

FOR MORE THAN HALF a century Alice Cooper - aka Vincent Damon Furnier - has been known as The King Of Shock Rock, forever associated with horror-inspired greasypaint

and the ever-present danger of a falling guillotine. Of course, Alice's stage antics would be the first thing people who aren't committed fans would cite at the mention of his name. But nobody can sustain such a long career in the notoriously fickle world of rock without having the gravitas of serious music to back up the outrageous image.

With his trademark rasp, and seemingly forever-indignant sneer, Cooper turned blues rock on its ass and gave the well-loved and well-worn genre an entirely new feel.

"It was very easy to shock an audience in the '70s," Cooper admits. "There was no Internet, so things got around by word of mouth. Not everybody could see an Alice Cooper show, but the imagination was a powerful thing. And to be fair, I did more than enough crazy stuff up there to get people talking; the giant snake on stage, setting a lot of stuff on fire... And that meant the press was writing about us and parents ended up hating us, which was fine because the kids loved us. But the real trick was making great records. Kids related to 'School's Out' because there was a little bit of *West Side Story* mixed with just enough James Bond. When you added in the horror, you had the cocktail that made us unique."

Of course Alice Cooper has talent, but over the years he's also had a lot of help with his creative pursuits. This has always been by design. Right from the beginning,

Vincent fancied himself as a fully focused frontman with no room for his own guitar-related antics. So Cooper's vision always included at least one top guitarist by his

side. Over the years there have been many, many musicians filling the role, from Glen Buxton right at the start of Alice Cooper in 1968, on through Dick Wagner and Steve Hunter in the '70s, then Kane Roberts in the late '80s, Ryan Roxie in the '90s and 2000s, and Nita Strauss since 2014. One thing is clear, though. When it comes to guitar players, few have paid as much attention to the artform as Alice Cooper.

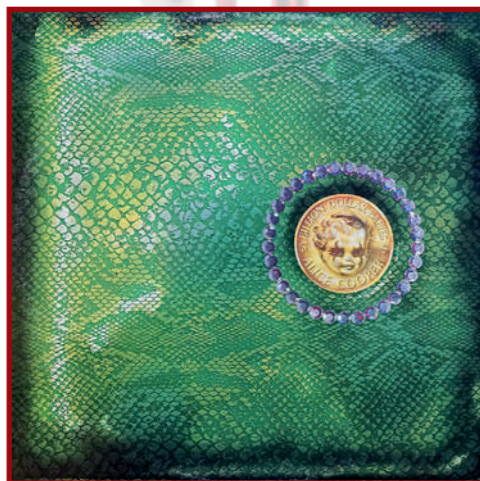
**YOU MIGHT** have thought Alice would be coy about

choosing a standout player from such a pool of talent. Not a bit of it.

"Glen [Buxton] was my most original guitar player. He was a lot like Frank Zappa. Zappa could play anything that Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton could play, but he chose to play his own kind of music. Glen was a lot like that. He had difficulty jamming with a blues band, but he could play with an early Pink Floyd-type band easily. He would write melody lines that at first appeared to make absolutely no sense. Bizarrely, though, they fit what was going on in an Alice song."

Nowadays Alice uses not one, not two, but three guitarists to provide the firepower. Ryan Roxie, Nita Strauss, and Tommy Henriksen are all top live players, so Alice knows he has to commit to holding up his end of the bargain when he's performing.

"I will never get up on stage and phone it in," he insists. "I won't be a guy hobbling around up there. If I can't play Alice properly, then I won't take Alice



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"I WAS VERY MUCH A FUNCTIONING ALCOHOLIC. IN THE '70S, I WAS FUNCTIONING EXTREMELY WELL. I COULD DRINK ALL DAY, I COULD WRITE SONGS, AND GET UP ON STAGE AND SCARE THE HELL OUT OF PEOPLE."



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