

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH AEROSMITH'S STEVEN TYLER

I packed my bags last night-preflight. Zero hour, 3 pm. Nonstop from JFK to Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport. A mental note: would the bomb sniffing dogs detect any THC laden gifts I decided to bring back? After a close call in Paris, I had to be careful. After a year of formidable troubles in my personal life, I was grateful for this assignment.

My destination was the Park MGM, self described "newest casino on the strip," while in reality a 2016 reband/refurbish of the twenty year old Monte Carlo Resort and Casino. This megaresort boasts many of the standard amenities you'd expect from a legacy hospitality center approaching the uncharted 21st century: a cutting edge spa and wellness center, luxury suites by NoMad, Steve Aoki at the Hakkasan nightclub (dress code-smart casual), and an emporium of dining options by Eataly. One ringer sets the Park apart from its much larger sister property, the MGM Grand, the Park Theater. With an impressive \$90 million price tag, the second largest indoor theater on the strip proudly opened its doors in 2016, with a concert featuring Stevie Nicks' 24 Karat Gold Tour.

It's here that we find legendary American rock group Aerosmith embarking on yet another act in their fifty year, and five time Grammy award winning career. Their "Deuces Are Wild" residency was set to run through 18 summer performances, but demand was greatly underestimated. An additional 32 shows were added. Then festival appearances, then a six week European tour. In an act of corporate synergy, Aerosmith agreed to cap this extensive schedule with a mini tour of MGM properties across the East Coast. This grueling schedule comes at the heels of Park Theater residencies featuring the legendary Bruno Mars and beguiling Lady Gaga, acts at a third of Aerosmith's age, who still boast a sense of Billboard chart relevancy. The show promises a "state-of-the-art audio and video experience," featuring

“never before seen visuals and audio from Aerosmith recording sessions.” How does the (somewhat self proclaimed) “greatest American rock band” endure through fifty years of breathtaking highs, and rock-bottom lows, only to emerge in time for a record setting victory lap? I hoped that by spending time with the group’s enigmatic frontman, Steven Tyler, and his foil Joe Perry, I would learn more about their longevity, their music, and the desert city which makes it all possible.

As a first time visitor to America’s Playground, I found my arrival fraught with a sense of having been late to the party. The story has been told time and time again, across generations. Ironically, the first western encampment of this valley was a Mormon supply fort, a far cry from the industrialized center of our base desires. The confluence of legalized gambling and New Deal working families in the 1930’s helped the city survive the Great Depression, and the Las Vegas Army Airfield and post-WWII boom created an oasis entertainment amidst the arid desert sand. The 50s and 60s saw Las Vegas reinvent itself again, as a den of glamorous Rat Pack lifestyle porn, and for some, as a post-modern personification of the creeping distrust in the “American Dream.” The city inches closer every day to the uncertainty of our new era. A 2002 drought gave officials serious concerns about the viability of the city in the age of climate change. Restriction of growth, as a check against the changing temperatures, has been vigorously fought by the gaming elites. The city has found itself an unlikely but growing tech hub, hosting the Zappos headquarters, and a host of start-ups. A 2017 shooting on the grounds of the Mandalay Bay Hotel saw 60 deaths and 411 wounded, resulting in a nationwide ban on the sale of bump stocks. The official report found no definite motive for the attack. (NOTE: Now, Sin City faces another reckoning: the COVID-19 virus. As of the publishing date, many of the city’s boasted attractions remain closed to the public).

Another 20th Century institution, Aerosmith, faced similarly humble beginnings. The three hours I gained in the air would be put to good use. Ahead of the Deuces Are Wild show, I was scheduled for a private tour of the “Aerosmith Museum.” I was met by two

individuals, Jorge Garcia, a Las Vegas resident and one of the Park Theater's three Aerosmith VIP Hosts, and Ryan Falchuck, the official custodian of the Aerosmith legacy, and author of the upcoming book "Life in an Elevator: Aerosmith and the 90's," focusing on the group's charmed mid-career renaissance. The entrance to the exhibit is marked by larger-than-life blow ups of the five performing members of the band, Tom Hamilton, Joe Perry, Brad Whitford, Joey Kramer, and of course, Steven Tyler. From a distance, their swagger and effeminate posturing gives them an appearance that defies their age, upon closer inspection, their road-worn image brings them back to a grounded reality. Falchuck often spoke over Garcia, whose job typically ran the gamut of ticket sales and ushering. He was given the Aerosmith Museum assignment as a reward for not utilizing his state mandated sick days. I imagine they came to a consensus, while the New York journalist is here, the group's official historian had precedence. The genesis of the group can be traced to a 1970 gig in which Steven Tyler's "Chain Reaction" opened for Joe Perry's "Jam Band." The leaders of both groups saw a potential to cede control in pursuit of a greater artistic statement. Cohabitation, over-consumption of marijuana, and a general "guys being dudes" atmosphere ensued. Gig posters, album art, an MTV Video Music Award, and some less than road worn instruments told the story. Regional success and a calculated gig at legendary club Max's Kansas City gave Aerosmith what would seem like their birthright, a precarious opportunity on the 1972 Columbia Records roster, amongst first time signees Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen. Unlike the Dylanesque songwriter-plus-band dynamic of Joel and Springsteen, Aerosmith embraced an orgy of blues and bacchanalian impulse. Though they were often derided as an imitation Rolling Stones, Aerosmith blended the British invasion blues rock of the Yardbirds and Led Zeppelin with the smeared make-up aesthetic of street level proto-punk acts the New York Dolls. They would soon be battling their major influences on the charts. Arenas turned into stadiums. Perry and Tyler (soon to be branded the "Toxic Twins") were dedicated to pushing the limits to their breaking point. By 1979, tensions came to a head,

and according to whom you ask, Perry was either fired or voluntarily left the group after a backstage argument, followed by rhythm guitarist Brad Whitford in 1981.

Following the tour, Garcia requested a moment of my time. As an employee of the Park Theater and a Las Vegas resident, I was eager to hear him out, whether it added to my understanding of the Aerosmith legacy or not. Garcia contended that the real story was not the origin of Aerosmith, or their upcoming residency. The story lived on approximately one mile down the strip, at the Mandalay Bay hotel and casino. The shooter's true motivation for opening fire on a crowd of festival goers was never determined by the FBI. Garcia claimed that was the issue-that the public was led to believe it was a random act of violence. In a week, it was forgotten by the media and added to the "memory hole." Why did the shooter bring 22 cases of luggage, filled with firearms which were never discharged? Why did multiple eyewitnesses claim to have seen multiple shooters from different rooms in the hotel? How do we account for the presence of members of the Saudi royal family being only a few flights up from the shooter? Helicopters were seen circling the concert with lights flashing-or were they muzzle flashes? Garcia's choice contention came from a personal connection. A friend of his worked the front desk at the Mandalay Bay, and had access to the billing history of the shooter's room. Each night he ordered two entrees from room service. Why would a lone gunman order two entrees? Garcia assured me it had nothing to do with portion size or a promotional opportunity. He drew attention to my single rolling suitcase, describing how the shooter had checked in with ten shooting range bags and a desktop computer. I assured myself that in time, the connection of this information to the Deuces Are Wild residency would reveal itself. I promised to meet Garcia again, and discuss his theories further. In the meantime, it was back to the Park MGM, for some much needed rest.

That night, a powerful vision came to me in my sleep. As the powered curtains fell on the winking lights of the Las Vegas strip, my mind raced through the subconscious suggestions of the day, the overweight seat-mate on the flight whose hands I allowed to stray across my legs in

his search for the entertainment controls, country music fans being splayed by hot lead, the thousands of penises rhythmically being stroked and pulsed to Joey Kramer's beat, the howls of pleasure escaping wet throats harmonizing with Steven Tyler. Songs of old black bluesmen being repurposed and marketed for horny teenagers across four decades. Explosions of cum soaking vinyl car seats. Fourteen year olds taking some roadie's warm member in their mouth to gain admittance to Aerosmith's traveling sanctum. I was alone in an industrial monument to America's lost productivity, a decrepit manufacturing plant. Robotic arms sat lifeless, covered in cobwebs. The dulcet, autotuned introduction of Aerosmith's hit "Janie's Got a Gun," brought them to life. They clasped my ankles and wrists, pulling me taught. Another arm reached for me, gouging my skin as the clothes ripped off my body. A Deuces Wild backstage pass was wrapped around my neck, choking me just enough to let me keep my consciousness. It felt amazing. An electric wheelchair approached, it was Steven Tyler. He was old now, much older than he appeared. The sunglasses fell off his face to reveal sunken, milky white eyes. He approached my hanging breasts with a piercing gun, and shot a ring through my right nipple. He had repurposed me, I was the cover of Aerosmith's 1993 LP "Get a Grip."

After a breakfast of Greek Yogurt and approximately 100 mg. of legal THC, the MGM team granted me an impromptu sit-down with Tyler's partner in crime, lead guitarist Joe Perry. Perry can be described without hyperbole as the main musical composer for one of the most successful rock acts in American history, alongside his solo work with the Joe Perry Project, and supergroup Hollywood Vampires, featuring Alice Cooper and actor Johnny Depp. Outside the music industry, he lent his name and likeness to "Joe Perry's Rock Your World Hot Sauces." The brand has since expanded to include barbecue sauce (not to be outdone, drummer Joey Kramer has launched his own line of organic coffee beans). I sat poolside with Perry, where his new routine brings him for a pre-mediation cup of coffee and prebiotic yogurt bowl. I shared with Perry that I would be visiting with his songwriting partner Steven Tyler. How has their friendship and artistic collaboration evolved?

“Let me put it this way...” Perry has a habit of pausing before expanding on his thoughts. “You can love your brother, but you don’t have to like him. We have our ups and downs. He’ll say stuff in the press and I’ll think, ‘What the hell is he talking about?’ Next time I see him, it’s all hugs and kisses.”

Whether that pointed to long simmering grudges or two faced meetings, I was not sure. The legendarily branded “Toxic Twins” haven’t let sobriety get in the way of their famously tumultuous relationship. The beginning of this decade threatened to tear the band apart, twice. First, when Tyler fell offstage in Sturgis, South Dakota, leading to rumours that Perry was leading a campaign to replace their long time singer. The rumors were quashed when Tyler agreed to participate in drug and alcohol rehab. Tensions flared again when Tyler agreed to a multiple season contract with the show American Idol without notifying the band, severely limiting their touring potential. On the group’s longevity,

“There aren’t too many bands out there that are touring all the time that manage to keep the same guys in the band, the same lineup that was there in 1971. That takes a lot of work. You learn to adjust as you get older. You go from being a teenager with no responsibilities to middle-aged with wives and girlfriends-then you become fathers and grandfathers.”

Perry’s peace with his elder statesman status is no doubt a result of his interest in eastern philosophy. Perry has been connected to the David Lynch Foundation for Transcendental Meditation, and he has cultivated close friendships with luminaries like Deepak Chopra. Unfortunately, he was running late for his guided meditation. He left me with a quote he attributed to Alan Watts, given in signature Joe Perry fashion,

“You know, when somebody plays music, you just gotta listen. You follow the sound, and eventually you get it! The point can’t be explained in words. Music ain’t like that. If you listen to it, you get it. That’s all there is. Same with everything.” I thanked Joe for his time, and assured him I was eagerly awaiting the show.

No one does a second act like America. Las Vegas is a master of reinvention. What was once a lifeless valley, became a throbbing hub of gambling and entertainment. As the WWII generation approached retirement, the city reinvented itself once again, as Baby Boomer cash gave rise to the megaresort era. The mob moved out, and a more sterile, family friendly Vegas emerged. Though the economic crisis slowed the city and most institutions reported a net loss over the ensuing years, the entertainment capital seems to have soldiered on and continued to expand its appeal to millennials and someday even Gen Z (Legal weed helps, and it is bountiful. In 2019, the city won \$9.8 million in taxes from the cannabis market.). As impressive as Vegas' longevity has been, you have to hand it to Aerosmith, the Bad Boys from Boston may have an edge. (I have to credit my advance copy of "Life in an Elevator: Aerosmith in the 90's," I had no idea how crucial this period was to creating the band we all know today) When we left the group last, they were minus two guitarists, and two albums in the hole. Despite a reconciliation in 1984-the comeback album, "Done With Mirrors," was a flop. There was potential-the band was still a concert draw, and they were introduced to a young Gen X through MTV when Run DMC covered their 1975 classic "Walk This Way," in a prescient mash-up of rock and hip hop. The group needed a new approach, and they got one. Stints in rehab brought the era of the "Toxic Twins" to an end. The band hit the studio sober for the first time, this time with professional songwriters who had worked with the likes of Cher, Bryan Adams, and Pat Benetar. The strategy paid off, and "Permanent Vacation" was the band's biggest hit in a decade. The follow up "Pump" topped its precursor, and it appeared Aerosmith had achieved the impossible, regaining their mainstream success while staying true to their too-hot-to-handle roots. The band dominated the media, targeting the youth on MTV Unplugged, The Simpsons, and Saturday Night Live. Despite the rise of grunge, electronic music, and hardcore hip hop, the power-ballad stuffed "Get a Grip" was a monster hit that carried the revitalized Aerosmith into the 90's. Diminishing sales and quality plagued 1997's "Nine Lives," but Aerosmith would end the decade on a high note, "Don't Wanna Miss a Thing," from the soundtrack to Michael Bay's *Armageddon*

scored the band their first #1 hit. By now, the Aerosmith machine was unstoppable, and the success of this decade would fuel the band's momentum to the present.

The revitalized Aerosmith brand benefitted from a charmed partnership with corporate America. Following the release of the *Armageddon* (released by Buena Vista Pictures, parent company Disney) soundtrack, the band teamed up with Disney for the "Rock n' Roller Coaster Starring Aerosmith," at the Hollywood Studios amusement park in Orlando (coincidentally, this park is a co-venture with MGM, owners of the Park MGM Theatre. In a way, "Deuces Are Wild" serves as a sequel to this iconic roller coaster, for the tourist/touring family seeking American roots-rock entertainment the Aerosmith brand has provided time and time again, whether it be as a thrilling amusement or theatrical experience). The band played multiple shows in partnership with the NFL, and co-headlined the Super Bowl XXXV halftime show (produced by MTV, sister company of Columbia Records) with Justin Timberlake. In 2001, the group was inducted into the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame, an institution started by the founder of Atlantic Records, a product of Access Industries, a multinational conglomerate with holdings in natural resources, the media, technology, real estate, and a major contributor to Super PAC's benefitting Republican presidential candidates Scott Walker and Lindsey Graham. Aerosmith continued their association with the sporting world by teaming up with FIFA to perform throughout the Tokyo World Cup. In 2004, Aerosmith partnered with General Motors to license their classic hit "Dream On," to a Buick commercial, in an attempt to capture Baby Boomer nostalgia for the group's glory days. This was tied into the larger mid-2000's GM business strategy of lobbying against stricter fuel economy standards, and promoting larger vehicles which use more gas.

In 2008, Aerosmith licensed their catalog to Activision for "Guitar Hero: Aerosmith," an entry in the (at the time) popular series of music rhythm video games. Activision CEO Bobby Kotick, a veteran of Coca-Cola, has been criticized for promoting intellectual property which has the potential to be "exploited" over the years. "Guitar Hero: Aerosmith" was already the sixth title in

the series in five years, and would be followed by “Guitar Hero: Metallica” and “Guitar Hero: Van Halen” in 2009 alone. Further evidence of this quantity over quality approach can be seen in Activision’s “Tony Hawk” and “Call of Duty” series. With sales totalling 3.6 million units, “Guitar Hero: Aerosmith” is considered the best selling music based game of all time, but critics denigrated the gameplay for enjoyability relative to the user’s affection for the Aerosmith catalog.

I had an earnest desire to embark on my one-on-one with the man behind the machine, Steven Tyler. His eternally swaggering demeanor wielding a microphone stand adorned in colorful scarves may serve as the most recognizable piece of the Aerosmith visual canon, next to their winged iconic logo. Part sage mystic, part savvy businessman, and part androgenous sex symbol, Steven Tyler has occupied the status of “rock star” from the brink of death and irrelevancy, to a hard nosed staying power few have achieved. As I prepared in the mirror, I thought of Steven Paddock. Had he also showered and dressed in a bathroom like this? His motiveless crime begged the question, did we have similar intentions? I crossed the street to the larger MGM Grand, where Tyler resides in a duo of two-story penthouses. The one I would be visiting was reserved for meetings with the press and the decision makers for the Aerosmith empire. He is known to charter a jet back to his home in the Hollywood Hills on days between shows, and I was lucky to catch him before his strict pre-show rituals. I was greeted by Ezra Shurmberg, a “Junior Manager” from Maverick Management, the high powered team which has guided the brand since 2018. After confirming my credentials, he offered me a sample from a bowl of dosist Disposable vaporizers, pleasantly designed cylinders with intentions like “arouse” and “bliss.” As a legendarily frugal traveler, I took a handful to reserve for celebratory opportunities.

Steven was seated at a beautiful marble table, a delicate tea set lay steaming in front of him. The light played on his face, luminous, hair streaked with a dignified grey that emphasized his longevity and success over age. The saint. The priest. The river god. I blushed. He approached

me with the grace of a jungle cat, planting a kiss on my lips, leading me around the gaping penthouse.

“Joe Perry and I got a thing, we both collect knives. I always carry a switchblade, and when I did ‘Idol,’ and I walked out on stage ba-de-ba-de-ba-de-ba-do, right next to J. Lo and Randy, this knife was right in my pocket...to open fan mail!” Tyler proudly displayed a dizzying array of knives on an aged leather blanket. Many featured accoutrements like a built in taser, brass knuckles, or ornate Japanese inscriptions. I ran my hand over the textured handles, admiring their potential for destruction. Steven handed me one, serving as the piece de resistance: though smaller than the others, it featured a small inlaid swastika at the handle.

“Hitler Youth!” exclaimed Tyler. “Taken off a body, poor kid. My man Stove gets these shipped in for me.” After taking a brief journey through Tyler’s impressive collection of knives, he led me back to the table, and poured me a cup of Sayaka matcha. A small crystal ball sits on a base between us.

“I bring it everywhere, I bring it to Maui, I bring it on tour, I’m into crystals! And sometimes that light hits it...like it hits me on stage when the light is just right,” he explains, with a weathered, dry New England accent.

If one could gaze into this crystal ball, you might see a young man growing up in the Bronx and later Yonkers, raised by a secretary and high school music teacher. The sixties were coming for him, and he saw himself expelled for marijuana use, and hypnotized, by a Rolling Stones concert. Tyler memorably attended the Woodstock festival,

“It was a disaster area...a helicopter flew over us dropped fifty pound bags full of hot dogs-boom, boom, boom. Then giant piles of pots and pans to cook them-boom, boom, boom. Then I picked up the pan and went-ra, ta, ta, ta, ta (playing the teacup and table with his manicured fingernails)-people joined in-ra, ta, ta, ta, there were hundreds of people playing the pans, I walk into the woods and who do I run into? Joey Kramer, my drummer.”

A fortuitous encounter in Lake Sunapee, New Hampshire joined Tyler with his creative foil, Joe Perry.

“I’m mowing the lawn...and in an MG sports car, Joe Perry-hair down to here, glasses broken with white tape, the nerd you saw in all those nerd movies in the 80’s? Joe Perry. And he goes, ‘Hey man, what are you doing up here? I don’t remember him. He goes, ‘My band is playing at The Barn, I’ve seen your band play there many times, I thought, if I can take the ear my father gave me and apply it to this jam band...we could create some real magic. And they had one song they played good. Rattlesnake Shake. Something like the magic of the lake and the trees and the moss. The wind blowing on top of Mount Sunapee. We were the children of the woods. I never had a brother and no one looked as cool as Joe Perry.”

Perry and Tyler were on the fast track to success and all it entailed. “Aerosmith,” “Get Your Wings,” “Toys in the Attic,” and “Rocks” served as one of the most impressive 1-2-3-4 punches of any American rock group. They arrived fully formed, a hybrid of the English interpretation of the blues, and a signature take no prisoners attitude.

“Let’s just say, rehab didn’t exist, but the buzz that you be gettin’ from the crack don’t last, I’d rather O.D. in the crack of her ass! I wrote that.” Tyler laments the depths of the group’s depravity in the early days, echoing Perry’s sentiment that the band could have done more with the time they had, before the group initially splintered. Tyler earned the nickname “Spider,” “I would crawl on the floor looking for a piece of freebase that I thought I dropped, but probably already smoked. Toxic psychosis.”

In 1975, Tyler entered a relationship that has since become one of the most controversial chapters of his life. Tyler won guardianship of sixteen year old Julia Holcomb, with her parents’ permission.

“I idolized him,” Holcomb later reflected. “I was mesmerized by the rock n’ roll culture.” Their relationship spanned three years. In 1978, Tyler pitched Holcomb’s birth control pills through an open window, and she was soon pregnant. Five months in, Tyler left for the “Draw the Line” tour.

Their home caught fire, and Holcomb took refuge inside a fireplace. As she felt herself struggling for consciousness from smoke exposure, she saw her grandmother's picture of Jesus hanging nearby and prayed a verse from the Psalms,

"Into thy hands I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me." Holcomb reflected, "Suddenly at that moment, he was real to me again, like he was when I was a little girl." Holcomb believed that it was a divine force who had mercy on her, and delivered her from the flames.

The tipping point for their relationship seemed to come when Holcomb's pregnancy was terminated on suspicion of birth defects from drug abuse and second hand smoke from the fire. Tyler remembers,

"It was a big crisis. It's a major thing when you're growing something with a woman, but they convinced us that it would never work out and would ruin our lives. You go to the doctor and they put the needle in her belly and they squeeze the stuff in and you watch. And it comes out dead. I was pretty devastated. In my mind, I'm going, Jesus, what have I done?"

Tyler and Holcomb have since lost touch. Holcomb has since converted to Catholicism, joined the Silent No More organization, and been married for thirty one years, "Sometimes I'll hear his music and it will bring back sad memories. And I will turn to prayer," she said.

I asked Tyler if he ever worries how this relationship will be interpreted, in a time when the dialogue concerning consent, manipulation, and sexual misconduct looms large, and careers have suffered what may be permanent damage.

"There is no drug stronger than music," Tyler replies, grasping my hand. "As a father and grandfather, I want to focus my energy on things that really matter, and leave behind something else in this crazy world along with my music."

In 2015, Tyler launched Janie's Fund (named after his 1989 hit, "Janie's Got a Gun"). The charitable initiative works in conjunction with Arizona's Youth Villages facility to bring much-needed awareness to the issue of abuse and neglect of children and to generate financial

support to ensure that girls receive the most effective services available to help them overcome the trauma and pain of abuse.

Tyler is staring down an 8 leg stretch of performances based around the Deuces Are Wild residency.

“They hear us play good old rock ‘n’ roll, and there are no samples. I sing in the same key, and Joe plays like a madman. Listen, I get to stand next to Joe Perry—he is a true rock star, one of the last. He’s just the greatest. He survived...I’m so wound up by those beautiful people that are singing along with the songs and freaking me out. Yet they leave there thinking, ‘I can’t freaking believe it,’ and guess what? Me too! And I’m here going, ‘What just happened?’ Sweeeeeet Emooooooooooooooooon.”

The days of wine and roses are far in the past for Tyler. He exists now as a living monument to the excess of the arena rock generation, a sage mystic who lived to tell the tale, and capitalized on it. Janie Joplin, Bob Marley, the mud at Woodstock, Hawaiian herbs, Ken Kesey, African fertility totems, rare crystals-personalities and influences swirl around him endlessly, cohabitating a plain only he can see. He embraced me warmly, and enthused about the evening’s performance, claiming he was in an unusually verile state of mind. We exchanged phone numbers, promising to speak more if the opportunity presented itself.

With time to kill before the show, I hit the strip around the Park Theatre, and rendez-vous with the community which has kept the Aerosmith brand viable throughout its fifty year career.

“The stage seating is terrible,” started Jennifer, from Strasbourg, Colorado. “I had to watch the sloppy-ass drunk couple in front of me tongue each other all night, I’m only 5’5”, so I didn’t see shit all night,” Jennifer was returning for another chance at seeing her idols, this time with VIP access. The VIP experiences differ in tiers and pricing, the premium package includes a meet and greet with Steven Tyler and Joe Perry (plus autographed 8x10), while the more frugal option provides the group’s rhythm section. The attendees shuffled into the theater, socks pulled

up to the knees. The charmed flower child generation slides comfortably into nostalgia.

Unfortunately, I hated these people.

Front and center, stage right. I'm hardly one to steal a prime seat from an eager fan, so I made up my mind to enjoy the show to the utmost of my human potential. My seat mates were Jerry and Paul (real names changed). They were two of the top sales people from the Raytheon defense contracting firm, and while in town for a conference on unmanned aerial combat, were rewarded with tickets to Deuces Are Wild. They had the option for Cirque Du Soleil, but in Jerry's words they "didn't go for that fag shit." Though not fans of Aerosmith any more than say, Led Zeppelin or the Eagles, they were fans of the genre in general. I assumed they were ready to rock, though they declined my offer of a few puffs from my Dosist Arouse pen. From the start, this was not the back to basics, guitar plus amp exhibition Joe Perry had prepared me for. The stage was swathed in neon lights and showbiz flourishes which brought to mind the Grammy's or Video Music Awards over a back to basics rock gig. Perhaps this was the post-sobriety Aerosmith's ideal environment, sterile, workshopped, overseen by a domineering corporate body. Tyler was as always a consummate professional, slinking on stage masked behind a wide brimmed hat. The band has a distinct John Varvatos meets Sgt. Pepper look on stage, I wondered how the band picks their on stage apparel, and whether or not a stylist plays a role. They look both young and impossibly old, completely out of place in any era, like a band that hadn't left the road since the 70's, throwing out what didn't fit and keeping what worked. In a way, it suits them perfectly.

The night's setlist was dominated by Aerosmith's post sobriety heights of popularity, curiously heavy on 1993's Get a Grip, the weakest entry in their late-80's early-90's heyday. Ties were loosened and drinks were spilled, I saw dance moves that hadn't been performed in public in decades. Steven Tyler was the ringmaster. Curiously lithe vocal chords. Pacing the stage, catlike. "Sweet Emotion," "Walk This Way," "Dream On," the words and sounds were ingrained in me. My body craved movement. I sucked at the dosist pen, my lips sticky with residue. Jerry

and Paul watched in horror as I began to move, uncontrollably. Steven Tyler was the lead singer of the band, the CEO, maybe Aerosmith really were the greatest American band of all time...they had monetized and sold what Joe Perry himself believes to be unexplainable.

“What is this, Cirque du Soleil?” Steven inquired.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA

I understood Steven. He wanted me to be bold. What happens here only happens here! Vacant expressions everywhere. I kept sucking the plastic vessel. The earthy scent was coming out of my eyes, out of my ears. I was aroused. Under Armor golf shirt in front of me. Massive gut. Dressed like a pathetic sack of shit. Loose, baggy skin. Sunken eyes. Steven was taught, animalistic. How could you call them both men? Steven wanted me to squeeze eyeballs. Steven wanted me to crush testicles. He wanted me to grind this fat fuck’s head on a cheese grater. He wanted me to rip hair. He wanted me to slice tongues. He wanted teeth. He wanted a necklace of toes adorned atop his John Varvatos scarf. He wanted to climb into my vagina and record Aerosmith’s 16th studio album in my ovaries. He wanted all the piss, cum, sweat, shit, and pus in the human body neatly arranged and labeled.

“Dude looks like a laydaaaaay!”

I took off my belt and ensnared the flesh sack in front of me by the neck, and pulled with all my weight. Blood flowed to my muscles. My pupils dilated. I was frothing at the prospect of choking the life out of this bald fat fuck in front of his wife’s eyes. Arms pulled at me, scratched at me, voices swore at me. Steven was reaching out, but he was fading away, distant. I was outside. Las Vegas Boulevard. Warm evening air. Desert air. Peace.

I decided to treat myself to a walk down the iconic Las Vegas strip. With all the excitement surrounding the Deuces Are Wild residency, I had barely gotten an opportunity to enjoy the sights, sounds, and tastes that this incomparable city had to offer. Despite my abbreviated version of the show, I had made note of its rousing portrayal of an American institution taking a much deserved victory lap! The men, women, and children gaped at the colorful display

surrounding them. Swatch. Shake Shack. La Tour Eiffel. Gucci. Caesar's Palace. Slots-a-fun. Margaritaville. I wanted shrimp. I needed shrimp. However, the night had other plans for me. My phone vibrated. "Roll stone! where u at tn??? feeling revealing..."

I returned to the MGM Grand, adrenaline from the night's events pulsing through my body. Ezra Shurmberg from Maverick Management met me at the elevator again, a clipboard in his hand. A non-disclosure agreement! I told him to shove it up his Hebrew ass. A vacant stare. I reached for his pathetic testicles. Small for a man. I squeezed. I dug my fingernails. He wheezed in pain. I bet you like it! I bet you'd pay for it if I'd let you! His knees buckled. I led him to the floor with my palm. Tears welling up from his Ivy League eye sockets. He was a vessel for humiliation, for hate. You snivelling choir boy. You ball of snot. You stain of dried cum. You skid mark of two day old shit. You gingham and body spray LinkedIn profile.

"Hooooo baby!" a familiar voice. Steven.

"Kitty can scratch!" I told him this scenario would make for fruitful inspiration for Aerosmith's upcoming sixteenth studio album.

"You got that right! Come on in." We left Ezra in the hallway. Pathetic.

I felt honored to be one of the few guests to visit Tyler's second penthouse at the MGM Grand. Unlike the sterile environment I'd met him in, the space was covered in soft, silken fabrics, exotic rugs. Scarves sat atop lamps and incense burned sensuously. Steven activated the Sonos speaker system. Nina Simone. He paused in front of a colorful portrait.

"David Hockney," said Steven. "The original is in the vault at home." My blood was flowing.

We sat on the Mario Bellini Camaleonda sofa. The yellow suede felt incredible. My body didn't have enough skin to feel this couch. I loved this couch. I twisted and turned against the fabric, contorting the clothes off my body. I knew Steven enjoyed watching me. My consciousness hovered far above us amongst the dim recessed LED lights. I saw it all. Teasing my nipples, caressing my thighs. Sucking my fingers. It undressed, lights playing on its bloated, aged body. It defies gender, its shaved and worn face bore no trace of masculinity, its

sunglasses stayed on, hiding its beady lifeless eyes. His bulbous chest displayed two sagging, defined breasts. A curiously taught stomach leading to a landing strip of shaved pubic hair. Its member dangled lifelessly between two schoolboy's thin legs. This intersex creature watched me ravenously. It reached down to its languishing scrotum. It began to squeeze a delicate area with his fingers. With every pump, the skin of its stamen rose and engorged. It was ready. It waddled towards me, entered me, made rousing calls of pleasure. Its face contorted. I spit at it. I bit at it. I pulled its stringy hair and slapped its animatronic face until rosy bruises came to the surface. I thrust finger after finger into its anus, as hard as I could. It howled with a final exasperated grasp at the abyss. I wondered how many more lunar cycles this creature had left. Before it returned to its cave and its muscles released and heart stopped. It lay on the couch, a slight smile on its face. The aging machine had sputtered another potent load. Soon the parts will atrophy, the fluids will dry up. I pulled on my pants. The thing got my attention, and pointed to the mid-century modern side table. A t-shirt. "Deuces Are Wild." An Aerosmith logo. A spinning craps wheel. "Las Vegas." It was for me. It wanted me to have something to remember this night by. My eyes watered. Thank you. Months of pain tumbled out of me. I dried my eyes. I crossed into the vestibule and picked up a rocks glass. I let the creature's secretion flow, collecting in the glass.

The next morning, despite a concerted effort not to miss my flight, I agreed to meet Jorge Garcia again, off Dean Martin Drive at the site of the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival.

"You can't believe everything you read!" he implored to me. "The established narrative, they want you to take it and never ask a god damn question. This was the start of the fucking coup, of the fucking Saudi royal family! Paddock, he brought the pieces. The team hits his room, loads up, goes up a few floors, cleans house, but the plan went to shit and the Saudi's bailed! The assassins, fuck, they took out Paddock and made the whole thing look like another mass shooting. We can't say shit about the Saudi's, they buy and sell our asses, so we can have gas to go work every day. 9/11 hijackers: all Saudi!"

I told Garcia that in all likelihood, he was correct, but due to Saudi influence on my publisher's parent company, Conde Nast, I would never be able to reveal the truth about what happened that day. This was a fact of life, and he would do well to understand that the world works a certain way and if he wanted to continue living his life, which is really not so bad, he would cease his investigations immediately. Because I too, am bought and sold by the Saudi royal family. And they have noticed his investigation. And they don't like it. But don't worry, Jorge. I have something that will help clear the air in this age of uncertainty and contradiction. A gift for you. Something to remember me by. I handed him an empty pill bottle from my bag. A viscous white slime lay at the base.

"This is Steven Tyler's cum."