



Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS (1972-1975)

Ken Sharp, Gene Simmons, Paul Stanley

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Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS (1972-1975) chronicles, for the first time, the crucial formative years of the legendary rock band KISS, culminating with the groundbreaking success of their classic 1975 album *Alive!* and the smash single "Rock and Roll All Nite," a song that nearly four decades later remains one of rock's most enduring anthems. Drawing on more than two hundred interviews, the book offers a captivating and intimate fly-on-the-wall account of their launch, charting the struggles and ultimate victories that led them to the threshold of superstardom.

Constructed as an oral history, the book includes original interviews with Paul Stanley, Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley, and Peter Criss, as well as with producers; engineers; management; record company personnel; roadies; club owners; booking agents; concert promoters; costume, stage, and art designers; rock photographers; publicists; and key music journalists.

Many of KISS's musical contemporaries from the time, most of whom shared concert bills with the band on their early tours, also lend their perspective via new interviews; these include Bob Seger, Alice Cooper, and Ted Nugent, as well as members of Aerosmith, Black Sabbath, Rush, Slade, Blue Öyster Cult, Mott the Hoople, Journey, REO Speedwagon, Styx, Raspberries, The James Gang, The New York Dolls, Iggy & the Stooges, The Ramones, Suzi Quatro, Argent, and Uriah Heep, among others.

The result is an indelible and irresistible portrait of a band on the rise and of the music scene they changed forever.

Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS (1972-1975) Details

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From Reader Review Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS (1972-1975) for online ebook

Mark says

What an awesome book! I have been a huge KISS fan for years and have read just about everything there is about the band over the years. This is the first book that I have seen that chronicles the first few years of the band. You get so many great details in this book that haven't ever been available before. Any fan of the band really needs to read this book. I hope they do another book sometime soon that covers the rest of the 70's and then a book on the 80's and then another book on the 90's. I am sure there is so much more hidden details in their career that can and should come out.

Mitchell Caplan says

Yes, I admit it, I'm a huge KISS fan. Have been since my Uncle Sonny (1who managed the Bayou nightclub in Wash DC) brought home their first album after the band played the 300 seat club. I was hooked from the first cords of "Deuce". After seeing them live in 76, 77, and 78, I was double done.

This book isn't written that well...it's really just a compilation of interviews with the band, their management, their roadies, and a variety of other artists.

It's a great look at those first three years right before "Alive" came out and they rocketed to stardom.

One of the most interesting and surprising pieces of detail in the book was the interviews with the bands KISS played with, many of which opened for them after KISS became headliners. The most delightful surprise was hearing these bands, almost unanimously, talking about how gracious and woe coming KISS was. In this age of rock n roll, most headliners treated their opening acts like shit. KISS, recalling how they themselves were treated, did a 180 and did all they could to help and support the bands opening for them.

It was nice to learn this, especially understanding Gene Simmons less than stellar rep in the business. Some say this is keeping them out of the Rock hall of Fame. Some say its Jann Wenner form Rolling Stone.

In any event, an easy read and a great piece of history if you are a fan of the band.

Julie says

Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS (1972-1975) by Ken Sharp with Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley is an IT/ HarperCollins publication. This book was released in September 2013. There are 560 pages with photographs.

Before I had a baby
I didn't care anyway
I thought about the backdoor
I didn't know what to say

But, once I got a baby
I tried anyway
She didn't want to do it
She did it anyway
But, baby please don't refuse
You know you got Nothin to lose
Lyrics to Nothin to Lose by KISS

The book starts way back when Paul and Gene first meet. The first group they were in- Wicked Lester, then the formation of KISS. The influence of groups like "The Brats" and "The New York Dolls" on them. Slowly we work our way up to the release of KISS ALIVE!, and the hit song "Rock and Roll All Night".

For many diehard KISS fans that have read everything they could get their hands on, this book might be just a rehash of the same old, same old. But, although I was a KISS fan from way back, I didn't read any books about the band before this one. So, for me this book was like a trip down memory lane. It had the feel of a group of guys and gals sitting around talking about the good ole days.

This book wasn't really written in the dry biography fashion so many performance arts books are written in. The majority of the book was a collage of interviews and stories from the people that lived through that time with the band. The roadies, the managers, the promoters, the opening acts, the bands the group opened for, the road experience, the first recording contract, the issues with the label, the slow process of making it in the music business is all covered. KISS was a very hard working band. Their makeup and costumes worked for them with the fans that were blown away by the live shows, but worked against them when it came to getting air play on the radio. People didn't know what to make of them.

There was also the criticism of other musicians that felt that the group's outrageous stage show and the entertainment first attitude was putting music way down the list. KISS was never thought of as a band that broke ground musically. In my opinion though I thought their music was no worse, (or better) than other hard rock type music you heard in the seventies.

KISS was a group that was needed for that time. The sixties and the seriousness of the lyrics in music, such as war and violence etc. was beginning to lose it's passion and people were ready to kick off the social conscience of the times and party a little bit. KISS was perfect for that. Sometimes people just want to have a good time and see a show and be entertained. There are lots of groups and singers etc. that are more focused on the music and when we want that we will buy that music or go to those concerts.

KISS put on one hell of a good show. Early on they realized the fans were what it would be about for them. The music industry has never acknowledged KISS in that way. Sort of like the Academy Awards will never give a blockbuster action movie that raked in millions at the box office, a nomination for an award. But, there has never been a band like this one before or since.

My favorite story in the book was about the visit to Cadillac High School.

The writing wasn't really "writing" if you will, since it was a mainly a collection of stories from people involved with the group.

Most of the stories were told by Gene and Paul and I guess that's way their names are on the cover as co-authors. (They didn't really write anything, but they were obviously the main contributors)

I also enjoyed the stories about the group Rush and the help KISS gave the group in terms of how things should work on the road and so forth.

There were also some really good pictures in here as well. Old photos of the band from way back and other bits of nostalgia.

I found the book entertaining and for me many of these stories were new. I have read some reviews of this book that stated this was nothing new to them. But, if you are that big of a fan, you may want to at least give the book a try since so many of these stories are told by the actual people who were there. These are actual quotes and told in first person.

The book is rather long and there were times when I had to put it down and read something else for a while. I think some things could have been edited out without compromising anything, but I think all the stories were chosen for a reason by either the main author or the members of the band.

Overall I give this one an A.

Thanks to the publisher and Edelweiss for the DRC of this book.

Sebastian Bach says

I am probably the wrong guy to "review" this book. A piece of literature that focuses on the 1st 3 years of KISS would be pretty hard for me to not enjoy. But luckily this book has a positive, cool, informative fun vibe with no putting people down or whining. Makes you feel good to read it. Plus killer pictures too!

Kevin Suchy says

I really really enjoyed this book. It covers the era of the band up until just after KISS ALIVE breaks the band out big. The author digs deep into finding out anybody and everyone who ever crossed paths with the band in the early 70s. Lots of good stories and insight into what it took to get the band off the ground.

TAMMY CUEVAS says

Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS (1972-1975) is an anecdotal memoir of the early years of this iconic band. Told primarily by Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley, it details their beginnings in the New York City area. The book is filled with stories from early fans, promoters, record company executives, and musicians who performed alongside them.

This telling of their story is not as interesting as it could have been. Quite a bit of the book is given to stories about the formation and early years of Casablanca records. While it is an interesting story in its own right, all of the story does not really pertain to the history of KISS. It was interesting to read of their struggles and determination, as well as a few escapades. I think most fans would enjoy more of the personal stories and less of the record company business. One of the most enjoyable parts was the story of how the band went to Cadillac High School in 1975. The memories shared by those who were there in that small town that day were fascinating.

For hard-core fans, this will be a must-read.

3 stars

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from Edelweiss review program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in

accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Jim Lane says

This oral history does a great job of not recycling all of the information from previous KISS books. It focuses on the behind the scenes mechanisms that allowed the band to prosper: management, road crew, promotions etc. Definitely worth a read for any KISS fan.

Kathryn says

ARC received from the publisher via Edelweiss.

As I sit to write this review, KISS is scheduled to perform where I live. Being elsewhere at the moment doesn't appear the opportunity to see the band play live has eluded me once more. I will admit, though, (and not to slight Eric Singer and Tommy Thayer) if the day does come I hope I get to see the original lineup. It would take a miracle, I know, but such sentimentality keeps me from spending money on acts that have replaced key players. When Rush puts Darren Stephens in place of Alex Lifeson, I'll know it's the end.

On this blog you'll find reviews of both Ace and Peter's memoirs. Where these books cover the entire span of KISStory and beyond, *Nothin' to Lose* does as advertised: it's a lengthy eyewitness account of the band's birth told in the oral history fashion similar to Sharp's other effort, *Starting Over* (also reviewed here). While this method of storytelling brings many voices to the forefront, I find this style risks the loss of an objective point of view. The book's introduction about KISS reads like a gushing fan letter, which didn't irritate me but did leave me wondering if any unflattering remarks or anecdotes didn't make the cut under the watchful eyes of Gene and Paul.

Nothin' compiles the memories of a huge cast involved in the band's genesis as Wicked Lester through their early association with Casablanca Records. More than thirty years after his death, Neil Bogart represents an enthusiasm for KISS's showmanship and drive through archived interviews - you also hear from early fans (many relatives and close friends of the original members), early road crew, former managers, and other musicians. Yes, I do give them points for an extensive section on the Rush/KISS connection, the Bag Man story, and an amusing picture of Geddy Lee covered in whipped cream that a few people I know will want to see.

You might wonder, how are Peter and Ace represented here? They do have voices, though Peter's contribution to *Nothin'* isn't as large as Gene and Paul's, and Ace appears less frequently. *Nothin' to Lose* offers a view of the early days of KISS with little evidence of in-fighting - maybe a few vocal concerns about drug and alcohol, but otherwise everybody plays nice. This doesn't mean you won't find gossipy bits to enjoy; I came away from the book with the perfect Boogie Nights image in my head about Casablanca. Nobody can accuse the 70s of being boring, and despite the healthy size of the book I wanted to read more. 1975, where the book technically ends, marks the beginning of the golden age of KISS. Tales of the humble start, from the tiny clubs and an odd Seinfeld connection, provide a wealth of memories for fans - perhaps

this book's success will inspire a second volume.

Kathy says

Great book covering the creation and first 3 years of KISS. Great pictures and comments from several people around at that time.

Christopher Long says

Love 'em or leave 'em, KISS is a super group with a super story. Hence, theirs is one that warrants the near endless slew of tell-alls over the years. Light on authorship, yet big on story, "Nothin' to Lose" is a treasure trove of insightful insider/outsider commentary from a compelling cast of characters. From firsthand accounts of band members to managers, producers, agents, promoters, record execs and the like, this one delivers -- BIG!

Carmen says

Great book. Tells you the history of KISS from the beginning. When Gene and Paul first met.

Emily says

KISS being one of my favourite rock bands in the world, this was a must read for me. The story was told in very well detail from all the interviews conducted with the band members, crew members, family & friends and even other legendary musicians. If you're a die hard KISS fan like me whether you've been around as long as they have or you're new to the KISS Army then this is a book for you. If you want to know how it all began then you have to read this. Once I started reading this book I couldn't put it down. All I can say is if you read this and didn't like it, it's your loss because the story of KISS's pathway to success is all about determination told from the perspective of many including Gene Simmons & Paul Stanley and even some parts with former members Ace Frehley and Peter Criss (who will forever be missed even though there are too many people on this planet that refuse to grasp the fact that they're not returning to the band). Speaking of which I don't think any shit was thrown at them in this book to be honest, they just started to have problems and well that's just life.

Anyway, there were lots of tense moments in this book and even some funny parts. I really enjoyed reading about KISS's early club shows, how they put together their show, and some of their first big shows like in Cadillac High.

This book was well-written in a unique way and KISS holds a place in my heart forever. As Alice Cooper said: Read this book or KISS off!

David says

I'm a big KISS fan and feel like I have a pretty solid handle on their history. This book was entertaining and taught me a little bit of KISS-tory that I was unfamiliar with. I enjoyed the technique of using different individuals discussing an event to tell a story (like Please Kill Me - Punk history book did). It gives different perspectives and tells the story through different voices. The only gripe I have is that the writing and recording of Hotter Than Hell and Dressed To Kill were glossed over. I think there must have been some interesting and entertaining stories from those sessions that were missed. If they would have taken out 5 to 10 percent about how novel what they were doing was and the groupie adoration and added more about the musical process, this would have probably been a 5 star book.

Chip'sBookBinge says

Straight up, Nothin' to Lose: The Making of KISS - 1972-1975 is aimed squarely at die-hard KISS fans that want to get even more inside information that has never been readily available till now. When I first heard about this book coming out, I figured at best I would get a few stories that were new. So imagine my shock after reading the book that about 95% of everything in this 550 page book is stuff that I had never heard about and that goes for the pictures that are scattered through the book.

I consider myself to be a true die-hard fan of KISS as I have followed them from the mid 70's onward and have never stopped being a fan, even during the lean years that saw them lose popularity with the masses. I thought I had seen and heard it all. With Ken Sharp's new book I realize that there was so much more to the story. Along with Ken, we get insight from Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley who helped write the book. Not surprising though is how very little input we get from Peter Criss and Ace Frehley. Yes, they contribute some stuff, but it's clear that a lot was cut out for whatever reason. It took all of 15 pages before Gene and Paul rip into Peter and Ace....again. The attacks are the one negatives in the book. We all know the story as Gene and Paul have beaten this dead horse into glue. It's time to just let it go and move on guys!

As for the books construction, I love it. It follows in the same steps as Ken's other book KISS: Behind the Mask, written with a series of anecdotes, allowing everyone in and around KISS, including fans, to have their own voice heard within the pages. The way the books is put together and how the stories are told actually do a much better job of painting a picture then if it were told from the perspective of Ken. Reading the book really does put you in their shoes and transport you back to the mid 70's.

There are so many stories from those that worked closely with the band, including Bill Aucoin to Sean Delaney to Neil Bogart to bands and singers that influenced them to fans that were there from the get go, it will enthrall you hearing what they have to say. There are a lot of great stories to be read, which had me reading at a feverish pace. I was actually trying to force myself to not read so fast as I wanted to savor it all. I think any KISS fan will get a kick out of the pie fight with Rush and Geddy Lee on stage at the final show of their tour in San Diego. It's also fun to see pictures of said pie fight, which is something I have never seen before. Any fan that has ever worshiped KISS Alive! and stared at the cover (front and back) will totally dig hearing about he two kids and their sign, not to mention Chad Smith (Red Hot Chilli Peppers) story of being there when they took that infamous photo. There's more to his story as well, but you're just gonna have to read the book to find out. I'm not gonna spoil it here. It's worth the price of the book.

I haven't look into or done any research on Ken Sharp, but I strongly believe that Nothing To Lose is the first of many Volumes coming our way with each new Volume covering a specific era in KISSTORY. With this book only covering everything from Wicked Lester all the way to KISS Alive!, the band is primed to dish out more stuff and have 40 years worth of material to make it a reality. My speculation has Volume II covering Destroyer (1976) to Unmasked(1980), Volume III covering Music from "The Elder" (1981) to Carnival of Souls (1996), Volume IV covering Kiss Unplugged (1996) to Monster (2013). Like I said, a lot of information is out there that the KISS Army would be willing to shell out hard earned cash for, myself included.

Nothing to Lose is worth every penny and KISS fans will enjoy the book. Definitely a Buy. For causal fans, it's still worth it to check out from your Library, but may not care much for the pages that are devoted to Casablanca Records. This book gets the rare 10 Stars out of 10.

You can find more of my Book, DVD, TV and Movie reviews at my Forum (Penny Can) at...

<http://pennycan.createaforum.com/book...>

Feel free to stop by and contribute your 2 cents.

Dr. Detroit says

Like many hemp-addled, cheap sonic-thrill-seeking Detroit teenagers in the mid-70's, I was a fully-paid member of the Kiss Army, proof of membership tucked tightly in my wallet right next to my D.R.E.A.D. (Detroit Rockers Engaged in the Abolition of Disco) card. "Detroit Rock City" dontcha know? Any questions?

Let's face it: with Kiss it's all about the bells and whistles. Every nuance (yeah, right...), nook, and cranny of the albums up to and including "Alive" are permanently stamped on my frontal lobe like the exact price of a bottle of Boone's Farm Strawberry Hill. If the band couldn't perform in all of their fire-breathing, blood-gakking, flashpot-straddling, drum-rising, guitar-flaming splendor, they simply wouldn't take the stage, correct in their assumption that anything worth doing was worth overdoing, even in the gymnasium at Cadillac (Michigan) High School's 1975 homecoming or some god awful Canadian college cafeteria.

Up until they released "Destroyer" at least, they were really something – the only time they ever really mattered - riding the coattails of Alice Cooper and the New York Dolls to knighthood among the unwashed masses here in Detroit and then the rest of the planet, their mad-eyed manifesto of gargantuan, three-chord thud rock – some with hooks - welded to a stage show with more surprises than Christmas morning, repelling as many as it charmed, their entire career structured to maintain a mythology that hung around them before they even entered a recording studio and long after Ace Frehley and Peter Criss either: a) quit, or b) were fired.

Despite looking like ugly mall chicks jacked up on Revlon and Mabelline, they were simply unstoppable in this shot-and-a-beer burg, their only real competition for space on the boards at Cobo Hall coming from the J. Geils Band, whose tour stops were something approaching a national holiday, every last kid in Wayne, Macomb, and Oakland County willing to barter their soul to the Goat Lord for a shot at tickets.

For anyone who's been paying attention to the plot, most of what's unfurled in "Nothin' to Lose" is nothin' new but I'll be damned if I'm not still drawn to it like a moth to flame nearly 40 years after the war machine began its uphill trek across the land of milk and honey and beyond, their quest to relieve most of middle America of its hearing, wages, and frilly undergarments gradually gaining momentum and ultimately steamrolling most everything in its path. Even the mighty Ozzy-era Black Sabbath.

Despite the appearance here of Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons as co-authors, it's not all "hip, hip, hooray for our team" as criticism (read: sour grapes) regarding the validity, craftsmanship (ha!), and legacy of their music and stage show are neither deflected nor ignored, taking on all comers – mostly bands they once supported then headlined over - the list resembling nothing so much as the playlist of the 70's FM crotch-rock, rust-belt mothership of your choice - everyone from Aerosmith to ZZ Top.

And if you get fed up with the rhetoric of Stanley and Simmons, then the shitload of photos may be worth the price of admission alone, alternately side splitting and awe inspiring in what huge Godzilla-caliber balls these guys owned that allowed them to even attempt something so novel, a trip in the wayback machine to the pre-punk dark ages, when they were just about the greatest thing on wheels.

The 70's. What a larf.
