



AS INTERVIEWED BY MICHAEL QUIGLEY, POPPIN MAGAZINE

MQ: What's the reaction been like wherever you've played? AC: Like this... MQ: What do you mean? AC: People that haven't seen us yet are shocked because they think that Alice Cooper must be a female folksinger. They don't expect the whole thing. And the whole thing is a direct product of television and movies and America, 'cause that's where America's based. That's where their heart is from the sex and violence of TV and the movies, and that was our influence. We weren't brought up under a blues influence. We were brought up under an electronics influence — the bomb, (I'm not knocking the bomb, I think the bomb's a gas), but television has been the main influence for this generation, and that's why this whole thing is happening. You just let your lower self go, and then it takes on all these aspects of the society — the city with horns blowing, the people yelling things at each other, and the all-in-all violence and chaos of the city. Put that on stage with music, and that's what this is.

MQ: OK. Now there's this thing on stage you do, which is sort of a freak thing. That's what the people see. Are you reticent about talking about your real selves? What are your backgrounds and influences, for example? AC: It's like this — these five members have been influenced of course by other groups, because that's where this generation's groups came from — an environment like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, and The Who. People like that. They were five years ago, and when they first came out, we were influenced by them — Zappa and people like that. So now we've taken that influence — we've done that whole trip, the sounding-like-other-people trip — and now we're applying it to a theatrics basis, to a statement, and what the statement is is nothing. It's a big flash of all these things and whatever you take out of that statement's one statement, one mind, one statement, one act, one show, and all the songs are one. They coincide with each other but they don't at the same time. So what it is is when people come to see us the first time, they see this. They pick all of this out, and then they decide, they computerize, decide if they like it or don't like it, and then they go home, and then they come back again because they're not sure what they saw. So what this is is us, our personalities refined down on to a stage performance. In other words, the way we play is the end product of the way we live — we live in the cities, you see.

MQ: How does the freak thing enter into all that? AC: Well, all of it is a freak thing, because it doesn't coincide with what the normal person thinks of the normal city. We take the city in abstracts — we take the city, what it does to us mentally — it affects you subconsciously. We take that subconscious power and put it on stage because you play what you're influenced by. I'm sure that blues-influenced people live the blues — real blues people. City people live the city. We live in L.A., New York, we live in places where it's chaotic and you never know what's gonna happen. And that's the music — you never know what's gonna happen. MQ: How much of your influence was from Zappa? AC: We identified with Frank. We were of course influenced — when everybody hears Zappa, they're influenced by him, just like The Beatles. But we were more affected by him than influenced. We understood that there was someone thinking the same way and so when we got together with him it worked perfectly. We got on his label, and the Bizarre organization is just going up and up. So we have faith. MQ: Why does the album have sort of a muted quality as compared to the performance? AC: You can't get the visual thing on the record as much as you'd like to. We produced this album, and we'd never done that before, except when we produced singles for ourselves. What happened was Frank wanted to produce us, and with Frank we didn't get the same feeling. He didn't get the same feeling. He didn't get the feeling that we wanted — nothing on him, but he wasn't on the same trip. He started to, but we said we weren't happy with the feelings we got off the cut . . . the album now is more us than the other production that Frank did.



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MQ: What were some of the differences he was putting into it? AC: I think he was trying to produce more of a . . . sort of a cheaper image . . . NS: Everything's recorded a lot tighter . . . AC: We wanted it more live and raw . . . we didn't want a studio sound. We just set it up and recorded it the way we played it. But that was the way we played it then . . . we play it differently now. If we did the album now it would be different. MQ: How have you been developing the theatrical routine you did today? AC: We've been just adding . . . things have been adding up and the songs have become longer, and eventually it may be a whole thing. It may just be one thing. MQ: Where did you all get together to decide to work this out? AC: Well, we were all in high school and we got together, and in college — we were in art college together. We started combining the use of light and the use of theatrics and the use of as many art forms as possible, and it's still growing — that's the whole idea of it. Right now it's here and certain people are affected by it, but six months from now, it'll grow — more things'll be added. Things are taken out, it becomes more polished, so it's an ever-growing, ever changing thing, the whole act is, and it's not really a play, or an opera like "Tommy" or anything like that, but it's a theatrical piece that I really don't like to put a title on, because you really can't . . . NS: It's never been done . . . AC: We try to take things that we hear on records and turn them around and change them, because we have a theory, like — the blues. (Points outside where a blues jam session is going on). Like that thing, that's been done so much . . . why is it being done so much? Is everybody that depressed? It's a depressing feeling to me. You know — "I lost my baby" — I don't care if you lost your baby, I care if you're feeling OK. Don't tell me your problems — tell me what good's been happening to you. That's the basis of getting along. We're tired of that and we won't accept that, we won't accept the blues except certain blues people that are real blues people . . . NS: No matter what you do, if you live it, that's you. That's why we accept some blues people that are really into it. It's not being phoney about what you're doing. Some people ask us some times, "Is this a put-on or what?" and it's not. This is the way we are, and we go from town to town and travel fast, and things change real fast, so that's the way we write, too. So that's our influences too. A long time ago, we started off like Alice said it was a rock and roll and even blues influence, but we changed out of it, because that's where we learned our basics, and also we learned that the people who play the blues live the blues and we didn't. So that blues taught us this, to be what you are. So we respect it, but we're into the way we are.

MQ: Have you thought about doing other things with a symphony? AC: We'd like to take a symphony orchestra and have them do such songs on the album as "10 Minutes Before the Worm" and "B.B. on Mars", and these songs are like packages, a full song compressed into one minute, sixty seconds of complete changes that all fit together, but not at the same time. It's not one of those songs you can talk about. Those songs are put together, compressed, and you think after hearing them that they don't make sense, but they do. I'd like to take an orchestra and have them do one-minute pieces using everything they can within one minute. MQ: Have you ever had any really violent reactions to your music? AC: Oh lots. We had Hell's Angels jump on stage before. At a pop festival in Michigan which was infested by bikers — I like bikers and I'm not saying anything against them — but they were there in full force. We went on after Arthur Brown and we were the last act on. The whole place was really tense, and we started doing the thing with the rabbit, killing the rabbit, and the bikers jumped on the stage, and they really got their rocks off killing this rabbit, and we're yelling "Kill it! Kill it!", and when they were killing the rabbit they just completely lost their taste for blood and were ready to kill everybody in the place. So after they were done, they were exhausted, and we took off. That was very close to getting killed. Usually at pop festivals we have people jumping on the stage. It's too bad that's not possible here because I would really like to see them jump on the stage. I appreciate an audience that reacts to the music, even if they jump on stage and try to beat us up, I think that's a fantastic reaction. I think that they're really hearing something then.

MQ: What would happen if you got murdered? AC: If you get murdered – what a great thing. What a great publicity thing. Hollywood . . . MQ: Neal, do you ever destroy your drums as part of the act? NS: Well, a long time ago, I used to do that stuff but I grew out of it because it was like a Keith Moon thing. Like he destroyed his drums and that was neat. But that was a long, long time ago, but the way things are going now, it's not a thing that in one's heart you destroy the drums. Sometimes it's a combination of the whole violence thing . . . things fall over. It's not necessarily drums, it's cymbals, microphones, amps, and people and guitars. It's a combination of everything happening. We don't like to put a limit on what happens. Sometimes nothing might fall down, but if it does it's more of a simultaneous thing than a set thing so instead of The Who – Jimi Hendrix destruction thing, it's a product of everything that comes toward the end of the act. MQ: How would you feel if somebody jumped on stage and kicked your drums in? NS: It's happened before, and like Alice said, the reactions are great then. Now when we were playing in the Panhandle Park in San Francisco at the Polo Grounds, about four or five months ago, people came on stage and they just started pounding the drums and the cymbals and stuff and then one girl just jumped right into the drums. If that's what happens, I have to play what's left. If something falls down, I just try to do the best with what's left, so it's a spontaneous thing. MQ: Well, what are you ultimately working up to? NS: Like Alice said, maybe that song, or the whole set'll someday come to a mixture of a rock show and a theatrical thing. There's no way we can tell what's gonna happen because our influences just keep moving along. A week from now, we might have some influence on what our product six months from now is gonna be. So there is no final set thing. That way would be putting a block on it too much and there's too many things to put an end on. AC: If you confine it, you're confining a whole thing. If you make it spontaneous, so that anything can happen, like we don't want to confine or restrict anything. Whatever we can do, whatever we can let happen, you just let it happen.

MQ: How does your sex trip or anti-sex trip fit into the act? AC: It's not an anti-sex trip. Like, we're taking sex, which is probably another half of American entertainment, sex and violence, and we're projecting it, and we're saying this is the way everything is right now. This is the way we are. Biologically, everyone is male and female, so many male genes and so many female. And so what it is is we're saying "OK, what's the big deal. Why is everybody so up tight about sex?" About faggots, queers, things like that. That's like making fun of a maniac because his brain isn't completely right, because he isn't in the norm. People don't accept that they are both male and female, and people are afraid to break out of their sex thing because that's making them accept more, making fun that we accept that. The thing is this is the way we are. We think it's a gas. MQ: What's the reaction of the people you talk to after shows? AC: A lot of them really understand it. A lot of the time, we think that they don't this is all we think about, what we're doing all the time. We like reactions – a reaction is walking out on us, a reaction is throwing tomatoes at the stage, that's a healthy psychological reaction. Reaction's applauding, passing out, or throwing up, and all of that is a reaction, and as much of that we can get, the better. I don't care how they react, as long as they react. MQ: How much of the performance is planned out in advance? AC: Well, we have very loose choreography. We plan some of it, but then something else'll happen and we'll just run all over the place as much as we can. MQ: Does anyone direct? AC: When we get together and rehearse, which is always living with each other, we always talk about what would make it better, what would mean more, what would say more. So we're always improving and growing. We just choreograph ourselves and work within our own unit.

MQ: What's the final thing you're looking for, either in reaction or with yourselves? AC: We really have no idea. We can only take it so far, because man can only take it so far, lower self can only take it so far, and you have to realize that the public is only at a certain place. We won't see the day when the public accepts what we wanna project, even though they are accepting a lot now. By the time they're accepting it, maybe they'll be too old. MQ: If it's total freedom . . . AC: If it's total freedom, I guess the ultimate thing you can go into is total silence between the audience and performer, with the performer projecting something he doesn't even have to play. A total silence trip is the ultimate. MQ: When you're on stage, do you try to antagonize the audience like Zappa does? AC: No, we try to antagonize them psychologically. We do antagonize them psychologically. People look at us and react. They either go "Wow! Hey-hey-hey, baby!" and we say that's great — they're reacting and that's wonderful. It's better than them sitting there doing nothing. I say make them react — do whatever's in your power to move the audience, and if that's where it is, and that's where it is with America, sex and violence, then I say project it.

MQ: Whose concept was the album? AC: Well, it's our concept — it's Frank's painting on the cover. We were originally going to use a Salvador Dali painting that we got permission from Salvador Dali to use, and Frank found this one, and it really did fit the music much more. We try to be as much involved in our product as possible, because then it's us.

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