

ACE FREHLEY

Like a shooting star headed toward earth from another solar system, Ace Frehley operates in his own musical galaxy. He's a musical maverick and iconoclast adored by millions of fans around the world. Through his seminal work with KISS and as a solo artist, Ace Frehley is championed as one of the most influential guitar players of the last four decades and his impact on popular music is immeasurable. With his smash 1978 solo album and post-KISS work including 2009 *Anomaly*, Frehley continues to be the best selling member of the original band.

A career in music was in the cards for Ace from the very beginning. "I decided when I was sixteen years-old that I wanted to be a professional musician," Frehley asserts. "Not only did I decide that but I always felt that I was gonna make it. I've always had the power of foresight and I felt it was destiny for me. I knew it was gonna happen, if it wasn't with KISS it would have happened with someone else. I distinctly remember seeing Led Zeppelin, Cream and The Who, all groups who I admired tremendously, but at the same time there was a little voice in the back of my head going, "You can do that too." Early on, Ace recognized the importance of fusing explosive musicality with "look at me ma" showmanship. "The Who was a big inspiration on me. The day I saw The Who play for the first time in 1967 at the RKO Theater changed my life. Seeing Pete Townshend made me realize playing live onstage wasn't just about peeling off impressive licks but you have to entertain too. I knew then that I wanted to do something musical and theatrical. I remember playing in high school bands and lighting off smoke bombs (laughs). I painted day-glo flowers on my drummer's drums and put a black light in front of the kit so it would glow. I put lights in a guitar when I was eighteen-years-old."

Heavily inspired by the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page and Pete Townshend, Ace Frehley was a devoted student of rock and roll, practicing his craft by studiously listening to records by those classic players and treating them as sacred music scrolls. Little did the Bronx born musician know that years later the tables would be turned and his revolutionary six-string axe work as a member of KISS and a solo artist would inspire millions of guitar players around the globe to follow in his footsteps. Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard, Lenny Kravitz and the late Dimebag Darrell of Pantera are amongst the numerous artists whom have pointed to the legendary guitarist as a profound inspiration. It's an honor that Frehley acknowledges with characteristic modesty. "I don't think much about how I influenced a whole generation of guitar players because that idea is so big (laughs). I'm not egotistical and I try to be humble about all facets of my life but it's kind of mind blowing to know I was a huge influence on a new crop of guitar players in the same way that people like Hendrix, Page, Beck and Townshend had an impact on me. I was influenced by all those players and now I'm lucky enough to have that kind of influence on guitar players younger than me that grew up listening to KISS and Ace Frehley. It goes full circle and it's the way that rock and roll evolves. It's a good feeling and it makes me feel proud. I hear my influence on some players and it just puts a smile on my face and gives me a little hop in my step." (laughs)

More than four decades ago, Ace Frehley was rewarded with that life changing, big break that all aspiring musicians can only dream about. Answering a "Guitar Player Wanted" ad in New York's *Village Voice* weekly newspaper, the struggling 22-year-old musician showed up to an audition for a new hard rock band at a seedy downtown loft with egg crates hastily plastered to the walls to act as a noise buffer for the sonic commotion unfolding inside. Ever the individualist, Frehley famously turned up wearing one red and orange sneaker and dutifully blasted off some of his signature fiery licks, leaving proverbial jaws on the ground and reducing all other candidates to

dust. Having "aced" his tryout, he joined forces with Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley and Peter Criss and KISS was born. Signed to fledgling new label Casablanca Records, KISS took the music world by storm. Wearing garish makeup and decked out in outrageous costumes, love them or hate them KISS was a band you would never forget. Borrowing elements of their look from shock-rock master Alice Cooper and comic books, and horror films, the band's glorious tsunami of sound drew sweaty inspiration from the best of Led Zeppelin, Humble Pie, The Who, Rolling Stones and others.

Defying critics who slammed them as talented clowns in black leather and six-inch heels, KISS kicked down the doors of convention with the perfect triumvirate of explosive music, unforgettable image and spectacular stage show. "Once we started playing live and we found our niche, I really got the sense that it was gonna go somewhere, Frehley recalls. "Everyone in the band was on the same page back then. Everyone was committed in their own way. Gene did a lot on the publicity end because at the time we didn't have a publicist. (laughs) In essence, in the beginning Gene was our publicist. I was more of the design guy—I designed the KISS logo; I suggested Paul put one star on his eye. We all worked together as a team." The group's tireless work ethic and unshakable commitment to do anything to make it helped catapult KISS to stardom on the heels of their seminal 1975 album, *Alive!* For the next several years, through such albums as *Destroyer*, *Rock and Roll Over* and *Love Gun*, KISS became an international phenomenon, racking up multi-platinum records and sold out concerts around the globe. For Frehley, the realization that KISS was now one of the biggest bands in the world came "when we played three nights at Madison Square Garden. That was a pretty special three days. It was our hometown and here we are playing Madison Square Garden. It was where we struggled in our early days rehearsing in a small loft and playing small clubs. That's when it really sank in that we had made it big."

As both a showman and musician, Frehley made an indelible impact on popular culture as a member of KISS. Whether firing rockets off his guitar, bringing crowds to delirium with his smoking guitar effect or impressing fans with his explosive fleet fingered six-string guitar work, in a band not renowned for its playing ability, he drew critical and public accolades for his accomplished musicianship. Taking a break from KISS-mania, in September of '78 the band members released four separate solo albums. Ace Frehley's debut solo album was by far the runaway biggest seller, spawning the smash hit, "New York Groove." "Eddie Kramer's assistant suggested we cut 'New York Groove', recounted Frehley. "When I first heard the song I wasn't too keen on tracking it but Eddie pushed me and said, "C'mon Ace, you should try it." After we recorded it I still didn't think that it was really the right song for me to do. It's not the kind of song I would ever write. But what do I know, it turned out to be my biggest hit!" (laughs) The ramifications of his surprise success as a solo artist were far reaching as Ace explains: "The success of my '78 solo album definitely planted the seed for my eventually leaving KISS to pursue a solo career. I felt I was more creative apart from the guys than with them. The success of my solo album opened my eyes and made me a little more cocky. It made me realize that I had the ability to do it on my own."

Splitting from KISS in the early eighties, the first fruits of Ace's creative efforts came in 1987 with his new band, Frehley's Comet and eponymous debut album, which yielded the FM radio hit, "Into the Night," a track penned by Russ Ballard who also wrote Frehley's signature '78 smash "New York Groove". From there, Frehley was on a roll, issuing a string of well-received solo albums--*Second Sighting*, *Live + One* and *Trouble Walkin'*--each demonstrating his spectacular six-string abilities and immense gift for crafting imaginative and arena ready rockers was safely intact. Looking back Frehley observes: "I enjoyed the freedom of going solo but it was scary. Once I'd actually left KISS and it sank in, I realized that the other three guys in the group did more than I

thought. I soon found out it's a much bigger undertaking to go solo than I'd anticipated. I have fond memories of the Frehley's Comet days. That first lineup was great and it evolved over the years. We put out some good music and were a really good live band. It was a lot of fun playing with those guys. If I wouldn't have run into trouble with drugs and alcohol I think the band would have gone a lot further. But we all have our demons and we deal with them in different ways."

Reuniting with KISS in 1996, Frehley teamed up with his old mates for a spectacularly successful five-year run numbering sold out concerts around the globe and high profile appearances at the Super Bowl and the Olympics. Splitting from the group in 2001 after their "Farewell Tour", Frehley needed to recharge his creative batteries and took a much needed sabbatical after decades in the rock and roll circus. Eight years later, to the eternal joy of his loyal fan base, in 2009 "Space Ace" returned to the music scene with his first new studio album in twenty years. A commercial and artistic triumph, *Anomaly*, proved to be his highest charting album since his classic 1978 solo debut. In 2011, he added yet another accolade to his mantel as a *New York Times* best selling book author with *No Regrets*, a hard hitting and honest account of his tumultuous career.

Having battled substance abuse for decades, in 2014 Frehley is seven years clean and sober and driven by a new-found commitment and focus to his artistry. On December 17, 2013 Ace and the original lineup of KISS was nominated into the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame in the 2014 class. Entertainment One Music is proud to announce the addition of the legendary Ace Frehley to its roster. His new solo album, as yet untitled, is due for release in the spring of 2014 and promises to forge yet another exciting chapter in the life of one of rock's most influential and distinctive artists. "Fans can expect something closer to my '78 solo record," Frehley reveals. "Over the past couple of months I've been listening to my old records and trying to find that formula that I've captured so many times in the past. I recently played some of my new music for a few people at my label and they were blown away. It reaffirmed in my mind that I'm on the right path and I think my fans are going to love the results. It's gonna be a great record."

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