and wasn't sure what I wanted to do. So, when she got pregnant, it was like: 'Are we going to do this?' And then the paternal side came out and we decided to be very responsible, with a lot of love.

"Having kids really does give you a perspective on your own mortality and gives you something you can put your heart and soul in besides your own self-centered concerns, which music really is. So, I think everything has been happening in due time."

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