

Boys Who Rock: Velvet Revolver & the Gunners – gifts of nature

Exiguity – a melodrama

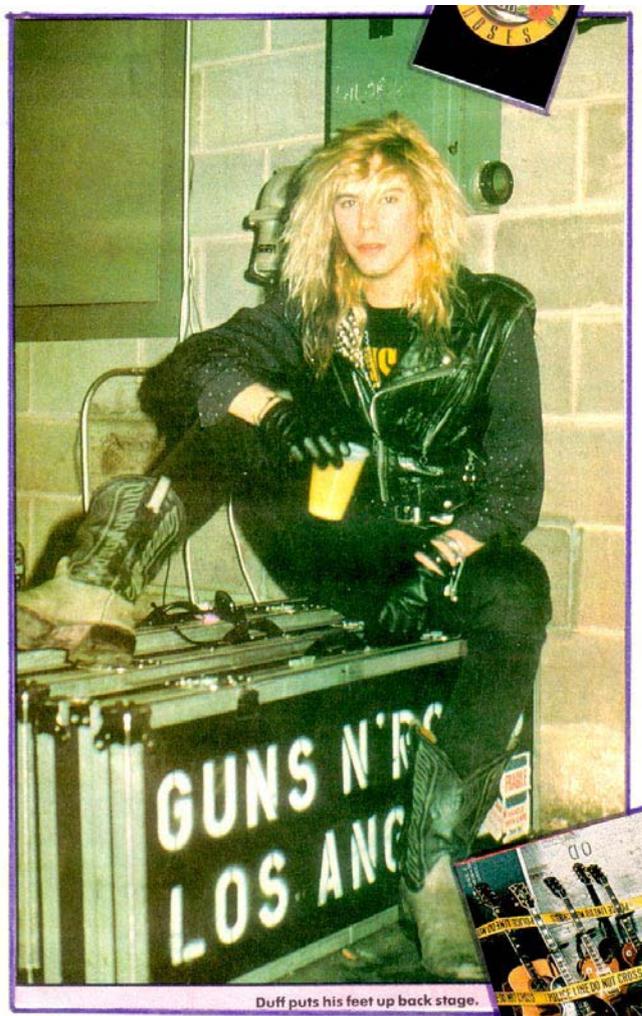
As she reached down to fetch her other green leather sandal she took a final long draw on the Buddha stick. The tips of her fingers met the floor and the pad of her silver ringed thumb lazily traced its way along the curved stem of an embroidered flower, hand-woven into the Indian mat. She felt the petals emerge from the stem and the pointed beak of a small bird, its tiny boned head dipping into the flowers coronet. The tail feathers wound away and under her chair. After some moments spent pressing her palm onto the bird to make a print in her skin her wrist finally urged her fingers toward the sandal. As she knocked into the leather her thumb touched another person's hand. She hung her head between her legs to look under her chair and discovered a pale long-fingered hand gently wrapped around her sandal. The new hand rested softly, calmly, intimately, its scarred and gold ringed thumb rolling the sliding barrel on the buckle until the whole shoe found sleep and began to dream. All of the fingers on all of the hands in the room at that party paused and then curled momentarily. A wave of excitement surged along her fingers, curled around the bones and flushed her fingernails an oriental red. The new hand on the sandal tightened slightly, waking the leather from a dream of sunshine, green grass and prairies empty of cowboys. She met his eyes. He handed her the green sandal and whispered "Earth is an edible brothel. Love is celestial. The cat sleeps sixteen hours – the old cat and the kitten sleep twenty. ALL IS GOD GIVEN WITH BOTH HANDS." She took back her green leather sandal with a hand that laughed. Her palms broadened and flexed as her entire nature drew itself into a single line of mathematical alliance. Later they performed the act of essence and a boy child is conceived. In the darkness after parties or fights or days of days filled to the top with nothing many boys are made. Years later young men with heads full of misfiring, misdirected, mistrustful impulses come together to board a pirate ship, form a gang – a brotherhood – and start a rock n roll band in Angel City.

Superhuman: rodeo, rodeo, rodeo, rodeo, throw a rope around her neck and get the show on the road

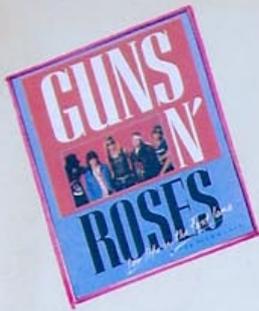
Duff on Willis St, Wellington

Dirty Little Thing: Get away from the film of sex in your life

This tall blonde fella walked by me on Willis St the other day. He had bleached out shoulder length blow-dried messed up hair. He wore a Harley t-shirt under a black slightly girly leather jacket, leather pants, studded wristband and heavy new boots. The look wasn't cheap Wainuiomata – more



Roberto Cavalli. It may have been Duff McKagan formerly of the band Guns n Roses and now crew member of a new L.A band named Velvet Revolver. I discovered Duff's super sexy cool bass player self roughly six years after GnR had reached their creative zenith. My sister-friend G and I found we shared a passion for lean, pretty punk-ass rockers – the more cartoon-like they appeared the better. The first time I saw Donald Duck in real life (man in a duck suit at Disneyland) I drew to an abrupt halt. There is something so unnatural about a cartoon character crossing from the fantasy realm into the natural world. Seeing Duff (possible sighting) caused a collision in my brain. And what in the name of satan's tits was he doing trotting around New Zealand in his Cuban heels? Perhaps he had a brief stop over in Wellington before shooting off to buy land in Wanaka. Whoever he was he looked like a fine feathered peacock



IZZY STRADLIN'
 RYTHM GUITAR
 BORN: INDIANA
 AGE: 27
 FAVE BANDS: EVERYTHING
 FROM CLASSICAL TO PUNK



DUFF "ROSE" MCKAGEN
 BASS GUITAR
 BORN: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
 AGE: 25
 FAVE BANDS: AC/DC,
 PUNK ROCK GROUP FEAR

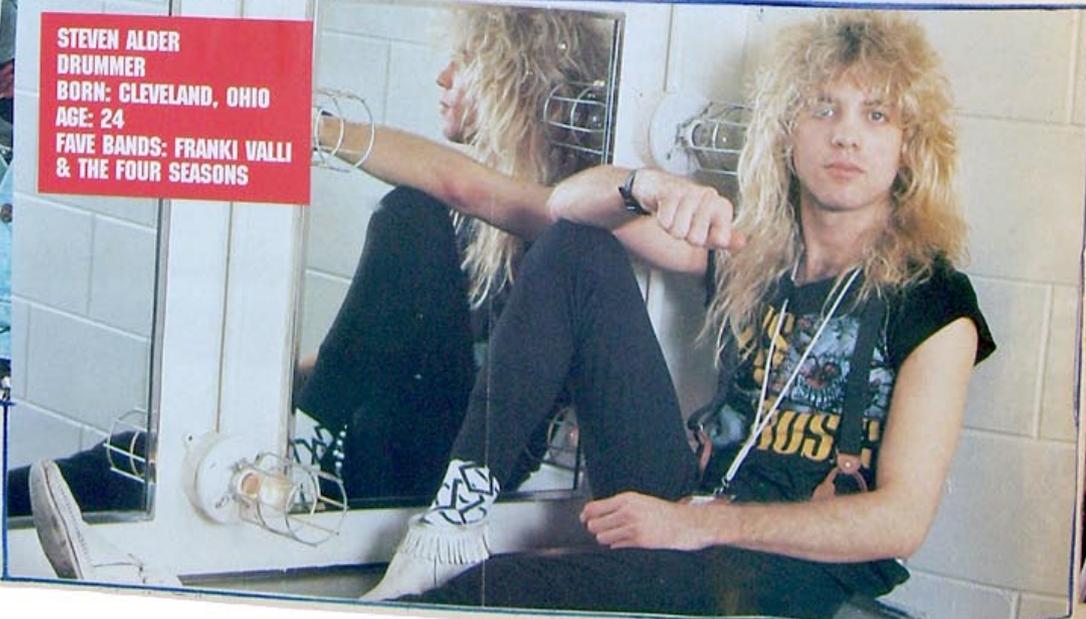


*** Guns N
 Roses have been in a LA studio since
 January 13 recording their new album. Two
 titles being bandied about at the moment
 are "G'N R Sucks" and "Girth". The band
 have loads of new songs which means they
 might even release a double LP or a single
 with some EPs to follow. They might also
 tour Australia later in the year.



Axl and the band are "layin' down
 trox"!!

STEVEN ALDER
 DRUMMER
 BORN: CLEVELAND, OHIO
 AGE: 24
 FAVE BANDS: FRANKI VALLI
 & THE FOUR SEASONS





■ AXEL ROSE



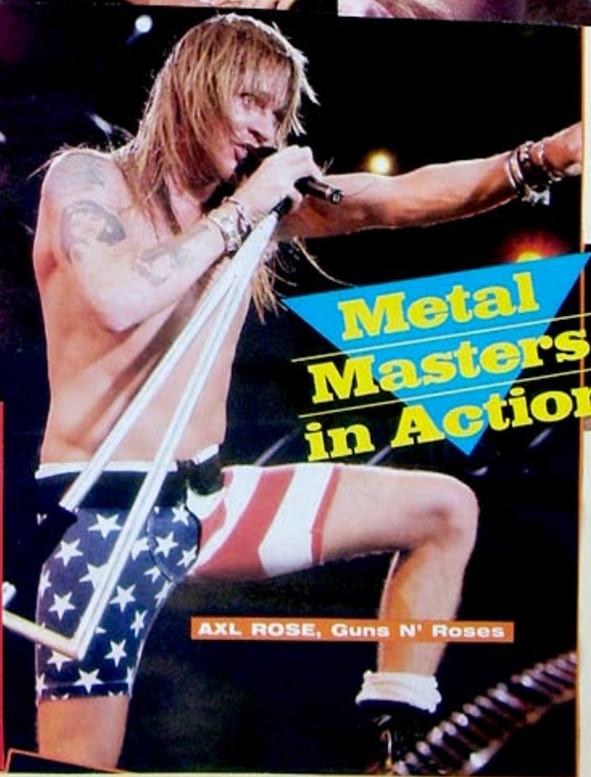
YOUNG MC, the two macho brutes from PET SHOP BOYS, and AXEL ROSE, consoled themselves after failing the audition to replace Vince Neil in Motley Crue.



PHOTO BY GENE ZEGLAND



AXEL ROSE, Guns N' Roses



Metal Masters in Action

AXEL ROSE, Guns N' Roses



stranded in a sea of mullet-faced grey-hued Wellingtonian 8.30-6.30ers. To my horror I caught myself sneering at his back and thinking the grey suited sharks surrounding him might just eat up a pretty bird like him. He even looked nervous – as well he should be – clearly Willis St is a long way from The Rainbow Bar & Grill. I was behaving like the worst hypocrite. I might sneer at him on this Wellington street but I would crawl over the shards of a thousand smashed Jim Beam bottles to playfully inhale the creamy sweet leather of Duff's boots on Sunset Strip. The problem was a blip on my melodrama screen – he was looking like a character from the set of Spinal Tap who had strayed into Ally McBeal land. Why do I live here again?

Sherry and Melodrama – a child's guide to raising yourself

Until I reached my Thirties my two principal forms of nourishment were booze and melodrama. Both would provide crashing waves of well being and calm and were terrific when consumed concurrently. When I was a little kid I would take a day off school each week to catch up on the daytime soaps and to drink sherry. The soaps were slow, ponderous, startling, boring, and cruel, repetitive, stupid, sad and macabre Gothic indulgences. I adored violent, sentimental or emotional dramatics. I'd learned to find pleasure and entertainment and joy and pride in the things that make most people frightened and weak and miserable. Like many kids who were socialized in the 1970s I was both detached and hyper-engaged and surrounded by beer and parties and loud rock n roll. Mum and Dad checked out emotionally when I was a baby – lots of those baby boomers

were exclusively focused on fucking, fighting and getting rich so I looked for someone someplace to raise me, and of course there was the closest and most available of parents – the telly and the radio. The situational melodramas TV offered was a tremendous stress release – to seeing everyday and fantasy events intertwined and stylised was drably entertaining. Songs on the radio sent out puffs of pollens from foreign and exotic times and localities. Someone named Rachael played me Led Zeppelin for the first time and I panicked. I had been willing to give up the struggle to authentically reflect my island where there was no air to breathe. But these rockers cut a hole in my head and in poured the universe.

Hope I teach my son how to be a man/ now before he hits 35

Darwinian possibilities – rock bands & cell phones

Cell phones trouble my friend. They thrill me. People in danger of growing outer shells like small crabs and singing lonesome cowboy songs as they wander the seabed are instead chattering all day. And all night. And to anybody anywhere. We scurry from one assignation to another – brimming with the associated joy and social ease that constant attention delivers. Love is so easily made. My friend was asked on a date by a very hot chick who was sitting in the back seat of his car – he was in the front seat. She didn't lean forward and ask him – she texted him instead, and threw in a dirty word to clinch the deal. It is an evolutionary return to the cradle of the tribe and a connectedness that industrialism threatened to sever for all but the very rich. The mirror in the tale of the snow queen magnifies the bad and minimalises the good. Sometimes things that look bad are really good.

The Gunners did a slamming good job of rocking the 90s L.A. style. Traditionally in rock n' roll transcendence is achieved through excess: girls money power stimulants depressants independence strength truth honesty loyalty narcissism risk taking play stress. Their maladaptive behaviour lead to identification with the ethics associated with the biker lifestyle: freedom sex and a common enemy. The band brotherhood represented a quasi-family or gang. BOYS WHO ROCK (the good ones) usually seem be raised in domestic battlefields but as young adults their drive to seek a way to authentically express multi-faceted privation, abundant isolation and invisibility is an extraordinarily creative act of survival and hope. To produce a creative product through expressing a dialogue with pain and stress is a sign of their unfeasibly lush and virulent natures. And then there is life after the party. Velvet Revolver is perhaps the reincarnation of The Gunners. Most of them have literally died and been resuscitated a number times. The challenge as Lars mentions in Some Kind Of Monster, the movie, is to produce aggressive relevant rock that you don't have to die for. That may seem a fairly straight-forward change in personal direction but the song is the sum of its parts and the parts can be jagged little fuckers. How do you fashion a mature working relationship with those other crazy fucked-up bastards who have been in your band since you were a

crazy fucked-up teenager? Usually bonds between rock n roll outlaws are forged by sharing common interests or values – bars, broods, free speech, fighting and messing around in garages. The dedicated pursuit of these activities tends to marginalize the participants and like freedom brotherhood isn't cheap or easy. So you end up being identified as either "straight" or "bent". To attempt to deliver yourself from the encumbent self-destructive habits of the "bent" identity is mighty tricky. I know, I've tried and had some spectacular failures and some modest success. Are songs written about the struggle to stay clean and gain maturity particularly riveting when we are accustomed to and strangely energised by tunes that describe grossly aberrant and frail human behaviour?

Loving the Alien: And I'm moving on, and I'm moving on / (sometimes I feel alone)

There's a Porn Shop in my Garden. Beautiful and Foul – nature from start to finish

Set Me Free: Metabolizin everything that you see.

Douglas Lilburn found a spiritual muse in his garden. He created hypnotic music that expressed the daily changes in the life between the back door and the front gate. His music was a reflection and understanding of the life cycle of nature. Consider that under the smelly leather and outlaw braggadocio that the L.A. rockers are composers too – their garden is the town of L.A., the crucible of Melodrama. It's a town that brings America to the world – self-serving war mongering stealing, lying, cheating, self obsessed, drug taking, drug pushing, infantile, adolescent. (Funnily enough American culture produces great rock.) There is the ever-flourishing Moral Majority in the U.S. whose worship of fervent Christian dogma expresses a collective nature so intolerant as to appear almost wholly fascist. Some people are born into families which have within their structures no room to stand. Axl Rose was told a big family lie as a child and through no action of his own became an outsider because of this – the trust is destroyed. The outside of the inside is an extraordinary place to find yourself. Once you get over the strangeness of your new emotional landscape you slowly realize the privilege of exclusion – of ridin' high and livin' free – which is not to say it's easy. Axl came to LA, as did most of GnR and Velvet Revolver, as fugitives searching for a new family (a brotherhood) and a lucky break.

Early Axl Rose, so full of nerve, dancing onto stage wearing nothing but his long strawberry hair and a G-string. Watching Guns n Roses was like watching a bad rock and roll accident that you couldn't look away from. Rock and roll – you are the agent of sex and springtime and love born of hate. Harmony from dissonance; harmony born of dissonance and like homeopathy the spirit of the poisonous plant prompts the mind to seek equilibrium.

Big Machine: Comic book lives don't really have any real life do they?



Life and Death and Love

Illegal Song: I – Don't – Anymore

I adore weddings – they remind me of games at school when the boys would say "You go and stand over there next to that tree – it's the prison tree. Pretend your hands are tied behind your back and cry a bit and then fall down. Me and my friends will come and save you – I'll put my arms around you and then you'll be free – right GO" and with the deliberately rough shove of a rookie jailer you were on your way. The kids who played this game were about nine or ten years old and enjoying the first surges of sex hormones and associated hardwired behaviours. Nature has us on the run practising, practising, and practising for the delightfully ridiculous lives we are about to act out.

No wedding (apart from maybe Charles and Di, and let's include their engagement) has ever evoked the grown up version of this childhood play better than the video for The Gunners' November Rain. The hair, the dress, the banquet, the coffin and the rain. Top melodrama. This innate sense of theatre is again perfectly realized in the songs and video clips (short films really) from the album Contraband by Velvet Revolver. Scott Welland sings about the struggle for independence and deliverance from the deadly sins. Slash, Duff and the boys tie dirty fat rockin cement feet to Scott's laments and then throw them both in the water. And then there is Life and Death – the existential follies of a rock band perfectly captured in Fall To Pieces. "Will I find you,

Can I Find You, Lonely, I'm Falling". Duff and the gang (band) are hanging at a bar but the good times go horribly wrong when SCOTT FUCKS UP AND GETS TOO HIGH and O.d.'s. Maybe he does this cause his GIRLFRIEND FUCKS UP AND GETS TOO HIGH and O.d.'s – anthemic, operatic, situational drama and a must see if you have a taste for adult adventures. Scott writes these marvellous medieval folk songs full of pastoral rhymes and biblical struggles. Bit like Axl really.

Slither: Like holy water, it only burns you faster than you'll ever dry

The Kids are Smart and Scared

Do It For The Kids: Went too fast I'm out of luck and I don't even give a fuck

In an age of self-conscious and mutual mental health diagnosis anytime someone says "NO" their critical faculty is said to signify an uncooperative character – political correctness scare crowing has got our kids afraid of saying no to anything. I work with someone who is 18. Her face is pale and beautiful and smart – her eyes walls made of glass. I'd say her style is expensive rock chick. Her friends are models and dancers. One of the model friends came running into our work in a flood of tears. One of the other models had described his extraordinary face as "borderline ugly". Later that day a stranger rushed him on Cuba St and bit him – he had to have some blood tests. Another of her friends wakes my workmate half hour early each morning. This is so she can assist him to superglue back the sound shell part of his ears to the sides of his head. I was horrified, laughed and then asked exactly how to do it.

I work with someone who is 17. He has long hair and a gentle face with bones that are calmly and confidently stretching themselves toward symmetrical perfection. He is a beautiful pale male. I'd say his style is elegant, intellectual, old-school heavy metal. His friends are just like him. One day just before Xmas I decided to give him an original Gunners t-shirt I had been gifted some time ago. The garment had been quietly waiting in my closet for me to transmutate into Bradley Pitt's girlfriend – she looks terrific in rocker chic. I don't have the shoulders I'm afraid. So I put it in a bag and blushing slightly, handed it to him at the gift-wrapping station. He had been happily flirting, flicking his hair and taking the piss while wrapping some crap for an overpaid, overweight, overfragile old tart and her bullying husband. He was delighted with the unexpected gift. We chatted about the Gunners flagrantly ignoring shoppers anxious for some tissue and a bow. He knew more about the band than me. The next day he handed me an unstuck envelope with my name on the front. He had made the card inside – it was detailed with a half inch square of cloth from a bedspread his dad had bought in Indonesia. The card read "thank you very much for the Gunners t shirt you gave me. Have a wicked holiday and thanks again." Superb manners to a disarming socially-able degree.

These kids are some of today's youngest adult rockers. Their styling is faultless – their skin is clear; they smell sweet. Their personal problems are sophisticated and broad in scope. They are remarkably well informed on everything except, perhaps, rather strangely, sex. Their knowledge of rock history easily encompasses Blondie, The Crue, Alice C, Lou R, Television, Poison, Sonic Youth, Metallica and of course The Gunners and it's 21st century baby – Velvet Revolver. The kids say yes to everything because they are modern – that's what modern is and it's as sneaky as the worst of historical manipulations. Can rockers get safely past the advertising and media giants and make it to the kids or has the cave door closed?

Headspace: Dying with your face on a t shirt ain't all that original

Until Our Hands Go Cold and Still

You've Got No right: And if I fall apart on the outside you would have barely seen me breathe

My friend and confidant ROI gave me someone's GnR scrapbook collection that had found its way into his music store. Articles and band pin-ups had been chopped out of newspapers and magazines, then tenderly repasted into cheap scrapbooks. Each segment had then been outlined in pink felt tip pen. ARE THEY YOURS? The exploration of the human condition is a passionate focus for the creative artist gardener. Is Contraband a good album? Who the fuck cares. I sure don't know. I haven't really listened to it. My critical faculty with most things is inherently lazy and I find dissemination of a creative enterprise to be erroneous and dull (read: am very lazy fucker). Mr Fellini reckons that to analyse oneself and others is an entirely unnecessary act of arrogance. That man is said to have felt at his most engaged and aaaaalive when filming his reassembled doses of melodrama. I'm a girl and for me it's about the PLAY of the thing – catching the roar in the chorus and having deadly crushes on the boys who rock. I continue to daydream of trotting round a kidney shaped pool in Laurel Canyon. (For you ROI). Killer spiked high heels, pink leather bikini, lots of turquoise, sandalwood scented blue leather pants, holding the hand of a rock god with bleached-out shoulder-length blow-dried hair, a poet's soul and a pirate's twitch. We're all just keeping busy – creating and sustaining our own tiny theatres – until our hands go cold and still.

Flowers in the barrels of guns man.

Loving The Alien: Sometimes is all the time and never means maybe

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Andre is 5ft 7 and has brown hair.