

Slash: the man and the myth

As the ex-Guns N' Roses axeman brings his solo show to Dubai, we separate fact from fiction, and grab a word with the man himself.
Words *Rob Garratt*

The roots Born as Saul Hudson in 1965 in the UK's Stoke-on-Trent, to an African mother and British father, he moved to Los Angeles when he was five, taking the nickname 'Slash' in his youth because of his speed. Now 47, he's still a citizen of both the US and UK.

The rise After taking up guitar in his teens, Slash played in various bands before joining Guns N' Roses in 1985. The band became the biggest group in the world following the release of their seminal debut, *Appetite for Destruction* – the best-selling debut album in the US ever. The record was a masterpiece that combined the classic rock riffing of Aerosmith with the prototype teen angst of the '90s alternative rock movement that was yet to come.

The fall Following the same-day release of their epic double LPs, *Use Your Illusion I* and *II*, in 1991, GN'R embarked on a two-and-a-half-year tour that pulled the band apart. Slash hasn't appeared on stage with frontman Axl Rose since 1993, and claims not to have spoken to the singer since 1996.

The rebirth Following his departure from the band, Slash released two consistent but forgettable albums leading new project Slash's Snakepit, and it looked as though the guitarist was destined for the classic rock scrapheap. However he found fresh relevance after regrouping with former GN'R bandmates Duff McKagan and Matt Sorum to form Velvet Revolver, whose 2004 debut, *Contraband*, shifted two million copies and dragged Slash's top hat back into the limelight. Yet after a follow-up LP the group disbanded, with frontman Scott Weiland rejoining the Stone Temple Pilots.

The hedonism Slash's rock'n'roll excess is the stuff of legend, but he claims to have been clean since 2006.

Here and now Slash rinsed his contacts book and called in a few favours to put together his eponymous 2010 solo debut, *Slash*, which featured the likes of Ozzy Osbourne, The Black Eyed Peas' Fergie, Foo Fighter



Dave Grohl and Iggy Pop. After a world tour with singer Myles Kennedy the pair collaborated on a second solo effort, last year's enjoyable *Apocalyptic Love*.

The hat Much of Slash's iconic allure is down to his novel stage prop: a black top hat. Also essential to his rock'n'roll credentials are dark sunglasses, leathers and an occasional snake – he's renowned for his love of reptiles.

The glove Slash laid down tracks for Michael Jackson's 'Give In to Me', 'Black or White', 'D.S.S.', 'Morphine' and 'Privacy', and has also teamed up with Lenny Kravitz, Free's Paul Rodgers, Alice Cooper and Wu Tang Clan's Ol' Dirty Bastard. As if that wasn't enough, he has also played on the soundtrack to *The Wrestler*, and can be heard in Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown*.

The kudos Guitar geeks salivate over Slash's razor-quick riffing, and the critics are quick to agree. In 2009 *Time* named him runner-up on its list of 'The 10 Best Electric Guitar Players', while a year earlier *Total Guitar* placed his finger-work in 'Sweet Child O' Mine' at No 1 on their list of 'The 100 Greatest Riffs'. Not bad work for a 47-year-old from Stoke.

Slash plays at Dubai Tennis Stadium on Thursday January 31, doors open 8pm. Tickets Dhs300-500.

www.timeouttickets.com

Slash in his own words: an exclusive interview

You were last in Dubai in 2008 playing Desert Rock with Velvet Revolver. Are you looking forward to coming back?

Yeah, I didn't do anything last time because it was a quick in-and-out trip. Hopefully we'll get some time to hang out [this time], but it just depends on our travel schedule.

Are you still expecting Velvet Revolver to get back together?

As soon as we find a suitable singer, that band is planning on getting back together. It's just a matter of finding the right person.

On your new solo record you've gone with just one singer, rather than a list of guests. What did you see in Myles Kennedy [who will be playing with Slash in Dubai] that inspired you?

I had been hearing a lot about this guy Myles Kennedy for years, [but] I had never met him, never heard

him sing. He had been invited to England to audition for Led Zeppelin for a possible tour that never actually happened. It was really just a shot in the dark contacting him. We had an instantaneous chemistry, and just hit it off really well. From that point on we had a very seamless, organic, creative relationship.

Which members of Guns N' Roses are you in contact with the most these days?

That band does not exist any more and I don't think there is any chance for that crew to get back together.

You've won so many accolades for your playing. What's your greatest quality as a guitarist?

There's so many of them, but I'm pretty aggressive. I'm way more aggressive as a guitar player than I am as a person. I think a lot of



stuff that I don't express in my daily life comes out in my playing. It's a combination of all the different emotions. It's a lot of different passions from the sadness, the anger, the happiness. All the emotions that a human would experience, I express through guitar playing.

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