

Mötley Crüe milk the applause at the end of a show on the 'Girls Girls Girls' tour. I-R: Emi Canyn (backing singer), Nikki Sixx (bass), Vince Neil (vocals), Tommy Lee (drums), Mick Mars (guitar), Donna McDaniel (backing singer)

# WHEN CRÜE RULED THE WORLD

**MÖTLEY CRÜE** WAS THE HOUSE BAND OF THE SUNSET STRIP HAIR METAL SCENE. MESSRS SIXX, NEIL, LEE AND MARS WERE LARGER THAN LIFE, LOUDER THAN HELL AND BAD TO THE BONE. UNSURPRISINGLY THEIR 1987 'GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS' TOUR WAS THE VERY EPITOME OF ROCK'N'ROLL. BUT WHAT WAS IT REALLY LIKE INSIDE THE INFERNO? ROCK CANDY ASKS THE PEOPLE WHO WERE THERE... INTERVIEWS BY CURT GOOCH AND JEFF SUHS. ALL PHOTOS BY MARK WEISS.

**IT'S THE SUMMER OF 1987** and Mötley Crüe are on top of the world. 'Girls Girls Girls', the band's fourth album, was released on 19 May and has been a huge success, making number two on the *Billboard* album charts, only narrowly kept off top spot by Whitney Houston. The album is fast heading towards quadruple platinum status and has firmly established the Crüe as the pre-eminent hair metal act. The forthcoming 'Girls Girls Girls' tour is touted as the hot rock ticket of the year and, given the band's reputation for excess all areas, it's sure to be the most hedonistic. The tour turns into an epic pilgrimage, running to 108 shows in all and netting \$21.1 million in ticket revenue. It becomes one of the most profitable and highly visible tours of 1987 alongside treks by U2, Bon Jovi, Pink Floyd and the Grateful Dead. Incredibly, it would have been even more lucrative had

bassist Nikki Sixx not succumbed to a heroin overdose on 23 December 1987. In an attempt to save his life, the bassist heads to rehab and an entire European tour, scheduled for early 1988, is canned. But the hell already raised on those 108 dates ensures that Mötley's 'Girls Girls Girls' tour will always retain legendary status in rock history.



The band and tour members beside their plane. Manager Doc McGhee opts for double denim

*Doc McGhee*  
Crüe's manager at the time

"This was a BIG tour. We'd done Europe with Iron Maiden before, but in 1987 we really ramped things up. This was HUGE - a ton of dates."

*Freddie Saunders*  
Tour security director

"The band were no longer travelling in tour buses, choosing instead to jet between gigs in their own private plane, using one luxury hotel in one city and hopping



Vince Neil tour pass courtesy of Bryan Anderson Collection

from show to show. Every night we'd fly back. The local fans would assume we were at their finest local hotel, when the reality was that when the show was over we'd jump into vehicles, head right to the tarmac, go back to the hub city and be in our own beds that same night. But after two or three days in the hub city it became pretty obvious where we were. The lobbies would be full of people. They knew we were coming back."

## Vince Neil

**Mötley Crüe vocalist**

"Being based in one place was really cool, but it was a bit of a pain in the butt, too. It was great to have a plane, but you're adding more mileage to what you have to do. Say we were based out of Dallas... We'd have to get in the car, drive to the plane, then fly to, say, Oklahoma. Then after the show it's back in the car, back to the plane, back to the hotel in Dallas - and you do that for about a week. We finally figured out that that's not the way to do it. It's better just to bus it. But it was a fun time all the same."

## Fred Saunders

"The captain and stewardess on the plane were married to each other. They were young and hip and flirtatious. I toured with Bon Jovi using the same plane. We had to bring an additional guy along just to deal with luggage: when you're on a bus you just leave your gear in there and go into the hotel every other night, but when you fly you're in a hotel every night. You need an assistant just to deal with luggage from tarmac to tarmac. The guys in the band would get picked up by a limousine and be driven directly to the hotel. The luggage would follow. It was crazy. Fans came up with ways to get into the inner sanctum, hiding in food carts or in laundry baskets at the hotels or inside road cases at the gig."

## Vince Neil

"Girls...' was a great time. The stage set was amazing, the first time Tommy's drum set flipped around and all that. We had Guns N'Roses open for us for a little while, and Whitesnake also opened right when they'd put out their big album ['1987']. It was actually doing better than 'Girls Girls Girls'. Those were some really fun times. I don't remember who came up with it, but everyone



Tommy with his wife at the time, actress Heather Locklear

was very supportive of the idea of having some girls on the tour. That's what we needed. We had some rehearsals in San Diego in June and these two female backing singers turned up. Then Mick had to go ahead and marry one of them!"

## Donna McDaniel

**One half of backing singer duo The Nasty Habits**

"Emi Canyn was the other girl and she was from Tacoma, Washington. She was definitely a rock'n'roll girl. She'd had a band called She Rok. I left my Disneyland gig to go audition for these guys and I had no idea what heavy metal bands were about. The day after the audition my body was so wrecked from the volume that I was almost ill. The next thing I knew I got the gig! Usually when you get a job you go on the road and you have to get on the bus. But this was first class all the way - all the best hotels and a private jet. It was the best job ever. Emi and I signed contracts before we went on the road, agreeing that we'd have nothing to do with the band members - no personal relationships with them. I was very happy to do that. I signed that contract right away because they scared me!"

## Ron Keel

**Lead singer of Keel, who would open the show on the first two gigs of the tour**

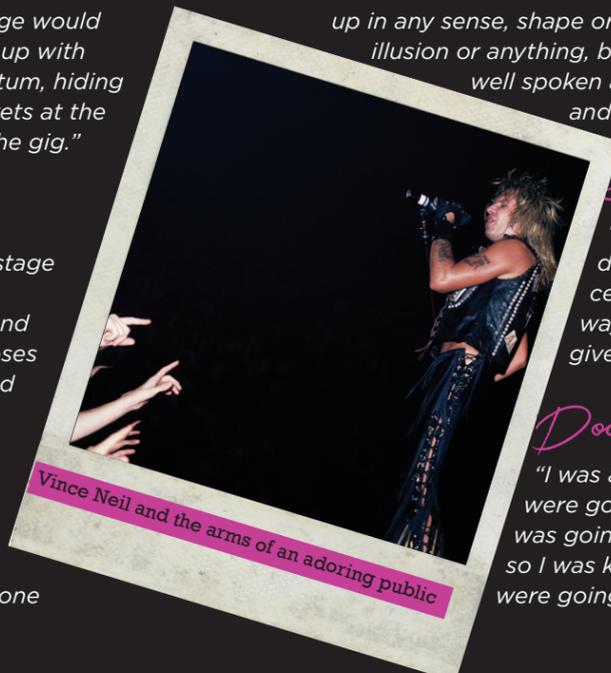
"It was obvious that Mötley set the gold standard at the time. They had amazing energy and we all followed in their footsteps. I remember at our first show the band came by our dressing room, all four of them, wished us well and thanked us for being there. They weren't fucked up in any sense, shape or form. I don't want to shatter the illusion or anything, but those guys were really nice, well spoken and professional. They went out and did a great show."

## Fred Saunders

"The band weren't like madmen doing shit all the time, but they certainly wouldn't go out of their way to hide anything. They didn't give a shit."

## Doc McGhee

"I was a little cautious of anything they were going to say. You had no idea what was going to come out of their mouths, so I was kind of worried about what they were going to say to the press."



Vince Neil and the arms of an adoring public

## Fred Saunders

"Doc McGhee said to me, 'Oh, Fred, these guys are so wild. I'll give you a bonus every time you have to punch them in the face to keep them in line.' I said, 'You're kidding?' He said, 'No, and you've got the job to smack them around if need be.' I'd broken Tommy's nose before and broke Vince's ribs on the bus. It was pretty rough and tumble. They knew I was serious. I used to tell them if they got out of line I'd beat them to death with their airline ticket home."

## Vince Neil

"That's kind of a half-truth. Fred was a triple black belt in karate and we would just try to take him down. It was all in fun, there was no anger about it. But we'd try to throw a punch at him and we'd be laying on our backs within a second. It was a 'Let's gang up on Fred!' kind of thing."

## Ron Keel

"We opened for Mötley at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix. It was the venue I went to as a kid. To be able to come back to my hometown and open for Crüe at a sold out arena where I'd stood in the audience was amazing. I was finally where I'd always wanted to be. As soon as we got done with our show I was out there in the audience with my fist in the air. I recall being severely entertained."

## Doc McGhee

"There were less drugs than at the time of 'Shout At The Devil', and also the whole 1984-85 era. It was definitely less than 'Theatre of Pain', but it wasn't exactly good. It was part of the culture."

## Fred Saunders

"The management said, 'Try to keep the drug thing contained.' At one particular hotel in Texas there was a drug dealer on just about every floor, in about every other room. It was the hardest thing in the world to contain, especially knowing that these guys were always going to dig them up from somewhere. I would catch some opening acts doing hand-palms and exchanging things. But you could tell who the real dirtbags and sleazes were. They weren't only trying to get to the band. They would have enough stuff for the truck drivers and anyone else who wanted it. They were explicitly there to deal. They weren't just a Mötley fan palming someone a little eye-opener. And if it was out there Nikki could get it. He could find it."

## Donna McDaniel

"Nikki was a really honourable man and was very professional in every way. He ran that band like a business. As far as I saw he would never be high for a show. They'd always be partying after a show in their own private rooms and doing whatever they did. But I was naïve about all that. I didn't do drugs. I never did drugs and it was an interesting concept, to be in the throes of all that. You definitely got a lesson in what they

were doing. I was very concerned for Nikki, because he was with [actress and singer] Vanity at the time, and they both weren't good for each other in that respect. It was sad it turned out they were messed up at the time."

## Fred Saunders

"Vanity would always be dancing on the side of the stage and would try to wander onstage. Nikki looked to his left and she was damned near on top of him. It became part of my job to keep the band's girls off the stage. I would have to escort them out to the mixing desk before the show. The house lights would be up and Heather [Locklear, then Tommy Lee's wife] and Vanity would shake their tails a bit and wave at the crowd and get them fired up. The band didn't like that at all."

## Donna McDaniel

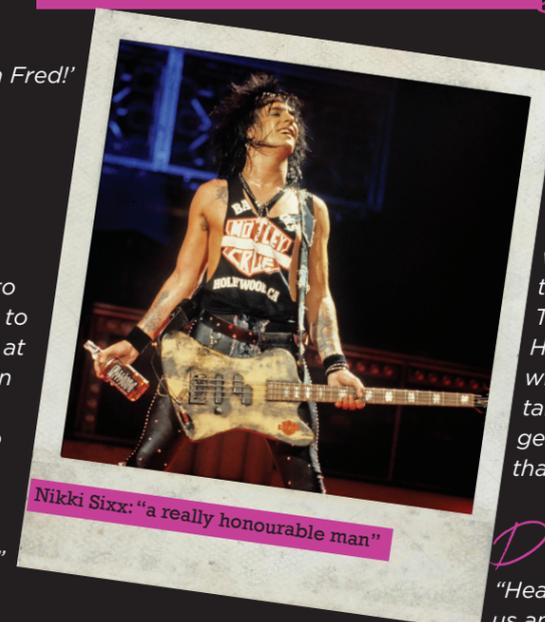
"Heather would travel on the plane with us and was a really good friend for a long time. I was being realistic about the

fact that she'd want to be my friend, because she'd want me to watch Tommy. But I never had anything to tell. The band were pretty private about what they did, so I didn't see much. I think Heather really loved Tommy, but it was a volatile situation. You bring alcohol and drugs into things and it's never good. It was obvious early on that Mick and Emi were flirting all the time. I think she was excited that someone of his calibre was interested in her. They tried to keep it secret, but you can't keep anything secret on the road. There was a point where other people were mad at Emi for breaking the 'no relationships with the band' contract and she got some hassle for that. But because they were an item I got a room to myself! Emi had hopes of having her own group after the tour ended and I think Mick helped her get her thing together."

## Fred Saunders

"The band would leave the girls in the hub city. 'I'm off to work honey. I'll be back in five or six hours, so entertain yourself.' They kept it all pretty low profile. Mick and

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TOUR SECURITY DIRECTOR  
FRED SAUNDERS**



Nikki Sixx: "a really honourable man"