



The definitive examination of "Music From The Elder," KISS' cult-classic concept album

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Robert V. Conte Takes Fans inside "The Elder" Vault

KISS' first catalog consultant discusses the work done with "The Elder" as part of the KISS: The Remasters project

KissFAQ: Robert, we're going to talk about a focused part of your KISSstory, so I don't want to rehash too much of the great information you provided on the "[Three Sides of the Coin](#)" podcast during episode #207. I do want to strongly recommend that folks check that episode out -- it was certainly very engaging and entertaining. For the sake of introducing our past relationship, I believe we first crossed paths way back in 1997. I'd sent a fax to Mercury/Polygram in New York, while I was still living in Scotland. And you called me, since I'd used my father's fax machine, which had a "Dr." header, making it seem I was more important than I certainly was ...

Robert V. Conte: Yes, I tried to directly respond to KISS fans who attempted to reach me after the "KISS: The Remasters" project. I appreciate your remembering that!

What do you recall of that fax I sent? I think I criticized your liner notes, didn't I?

You certainly did, yes! You know, it's funny because when "KISS: The Remasters" were first released, the internet was still in its infancy. A lot of KISS fans chose to handwrite letters, as opposed to using email, so there was a time when a lot of mail was coming in and we received a mixed reaction. A lot of people commented, "Oh, my God -- this is great!" There were others who thought they were "okay," but wanted more. And then, of course, there were those who said, "I don't really like this writing. I don't like these liner notes." You were initially in the latter group. I remember that! (Laughs)

I think I even sent you a copy of the atrocious U.K. "Double Platinum" remaster that was housed in a regular jewel case with gray print cover insert with black ink line art; rather than the beautiful, foil-embossed reproduction that made for the U.S. market... I always like to give people a 90,000-foot view of the person who I'm speaking with, in terms of their relationship with KISS. So, what was your "Ed Sullivan" moment within the KISS construct; that moment that initially sparked your interest in the band?

It's funny; I'd have to say that it was three different instances combined into one -- if that makes any sense. When I was around 7 or 8-years-old, I had seen the Marvel Super Special #5, the second KISS comic with the green-and-white logo cover. Around that same time -- I think it was sometime near the first anniversary of Elvis' passing -- Donruss had issued a series of Elvis trading cards. I was a big non-sport trading card collector at the time, so I'd go to the local smoke shop which also had a ton of trading cards. They had Star Wars, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Superman the Movie, and then I saw the Elvis cards. Next to Elvis were KISS cards. I said, "Wait a minute!" So, that in conjunction with the Marvel Comic plus I remember seeing the TV ads on NBC for the "KISS Meets the Phantom of the Park" special. And then there were kids in my class -- I think I was in third grade at the time -- who brought some KISS albums to school. So that was probably when I was really first exposed to KISS -- via the merchandising. But what got me into the music was around 1982. My now-deceased friend, Brian Aarons, had invited me over to his house for an overnight stay and he had a ton of heavy metal music. I was not as knowledgeable as Brian was at the time about this particular genre and he had some really obscure stuff. There was early Metallica, Saxon, Anvil, Twisted Sister -- just a really eclectic collection. As I'm flipping through his enormous vinyl collection, I saw "KISS Alive!" We put it on and, honestly, from the second I heard that first explosion on "Deuce," I was hooked!

But what really got me into KISS was the night KISS unmasked on MTV [in September 1983]. Some may not be aware of this, but, before that special aired, David Lee Roth was featured on an exclusive half-hour long interview with MTV; so anyone that was a Van Halen fan ran home to watch it. It was also the very first time that MTV aired the "Pretty Woman" video; even though it was old it was the first time it had ever aired on MTV. And then afterwards was the KISS unmasking on MTV. The "Rock and Roll All Nite" live compilation that they aired beforehand, with primarily the Tokyo 1977 footage, just blew me away. I was fortunate enough that I videotaped it on my General Electric VHS recorder! I ran downstairs where I kept all my stuff in my house and dug up the Donruss trading cards, the KISS custom Chevy van model kit a kid had given me for Christmas, the KISS View-Master 3D reels, etc... All of a sudden, I was now a rabid KISS fan!

What was your first "new" KISS album?

I became a very devout listener immediately and my grandmother, who lived with us, would bring me home a new KISS album every week -- as long as I did well in school. So the very first KISS studio album that I owned for myself was "Dynasty." And then almost every week afterward I would get a new one.

What was the first album that you bought new? So you're already into the band, what was the first album that comes out for you? Was it "Animalize," I guess? Or "Lick it Up" at that point?

It was actually "Lick It Up." I actually did not like the song "Lick It Up," but when MTV aired the "All Hell's Breakin' Loose" video I said, "Wow, this is great!" I went out and bought "Lick It Up." Then when "Animalize" came out I purchased that, and then subsequently every KISS album that came out, I bought on the first day of release.

So looking back at 35-plus years as a fan, what's your favorite KISS album at this point? If you have to pick just one album that you'd take with you to a desert island, which would it be?

I'm always torn with that because it's either the first KISS album or "Hotter than Hell." I love them both so much, so it's always hard for me to pick one. If I really had to pick one I'd probably say the first album because there's just so much great material on that album. During the Alive/Worldwide reunion tour they played at least six songs off that record. Other KISS fans have said this too; it's like a greatest-hits album on its own in a sense. And that first album cover, it just blew me away! As I told you, my grandmother would get me a KISS album every week so the first one she got me was "Dynasty," the second one was "Hotter than Hell," which I thought had just a beautiful cover. But then the third LP she got me was the first KISS album. At the time I used to call it

the horrific KISS album photo because they didn't look like superheroes yet. They looked like "pure evil." But that was just such a fantastic cover. I know a lot of people don't like it but I love it! And "Black Diamond" on the album was just so cool. I just thought the fade out of the record was so brilliant at the time.

Before we get into the topic that we're actually going to discuss, I'm going to make you play favorites and choose your flavor of KISS Kool-Aid. Who is your KISS guy, the guy who kind of best sums up KISS for you? I would have to say Gene Simmons because I got to know him personally more than any of the others. He was the one that picked me to be the first KISS Catalog Consultant. So I'll go with Gene simply because of our personal relationship at the time.

It's kind of hard to fault a guy who opened that door for you!

Yes, basically I was being let into the KISS kingdom at the perfect time. I started working with them sporadically at the close of the "Alive III" era and then when the reunion tour happened. Just to be part of that experience in an official capacity and I was only 25-years-old at the time! It was just such a wonderful opportunity and such an amazing gift from somebody I had idolized since I was 13-years-old.

I know from some of the stories that you told in that excellent "Three Sides of the Coin" episode that I can totally understand why you're drinking "Demon" flavored Kool-Aid. Those were some great stories about your interactions with Gene and some of the calls that you received from him. However, we're going to focus on brown Kool-Aid, and I have no idea what flavor it would be... Let's talk about the remaster of "Music from 'The Elder'." I'm almost hearing the sound effects from that album in the back of my head as I speak (A door clanking open, the chains being dragged across the floor, foot-steps shuffling). As a KISS fan, what was your first impression when you heard "The Elder" for the first time and where did it fall into you exploring the back-catalog when you became a fan?

The first time I heard "The Elder" was probably spring 1984. My school had taken us on a field trip during the time boom boxes were big and in-fashion to carry on your shoulder. A local record store had a special on certain cassettes and when I went to look for KISS, "The Elder" was on sale for \$3.98. So, I bought it. I already had "Creatures of the Night" on cassette, so "The Elder" was completely new for me. I remember listening to it with some friends in a park during the field trip. Of course it was the original American version that starts off with "The Oath." I liked that song, but then it got kind of interesting after "Just a Boy." I said, "Well, this certainly isn't 'War Machine' or 'I Love it Loud,'" or anything like that. It was also before I had owned "Unmasked" so it was kind of strange to me that the music wasn't as heavy as I had been used to already with "Creatures of the Night," "Lick It Up" and the first album. So, I won't say I hated it, but it wasn't one that I listened to every day like the other albums. Over time I appreciated it more.

I think any KISS fan has to be in a special sort of mood to say, "You know, I just want to listen to Fanfare today." When you were writing your critique of the state of the KISS catalog in 1993, did you include "The Elder" in that analysis and what do you recall being the issues that you noted about that album specifically in terms of how it was being presented in the catalog at the time?

After PolyGram had purchased Casablanca Records in the United States they started redoing everything with their logos and reissuing all the formats. This was also during the time that record albums started including bar codes, though initially PolyGram just took all the existing inventory of Casablanca's records and slapped stickers on them with the UPCs (Universal Product Codes). Soon afterwards they started reprinting the sleeves which included new bar codes and other current information. With "The Elder" I have to backtrack this a little bit. When I was about 20, in late-1990, I had gone into a record store in Manhattan, New York and they had a whole section of Japanese imports. They had a version of "The Elder" that had band photos on the cover overlay. I couldn't believe it, my heart dropped right away, and I said, "Oh my God, I gotta buy this!" Now to put this in perspective, to buy "The Elder" brand new American was probably \$6.98 at the time. To buy the Japanese import version back then was \$39.95. It was a big investment, but the plus side was that the Japanese track sequence was in a different order than the American sequence, in addition to the band photo on the front OBI overlay and other fascinating differences.

When I wrote the report for Gene, I noted, "Listen, if there's a way to put 'The Elder' back in its original track order that would be fantastic." Then during the remastering process, after I had written the essay and he reviewed it, I had put together a new track sequence. Another thing that some may not realize is that the Japanese version did not have "Escape from the Island" on it at the time. So what I pitched to Gene was, "Hey, let's do the ultimate 'Elder,'" meaning let's make sure everything that was on it, both the American and the Japanese versions would be melded together, and restore the album back to its original track sequence. He approved it and then we had to persuade Mercury/Island Def Jam to let us do it that way. Fortunately, "The

Elder" remaster in '97, and its vinyl counterpart which was only available in certain countries, the full "The Elder."

Can you describe the approach that was made for you to take on the KISS Catalog Consultant role and how that role was defined. Were the parameters you'd operate under written down like a job description?

There was no official contract, if that's what you mean. Basically I was hired as a freelancer. The title "KISS Catalog Consultant" wasn't mentioned to me until the Los Angeles KISS Convention (June 17, 1995). Gene announced that the band had hired me to be the official KISS Catalog Consultant! That was the very first time I ever heard the term! Of course, I was ecstatic because I'm finding out for the first time that I'm actually going to be in charge of the KISS Remasters project. You know, it's interesting, I think I'm the first of the three KISS Catalog Consultants. I believe Curt Gooch was in that role for the "KISSology" project and Tom Shannon consulted on the KISSteria vinyl reissues. I don't know if anybody else has had that position. To be the first one in that role, I tried to work with the record company, the band, the licensing agent (Sony Signatures) and McGee Entertainment, because they didn't really understand all the intricacies and all the minutia of the changes that occurred to the catalog over the years.

When I first went to Gene's guest house in 1994, I brought some of the KISS records and cassettes with me to show him what some of the differences were. He was just shocked that some of the catalog had been basically bastardized. There's a very limited run of "Alive!," "KISS Alive II," and "Double Platinum," where they basically shoved two records inside one sleeve. I showed all three of those versions to Gene and he just couldn't believe it. I remember distinctly he left me a voice mail the following day saying that he had called KISS's lawyers and the record company and things were going to be changed. To have been the "trigger man" to bring back KISS albums to their original intended form -- and being invited to be part of that process -- was just a wonderful experience!

You didn't really have any previous experience in the industry, did you, or is there anything in your background that you think set you up for being able to work with not just the artist, Gene in particular, but also the label folk as the KISS: The Remasters project kicked off?

My only experience in the music business beforehand was that I had written some rock and roll comic books and that most of my disposable income was used to build a massive record collection and my knowledge of the industry. There were a couple of Long Island local bands and another group in Los Angeles I had either managed briefly or tried to work with to get them record deals. But certainly nothing as significant as the KISS project.

Were the KISS Remasters on the table from day one or did the project evolve? Was there always a plan to remaster the whole catalog and was Robert V. Conte going to be heading up that to make sure it's done properly? I was told one thing by the record company and another by KISS. The idea was because I had written the extensive report and included photographs of all the different variants and noted all of the changes (I used to call it the "de-evolution of the catalog" because it just fell into the wrong hands at some point), Gene wanted me involved to make sure that it was done right. Jesse Hilsen, who at the time was Paul's psychiatrist and also KISS's manager to some context, understood how fans were rabid for the toys, merchandise, tour books and everything. He couldn't, however, comprehend how or why I was buying multiple copies of the same records. At that time I had 32 variants of "Alive!" He just could not understand why I or anyone else would care about that.

I remember him saying, "I wonder if you have Asperger's?" I didn't even know what that was! I'm like, "What do you mean by that?" He goes, "Well, do you have obsessive compulsive disorder?" I said, "I know I do!" (Laughs) But, no one in the KISS camp, up to that point, knew about and/or was willing to invest in 32 copies of "Alive!" to open and point out all the differences in each version; and then explain why one version differed from another. So I think that got me in the door in that respect. I know that they had considered at least two other music journalists that I was acquainted with to write the liner notes. Ultimately, all parties involved decided that I was the best suited for the job. That was nice!

How early on in the process was it decided to release the albums in batches because obviously they came out on a staggered schedule in 1997 and 1998?

Originally, we were supposed to remaster "Alive!" and "KISS Alive II" and that was going to come out as a special box set, and then be followed up with the studio albums. At some point that had changed after we had already remastered the "Alive" albums. When that box set got canned, after we had already done the work, they decided to make "Alive!" and "KISS Alive II" part of the quarterly releases. I think it was every 3 months that they put out four records.

Were "The Elder," and the other non-original albums, such as "Creatures of the Night," "Lick It Up," "Animalize," "Asylum," and "Crazy Nights" always planned for inclusion in the project, or with the project being rooted in the reunion era, was there originally a focus just on the 1974-79 era? No. From day one, after the "Alive/KISS Alive II" box set got nixed and they decided to do all the studio records, it was definite to do all the makeup albums. So it was definitely from "KISS" through "Creatures of the Night," and then sales were good enough that it warranted doing "Lick It Up" through "Crazy Nights."

I'm curious about one thing in particular, especially as we're specifically talking about "The Elder." Was there any reticence from Gene and/or Paul about including that album in the KISS Remasters project? It had been such a commercial failure; they've never had too many good things to say about the album. It had also been omitted from previous reissues in the U.S. and ignored by the label for much of the 1980s. It did finally get properly reissued on CD in 1989, I believe, but was there any desire from the band to sweep it under the carpet? No. When the KISS: The Remasters project was approved it was always with the idea from "KISS" through "Creatures of the Night." There was never any talk about taking the album out of the equation. As I said, once Gene and I had a discussion about making sure that the Japanese market got "Escape from the Island" on the same CD and we were able to put the tracks back in the original order, the band was very supportive of the idea. There was never talk about nixing it.

There was no talk either about making any other changes to it other than unify and original mix -- which is what was released in Japan in 1981 -- and putting "Escape From The Island" back in? They didn't want to make any other changes to the product in any way?

Actually there was a time when we were going to do expanded Digipak versions of the KISS: The Remasters and there were plans to basically do them as limited editions that would only have been available through the KISS Army Depot and through the Mercury/PolyGram website. But the store editions did not sell enough for them to want to justify trying to do the limited editions. I begged and I pleaded, and we even designed the very first four of those, "KISS" through "Alive!" There's actually digital files that exist of the Digipak packaging designs and everything with extra tchotchkes [Ed. The premium goodies included in a release] and all the stuff. Sadly, we couldn't get Mercury to give us the green light, but it would have been something, you know! And, that leads to another project I'll tell you about a little later.

All right, hold that thought and don't forget! Was the whole catalog remastered in one shot or did they do it in batches? And what do you know about the actual project to remaster the audio for "The Elder?" Where does that in terms of the timeline?

We did them all in order other than "Alive!" and "KISS Alive II" which were done first. But then when we started with "KISS" onward, we didn't stop. Certain records took longer to remaster than others so it wasn't like every week I was doing a different record. Some records took maybe a week and a half to get right. The thing about "The Elder" though, was it had the most multi-track recordings in the warehouse than any other KISS album that was there. I mean there were just boxes and boxes of tapes, primarily from Ace Frehley's Ace in the Hole studio. Mercury/PolyGram had those tapes and they were just laying on shelves and we couldn't figure out [what it was]. Some of the tapes weren't logged into their computer system, so fortunately if the engineers had some time and we put some of that stuff on the reels... It was just amazing hearing that stuff for the first time! I had tried to pitch the idea of doing this remaster with a bonus disc with some of the alternates and outtakes, but because "The Elder" sales were amongst the lowest of all KISS records in the catalog, that idea was not looked upon very favorably.

You just touched on the New Jersey storage facility. Before we talk about "The Elder" in there, what was the first album -- when you enter the doors of a hallowed facility (in terms of the KISS fans' desires for what they might find in there) -- that you actually went to investigate in there?

"Alive!" and "KISS Alive II," and then any of the bonus live material that may have been in there on the multi-tracks because it was also around the time the compilation album "You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best" was being planned. So the idea was to find any unused live material that they had in the vault for possible inclusion on that record.

I want to stay away from "You Wanted the Best..." because I'll start crying after hearing what you explained on the Three Sides podcast about the original conception versus what it became. I just don't want to relive that sorrow (laughs). Going back to "The Elder" cage, what sort of media are we talking about that was in there? Are we talking the full 2" multi-tracks or 1/4" mix-down reels, acetates, test pressings, cassettes, or any other sorts of stuff that kind of sticks out in your mind?

Regarding "The Elder," there were tons of reel-to-reels of various sizes. There were about 50 to 60 boxes of tapes

in total of multi-track recordings. I'm not just talking about the mastered LPs, cassettes, reel-to-reel, and 8-tracks. The problem was that I wasn't permitted (sadly) to open up a lot of that stuff because when we were remastering, each album had a budget at Sterling Sound, the mastering studio. So we really couldn't go over what that time was allotted for each album. We got "The Elder" remaster done in enough time that I was able to listen to some of those mystery tapes. But not the whole tape from beginning to end; we would put a reel onto the player and then run it for a few minutes to hear the basic gist of what was on that particular tape. And then we'd move on to something else. But once that budgeted time got allocated we couldn't really do anymore with it than what we had.

So how do you identify which master source is going to be used as the basis for the remaster when it comes to "The Elder?" How do, how do you find that? Is it recorded accurately that a certain source is the actual mix? Because we know, from assorted studio documentation, that there were multiple mixes done of the album. There were mixes that were rejected and then remixes that were done. How do you find which one was the one that you needed to go off in order to keep it authentic to what was originally released?

We had each master that was used for replication to make albums, cassettes, and 8-tracks, so on and so forth. They would all be marked "Approved for Replication." We went back to the original master recording that was approved for the American version and then we also got the Japanese version sent to us. And then we worked on both those masters together to reconstruct the version that you ultimately hear on the '97 remaster.

What sort of condition were "The Elder" reels in? You have previously mentioned that some of the boxes that you went into, the materials were in pretty dire shape.

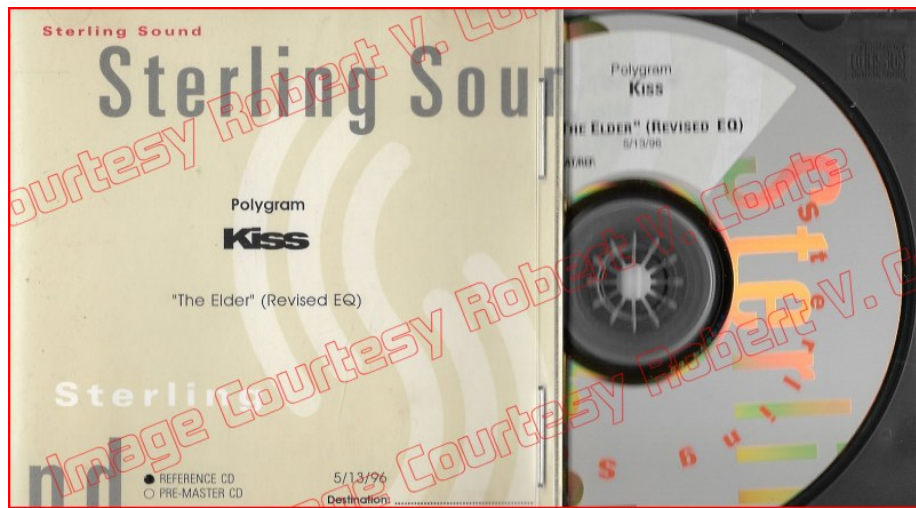
Almost pristine mint condition. The Japanese one was actually amazing. The way they store their tapes is just incredible. You would think like you were walking into a perfect vault.

With "The Elder" master reverting to what was the essentially the original mix, only released in Japan in 1981; would it be fair to say that it forms the primary foundation for the remaster and only "Escape From The Island" was taken from the U.S. version?

The Japanese master tape was used to duplicate the complete "Fanfare." Other than that, it was a reference guide for us to create a new EQ from its track listing. Then we took "Escape from the Island" from the original U.S. master and digitally "spliced" it in.

Going back to the track sequences again, and I don't want to make this sound too much like an inquisition, but there were numerous sequences that were discussed. How did you decide where to put "Escape from the Island" into the Japanese version when the original Japanese track listing obviously didn't have that track and the eventual American sequence was so different?

I had selected three possible spots to put it in and we made what were called remastered reference CDs. One set was burned for Gene, one set was burned for me, and a third set was burned for the record company. Basically it came down to a voting process. It was like okay, "I think it should be here. What do you guys think?" Gene and I agreed on where it ultimately rested and I think the record company, to be honest, didn't care. When the record company wanted something they made their position known, let me put it that way. You've got to remember that the record companies, they're looking at back catalog as, "Okay, we're investing money in old catalog to hopefully recoup." You've also got to remember that at this time Mercury/Island Def Jam was upset that the "Carnival of Souls" album had had to be shelved because of the reunion tour. So here's a company that's hesitant because they invested a ton of money into "Carnival of Souls," then had to shelve it because it wasn't the original four members who played on the album. They were also very disappointed at the sales of "You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best," and we know why. So when it came to "The Elder" it was really more of, "Okay, this is a creative choice. Just keep it within budget."



("Elder" Remaster reference CD. Image Courtesy Robert V. Conte, © Robert V. Conte -- Used with permission)

Going back into the vaults, you took notes of what you were kind of finding in there and I know you're working on a project that we'll probably hear quite a bit more detail about it, but do you recall any like reels from Penny Lane Studios in particular? That's where they did a lot of their pre-"Elder" recordings before Bob Ezrin became involved in the album sessions. They were working out of Ace in the Hole and finishing up the vocal and overdub work at Penny Lane. Does that ring any bells?

Off the top of my head that doesn't ring a bell. Ace in the Hole does because the majority of those multi-tracks that were on the shelves did come from there. The other reason I remember that so well was because of the Federal Express packaging -- a lot of those tapes were sent back and forth via Federal Express. I know this sounds corny but I'm a big fan of pop culture. So seeing the evolution of the Federal Express logo I remember noting because these early FedEx logos were actually pretty cool. However, when I go through my diaries on "The Elder" if I did see something that says Penny Lane it will be noted because I wrote everything down.

I guess the one key question about "The Elder," particularly to someone who has actually been in the presence of all these reels, is: Did you find any of the missing spoken word dialogue? Obviously you didn't have time or the budget to go listen to everything, but there's always been the assumption that there is a version of the album that does contain the snippets of dialogue that were recorded in September 1981 that were ultimately were cut out (with only the section at the end of the album remaining). Did you hear any of that dialogue?

No. The one thing I did hear that really sticks out was basically just Ace doing scat vocals and he would make comments like, "Oh, my God!" or "What time is lunch coming!?" and stuff like that. One thing that he did turn in, which I thought was really cool, was a really tight version of "Don't Run," which was an earlier version of "Dark Light" that was almost complete. I would say the way I could relate it to KISS fans is on Ace's album, "Anomaly." The first song, "Foxy & Free" compared to the demo for "Hard for Me" that's streaming right now. That's how I would compare it. The version of "Don't Run," that I heard in the vault, is actually pretty tight as far as his composition and his role in it. That was actually one of the songs I had fought hard for, to include on a bonus disk for "The Elder," because I just thought it was so cool. But it wasn't to be. There was definitely a version of that and the two engineers and I who heard it were just so excited about it.

That one has circulated in fan circles since the 1980s as have multiple takes and mixes of "Escape from the Island" and "Just a Boy," and various instrumentals. Many seem to be Eric Carr and Ace working together. The whole question about the spoken-word dialogue is kind of the albatross of the project. We know without doubt that the dialogue was recorded. We know the actors went into the studio, we have the script, we know what they planned to read, and we know there's just one line from that script that's left on the album. Everything else is missing and even Bob Ezrin couldn't recall whether they ever put a version together of the album that included it.

So, when we talk about the remasters, obviously there was quite a bit of work done on those to reproduce some of the original premiums in the booklets, such as the booklets for "Alive!" and "KISS Alive II." Originally, "The Elder" came as a gate fold jacket primarily with a translucent printed inner dust sleeve because that had become en vogue in 1981. Was there any talk about how these were going to be packaged? You did mention the Digipak, but with the jewel case version was there any desire to do anything special with "The Elder" in terms of kind of bringing it back to the original packaging? You know in a way similar to how you handled the "Alive" albums? It's interesting that you say that. I was a big advocate for trying to keep everything exactly the way it was on its

very first release. However, the art department disagreed with me in the sense that they wanted -- and I agreed with this ultimately -- all the albums to be uniform looking. So that the albums lined up on a shelf all made sense visually. And I agreed with that. That was actually one of the problems I had with some of the other versions that preceded the remasters. They weren't concise in a lot of ways. As far as "The Elder," here's a little surprise I'll share with the world: A lot of people think there's only three versions of the U.S. vinyl of "The Elder." There's actually six. The project I'm working on for next year will show all six, amongst other things that some people aren't aware of. But the three that I believe most KISS fans are aware of are the one with the printed translucent inner dust sleeve, the one with the printed paper dust sleeve, which came later, and the one with the lyric sheet in either yellow (almost illegible) and subsequently black text.

Right, those are the three main variations of the original 1981 pressings, as far as I'm aware.

Okay. So, I was also a big advocate for including the lyrics in all the albums. I felt it was about time. I said, "Look, Japanese versions have them, other import versions have the lyrics in all these records. We should be really doing it as well." They nixed the idea again. You know, the sad thing is, the poor sales of "You Wanted the Best" had a domino effect into what we were really able to do with the remasters, because Mercury/Def Jam said, "Hey, if this brand new compilation isn't doing well then why would re-releasing these albums and making them look prettier do anywhere near what you're saying they're going to do?" That was a constant uphill battle. I had pitched a concept with one of the designers that worked on the remasters. I also did this with "Creatures of the Night" and "Lick It Up." But, we had three initial designs where with "The Elder," you would open it up and then you would open it up again and you would see the photo from the Japanese version. And then you'd fold it open again and there would be the free poster than came with I believe the Norwegian version of the record.

So my idea initially was to take all the best elements from all the different countries and incorporate them into one remastered version so you'd have a little bit of everything represented. We even created this compilation page where you would see the evolution of the first label, the blue-and-silver label to the blue-and-black label all the way to the Casablanca Records and Filmworks logo labels. Mercury, they just killed off all that stuff, which is so sad. But here's the good news: I kept all my copies of the Zip disks from that time. The thing that I found out after the KISSteria box set came out -- I had thought that Mercury had kept or archived all the stuff that we did -- when Mercury/PolyGram was sold to Seagrams, they downsized even more and threw a ton of that material away.

That's infuriating! And depressing...

You're not going to believe this, but the digital stuff that was created from the mid '90s until about two years after Seagrams took it over, they just got rid of most of that stuff. It's so heartbreaking because -- I think I touched on this a little bit on the Three Sides of the Coin episode -- "You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best" was originally supposed to be a gate fold cover. It was supposed to come with a poster, a bunch of tchotchkes. All those digital files, the copies that Mercury had, they're all gone according to what Universal stated to me. I believe McGhee Entertainment still has their set and I still have my set. So hopefully this stuff will ultimately see the light of day somehow. But, back to "The Elder," there was so much stuff I wanted to do with it and you know sadly when you've got the record company accountant saying, "sales don't justify the cost," it gets very frustrating.

You must have felt very impotent at times because you had pitched a very different idea for "You Wanted the Best," that from what you described would have been much better received by the fans. Obviously I'm speaking for myself, but I don't think anyone's going to say, "Well, you know it's really missing a 17-minute interview with Jay Leno." Most fans would rather have had three more unreleased recordings or something that made sense. That interview just doesn't fit.

The record pitch I had turned in -- all the audio that I had found and put in a sequence that I thought made sense -- again this is one of those things that only three copies exist; I have a copy, Gene/McGhee has a copy, and the record company has a copy. What happened was, the multi-tracks for several of those songs were sent to the band -- and you know the final product, as we all know, is very different sounding than what I believe it should have been. But yeah, I had to learn a hard lesson very fast; which was even though you're a consultant, you're not the final say-so. There's a committee, there's a board, and then there's people who make decisions based on just hard numbers and nothing else. Again, in a sense there was a cloud over any KISS project and it was very frustrating that the shelved "Carnival of Souls" was used as a weapon. "We have to shelve this damn record because Peter Criss and Ace Frehley aren't on it?" You have no idea the stuff that some of the key people at Mercury would say to use as a reason not to spend money on the remasters. It was really unfortunate.

Having paid an advance to the band they weren't recouping with the completed product just sitting on a shelf, were they? And it had leaked. So I understand the attitude they may have had of, "Now we have to spend more

money on KISS?" I can understand the attitude from the label perspective. "Now you want more money? We've got to do this for KISS? We've just, you know we've paid in advance!" I'll guess that it would have been 1995, or maybe even late-1994, that the band got the original advance when they started work on the "Carnival of Souls" album, so there would have been several years of real money coming in from that investment. "MTV Unplugged," as fabulous as fans believe the quality of the performance to be, didn't sell spectacularly in terms of album units moved. "You Wanted the Best," well I guess you know about that! I thought it was impressive that it even went gold, to be honest, in the form it took. It was disappointing. Oh yeah. Do you remember H&H Distribution? They did the limited-edition vinyl versions of "Creatures of the Night," "Revenge" and "Alive III."

Yes. They did a good job with those products.

The original concept of "You Wanted the Best" was going to be an exclusive through them. It wasn't supposed to be a mainstream store item. It was supposed to be something that originally H&H was going to distribute, then it turned into, "Okay, we'll sell this exclusively through the KISS Army Depot," and then as it evolved it became, "Oh, no -- we have to do this as a major release!" Okay, you have to understand something -- by going in that direction you're trying to encompass a wider spectrum of listeners as opposed to the real diehards who really want to hear the rare and obscure stuff. You've just changed the whole dynamic of the album! When I started working on the record, it was with the idea that it was going to be the ultimate "bootleg album" for the KISS fan that's been waiting 15 years for the band to be back together. And here's some really rare scarce stuff that they probably won't do on the tour but hey, here's an ultimate package of really cool live stuff from the band, as a thank you to the KISS Army for supporting them all these years. That kind of thing... But when you're in a room full of a dozen people and everybody has their own opinion and ideas, instead of the soup coming out delicious like it's supposed to, it winds up being this mish-mash of all these ingredients just thrown together. And it doesn't taste very good. For that being my very first contribution to the band on a record in an official capacity, when I got the promo copy of that record I was so upset. I couldn't even bear to look at the album designer. I didn't even want to talk to him I was so upset. It was just like, "This is not what we want." It was definitely not what I wanted.

How satisfied are you with the realization of "The Elder" specifically as a remaster, especially looking back 20 years? I mean this thing's still in stores -- those that remain in business anyway! Did you expect the remasters that you worked on so long and hard to still be the standard CD versions available in that format some 20 years on?

Years ago, when "Sonic Boom" came out and Wal-Mart had the KISS kiosks in certain locations, I brought my kids to one just to show them. I had three young kids at the time and I said, "Hey, your dad used to work on these records!" My daughter didn't believe me. So I said, "Okay, I'm gonna buy one. You're gonna see!" So I bought "Dressed to Kill," opened it up, and my name was in it. Just to see the excitement on my kids' face. "Daddy, you did this? Are you famous?" That just brought tears to my eyes. Here we are, I did this work 21 years ago -- I mean there are babies that were born then that are now full grown adults -- and it's just amazing to me, even the streaming versions, like on Spotify and stuff like that, are what we did. That's the stuff that most of the KISS fans are listening to now. It's so gratifying to have been a part of KISSStory that, here we are a generation later, and that work is still out there. To this day, KISS fans reach out to me on social media who ask me for my address so they can send me their liner note inserts for me to sign and send back to them! And many of these fans weren't even born when these albums came out. So that is just so touching and it makes me feel like, wow, here's a KISS fan, a diehard KISS fan whose dream came true and I was able to contribute to the next generation of KISS fans. It's just such a gratifying experience.

Per chance the band's current label or the band decided, "It's 2017, and we did the K40 vinyl reissues last year for KISSteria. It's time to do the CD catalogue again, just like the Beatles did with theirs, we need someone to head up that project." Would you be interested? Would you do it again? Would you go back and revisit all that knowing what you know now?

I would do it in a heartbeat. I would like to see the original concepts that we had happen now. And the good news is that a lot of those digital files still exist. I'll give you an example; when we did "Destroyer," Casablanca, back in 1976, had bought a bunch of Barry Levine images to use for promotional purposes and things like that. That stuff was in the art department at Mercury when I was working on the KISS Remasters. So we came up with an idea to do a special photo loaded edition of "Destroyer." I would like to see that happen. We also, and a lot of people don't know this yet, but we designed an alternate version of the CD prints where each album used the original Casablanca label design. You know the very first "KISS" album used the original silver-and-blue Casablanca label, etc. The versions fans have are the KISS logo and the song credits underneath on the actual disk with the Mercury logo on one side and Casablanca on the other.

Right, that would have been more visually appealing than just different colored "KISS" logos as were used. They did something similar to that with the CD version of the "Casablanca Singles, 1974-82" box set in 2012.

"Rock and Roll Over" was the first record with the tan label and "Love Gun" the first with the Filmworks label, but they decided not to go in that direction. We still have all those original files. So to be able to do the ultimate remasters, I would be very interested in doing this on the level that would surpass any remaster that's been on the market to date from any band. I would want to do the ultimate remasters, if that makes sense.

That's the only thing that you can do with a band like KISS. If they do it now, it's got to be the "ultimate remaster remaster," for what would essentially be a final updating the catalog. To me, it's the only way: Go big or go home, so it probably has to be a premium product similar to the KISSteria box set if they're going to make any real money.

I was quite impressed with the AC/DC remasters when they came out and there was a set of Black Sabbath remasters I felt were brilliant. I don't remember if it was Castle or Warner Brothers that put them out, but those were beautiful. It's a matter of taking things to the next level, like what Metallica did with the boxed remasters for "Kill 'em All" and "Ride the Lightning."

And just look at the newly announced "Master Of Puppets" box. It's got ten CDs, two DVDs, one cassette, a hardcover photo/story book and other premiums for \$175. 10 CDs!

That stuff is phenomenal and I would say, "Let's take it 10 steps further!" There's certainly enough material around. There's stuff that I'm working on in the project right now that I'd want to include because after 20-something years a lot of the stuff that I thought would eventually leak out has not. I was privy to a lot of information, a lot of documentation that a lot of KISS fans aren't aware of. The time has come to do something with them and to show fans, "Hey, this is what I learned decades ago and you guys have a right to see this stuff." The fact that KISS is almost 45 years old is just so cool and, when you have a legacy like that, you know there's so much minutia that has yet to be revealed. You know, when you think you know everything, there's just something else that comes out of left field.

That's one of the important thing with KISS fans is to remind us that we don't know it all, we never will, and there'll always be something else to discover or clarify. That's part of the magic for me -- that we're always learning new stuff! And for those of us that do the archeology, we're constantly reminded that sometimes we're on the wrong track. And it's great to be wrong because you learn something new, or something unexpected, or correct something that was patently false.

It's funny because Universal sent me most of the vinyl releases from the KISSteria set -- I didn't get the actual box but I got most of the albums. I'm very happy that "The Elder" is the version that we created, but put on vinyl for the U.S. That's very cool to me. I wish I got the credit in it like I should have, and Universal knows it should make the revision. My name did show up in "Greatest KISS" and "You Wanted the Best," so I'm happy about that. Of course with every re-released version of vinyl there's always something you're either going to appreciate or not be happy about. I'm disappointed that Bill Aucoin was basically removed from all of the albums. His credit on those new records is missing and it got replaced with McGhee Entertainment. I get that the new management should be on the current credits, but for the man who discovered KISS and what he had to do to get them a record deal, for him not to be on those records anymore is really disheartening.

It certainly wouldn't do any harm to have the Aucoin logo on there since it no longer exists as a business and of course Bill has passed on. Who knows what the kind of rationale is behind that sort of thing is?

It's not necessarily his logo that's got to be on there but just his credit as original manager. If your first exposure to KISS is the KISSteria box set or any of these vinyl records, you're not being educated about one of the original, most important people involved. That was very disappointing to see. I kept all my albums sealed, so I haven't listened to them so I don't know if you feel the sound quality has surpassed the previous vinyl versions? Of course these are more variants that we have to add to our collection because we're completists! (Laughs)

From my collector's point of view, you know I felt sonically they sounded just like the remasters, but on vinyl -- to my ears, anyway or with whatever condition the stylus was in on my deck when I played them. Analyzing the new digital files that they made available through HD-tracks.com, again to me they appeared to be pretty much identical wave forms to the '97 remasters, albeit slightly louder as is all they seem to do these days. Like Spinal Tap, "Ooh, slightly louder, it went up to 11." Certainly still good though whatever they did.

The thing that's interesting is how do you go back to an analog medium using a digital master, you know? That's the one thing that I do not understand. You know these are vinyl upgraded sounds but your base masters are probably the DAT tapes that we created back in 1996-1997. It doesn't sound likely that they went back to the

original master recordings that were done in the '70s.

On the one hand it wouldn't make sense in terms of cost if you're going back to the original sources. One of the project engineers did share pictures of the NBLP-7001 approved reel for Ampex from the storage library, so who knows. That would make a good interview too! I just don't see how the waves could really marry up as identically as they did to my eyes, so maybe that's an answer to discover. Certainly, we're in the realm of remaster rather than going back to the original 2" multi-tracks to remix and then remaster (or more accurately master anew), so there's probably not too much scope for change. A mix is a mix, and remastering, be it in 1997 or 2014, is in essence doing the same thing to the same source, just with a different engineer's skill set or taste.

I'm just curious for a fan perspective overall, but were a lot of people upset "Sonic Boom" was not a part of the KISSteria package or was that really not considered a big deal? For a guy like me that's a completist, if I'm going to spend \$2,000.00 on a box set then I want everything. I don't want to have to hunt down one record!

Without a doubt; it's something that was clearly missing from the product. It's a gap, and for me was tacky because I do like that album. But we don't know what the licensing arrangement with Wal-Mart was and how that might have impacted things. In my mind, or in a perfect world, it certainly could have been treated as a premium, just like "Greatest KISS" and the other five exclusive LPs. So few were made originally, and they ended up in a KISS associated store anyway; so it would have been nice to get that included, slightly different in execution so as to not impact the collectability of the original pressing. How can you do a KISSteria 40th anniversary box set and exclude one of the band's studio albums? It doesn't make any sense to me logically and annoyed me, so I'd expect there's a business reason. Heck, that LP is pirated to death because it hasn't been re-pressed. Pennies add up eventually and then you've got a dollar...

You're certainly right. Thinking about some of the tchotchkes that came in there... There were a couple of cool things, but when you've been fortunate enough to see a lot of the assets that were in the archive, for me to know what exists, and for that stuff not to be utilized in some manner it's just so confusing. I guess part of it might be because Mercury/PolyGram has changed hands so many times and there's been so much turnover as far as employees go. Maybe the people that knew this stuff was around are gone and today's guys just don't know this stuff has been there in the vaults. It's just surprising to me that stuff that I helped uncover nearly 22 years ago, none of that stuff's been utilized in any other manner. It's very weird to be honest.

That must be disheartening, and for me ignorance is bliss from much of what you allude to. When you went into that project, bright eyed and bushy tailed and all these years on, there has been turnover at the labels. You know these bands are often seen as dinosaurs at best, and annoyances or worse in many cases. KISS' SoundScan figures tell one facet of the story without providing anything useful from the financial side -- which is none of the fan's business anyway. The catalog has continued to sell decently (over 13 million copies in the U.S. since 1991), but it's certainly not selling impressively. So I understand why the label wouldn't want to put the money in, because they're probably not going to recoup in the current market or using traditional release models. As much as my heart wants this or that, or to see things done in a certain way, you know the sales simply don't justify the effort in 2017 for mass-market versions. Which is why you end up with the sort of product that's going to be high dollar exclusive items that will piss off many fans, but are what it takes financially to make things worthwhile doing.

While I've got you, I hope I can ask you a couple of questions about "Crazy Nights." That remaster was the final one released to date. When you were doing this project way back was that always considered the stopping point or were "Smashes, Thrashes & Hits" or "Hot in the Shade" considered as the non-makeup bookend? When we decided to move forward with "Lick It Up" onward, the idea was to do "Lick It Up," "Animalize," and "Asylum in one shot; and then it was going to be "Crazy Nights," "Smashes, Thrashes & Hits," and "Hot in the Shade." We were going to repackage "Revenge" in an ultra pack and re-release "Alive III," with one or two bonus tracks -- the ones that were used in Japan and on the H&H vinyl release. But, the initial sales figures were low for "Lick It Up" through "Asylum," and after that they just said, "You know what, we'll just do the first four non-makeup records and that's it." I had actually written liner notes for everything including the "Revenge" and "Alive III" ultra packs.

That's interesting. Ending with "Crazy Nights" seemed odd in some ways, especially with how poor "Hot In The Shade" sounds, even if 1996 was closer to the recording technology used for those later albums.

The work was done; "Alive III" ultra pack was frigging amazing. All that design stuff was fully conceptualized and the images were selected and everything. The vinyl and CD for H.I.T.S. sound terrible; the cassette is much, much better. But Mercury said, "These aren't selling to our satisfaction so we're pulling the plug now." And that's it.

As a fan, what did you think about "Crazy Nights" when it came out? What was your reaction to the change in direction that the band had taken?

To be honest with you, as far as non-makeup records go, "Lick It Up," "Animalize," "Crazy Nights," and "Revenge" are my four favorite records. I love "Crazy Nights" and bought it the first day it came out. I thought it was superior to "Asylum." To this day I can only listen to one or two songs on "Asylum," but I thought the "Asylum" tour was amazing because of that super duper large "KISS" logo with the multi-color changes. That was just out of this world for 1985-86, but I didn't really like the record very much. So I'm a pro "Crazy Nights" fella!

My last question on "Crazy Nights..." In the "Crazy Nights" vault did you find anything of interest? That's one of those albums I'm very surprised they haven't knocked out a 30th Anniversary edition deluxe version for. It sold well internationally and could certainly benefit from a remix far more than "Destroyer" ever should have. When I look at certain things that come out with KISS compilations and re-releases and deluxe editions, I'm really perplexed sometimes as to why they make the decisions that they do. "Destroyer: Resurrected," I thought was a great idea. The "Love Gun" deluxe edition was also a great idea, but I'm not too happy with the execution of it. That bonus disk could have had so much more on it and so much more varied material. I feel like they just said, "Hey Gene, you got any old demos in your garage?" "Yeah, sure, use this..." To give you an example, the whole sound board recordings from the Japan shows from 1977 were in the Mercury vaults. They were there, I heard them, and it was fantastic stuff. Why would you not put that out? They have a ton of stuff available but instead they do the "Love Gun" deluxe edition with a bunch of demos. But when you know what's available and you know what the fans know and you know the stuff that the fans don't know about, it's just like, "What?" "Rock and Roll Over," why wasn't there a deluxe edition of that? That certainly deserved a deluxe edition if anything did.

Indeed. There are few fans who would argue against you on that point. And marry it with the "Rock And Roll Party in Japan" unreleased live album! And they seem to have missed the boat for a 40th Anniversary edition of "KISS Alive II" -- though there's time to prove me wrong!

I don't know why some of the decisions are made but I would be all for a 30th anniversary edition of "Crazy Nights." I think it's a great album.

A couple of years ago you contributed to a very well received book, "[Star Wars: The Original Topps Trading Card Series, Volume 1](#)." Congratulations on the reception that it received. It's got a lot of very positive feedback. Have you ever pitched a similar project to KISS on KISS' collector cards, particularly the Donruss stuff from late-1970s?

I would love to. I'm a big non-sports card collector so of course you know working on the Star Wars stuff it was natural that the KISS idea would come to mind. But, here's the thing; the problem is licensing fees and what they would want in royalties versus what's realistic as far as sales. What could you give the fans that would be awesome that they hadn't seen before? You know, stuff like that. The other thing is that I would want to get the original slides and rescan all that stuff. Can you imagine what those would look like today if done from the original materials instead of just scans of the cards? One of the sad things about the Star Wars cards books was that Topps had auctioned off their original negatives maybe about a decade or so ago. So that stuff was no longer available. I had to use all of my collection to create those books! While that part of it was fun, I was just thinking to myself, "Oh my God, if we had the original 35mm negatives how brilliant this stuff would look today!" I'll tell you something interesting, a little known fact. Do you remember the Cornerstone cards I wrote in 1997/98?

Yes, those were great and were some of the few card sets I actually collected at the time. There were two series. We had actually wrote, created, and designed the cards for Series 3 and were all ready to be printed. KISS pulled the plug on them at the last minute because they were mostly non-makeup years. I still have my copies of those files so one of the things I'm excited to tell you about is -- that I mentioned on Three Sides of the Coin also -- I started working on my book, about what it was like being one of the KISS fans who was lucky enough to actually work with the band and contribute to KISSStory. I'm shooting for a fall release for 2018 because Lynn Goldsmith's book and a few others are being released within the next few months. I don't want to have too many KISS related books out there at once as competition, so it would be better to wait until next year. But there's going to be a lot of minutia in there, a lot of stuff about working with Mercury, and working in the vault.

There's going to be 11 diaries worth of stuff. I'm going to be pulling a lot of notes to share with the fans. There's a lot of stuff that has been rumored, but I have the facts on a lot of things. A lot of the variations of the vinyl -- everything up to 1997 -- I have an exact accounting of everything that was made, where it was made, how many units, whatever changes they made to the labels. There were limited vinyl runs that were done only regionally. So,

for instance, if you bought "The Elder" in California, your version differs than the one that I would have bought in New York at the same time. Not only with the manufacturing number on the actual disk, in some cases the label was totally different. All of that stuff will be seen for the first time next year.

That's the arcane side of the hobby. Knowing the difference between PRC West - Compton, CA, or Hauppauge Record Manufacturing in New York, or PRC in Richmond, IN, for pressing plants; or the various print facilities used for covers. And then label stock printers. Most sane people wouldn't care!

But also the materials that were used were different, the inserts were different too. So I'm also going to clarify a lot of that sort of thing. There seems to be this belief that albums like "Rock and Roll Over," "Love Gun" and "KISS Alive II" were counterfeits done at the manufacturing plant at the same time that the authorized versions were being manufactured. That's incorrect. All of those versions are actually authentic and official but with the machinery back in the '70s you couldn't guarantee that the stickers or insert would be inserted in every single copy. That was just the limitations of the machinery and/or the employees that were doing hand insertions. There's this urban legend that's not correct where they feel, "Hey, I didn't get my sticker for 'Rock and Roll Over.' It must have a counterfeit." No, you just have one that unfortunately the insertion machine or person just didn't insert the sticker. During my time on the remaster project I worked with some of the people who were working in marketing for Casablanca or for one of the distributors at the time. They filled me in on a lot of that stuff that had been made up beforehand. So a lot of that stuff's going to be in my book which should hopefully be out in the fall next year. I've started going through boxes of stuff already and there's stuff I totally forgot I had.

Before we wrap up, a final question: You obviously will have seen some of the numbers -- heck I've seen some numbers from PolyGram -- but, do you believe "The Elder" has sold enough in the U.S. to be gold certified by the RIAA?

My personal belief is that all of the KISS records are probably Platinum at this point. Because if Platinum equals a million copies sold, from 1981 -- when "The Elder" came out -- to 2017, between all the formats, album, cassette, 8-track, etc.; if you combine all those units sold from 1981 to the present I'm pretty confident that the album has sold over a million copies. It must be Gold at the very least! I don't know what the record company's hesitation is in having all these things re-certified. The first three albums must be at least Platinum by now, too. I'm pretty confident in saying "The Elder" sold a 500,000 to one-million copies in a 36-year period. Do you agree?

"Creatures of the Night" didn't go gold until 1994. So while it didn't sell initially over 12 years, and a couple of reissues -- or with the new cover in 1985 -- it did eventually get there. But it and "The Elder" had very poor initial U.S. sales and did better internationally. The word "abject" comes to mind, and while "The Elder" was reissued marginally along with the rest of the 1985 catalog updating, and then properly in 1989, I just don't see there as having been enough product available in the intervening years. Or consumer interest if they even saw the product. The band was at or near their nadir at the time. Particularly while Phonogram contracted the distribution/manufacturing points in the U.S. and really streamlining things from the business side has an effect. But, as you know the numbers with KISS are so mired in fudge, shall we say, when "Alive!" is still only officially recognized by the RIAA as gold when internal Casablanca audits many times higher by 1979. But, that's Casablanca "math," and likely not the sort of thing you'd want in the same county as an audit with royalties and taxes involved! I don't know if I would push "The Elder" to a million in the U.S. alone, but I would certainly say it's been hovering around 499,999 for many, many years. Maybe the 10 copies the "Odyssey" project inspired people to purchase pushed it over the top and Tim and I will get RIAA awards for our efforts! It should certainly be Gold, just to keep the "All Time American Gold Record Champs" shtick going. The rest of the pre-SoundScan albums should be Platinum at minimum from what I've seen numbers on.

I agree with you. And think about all the kids that have listened to KISS for the first time by streaming them on Spotify or iTunes downloads and all this stuff. I mean adding those sales in, too. I mean it doesn't necessarily have to be a physical unit, it just has to be a paid-for unit. So if someone paid \$.99 to download "The Elder" on iTunes, I mean that's a sale. That should be counted as such though I don't know what the RIAA's rules are. It just seems unrealistic, when you think about all the millions of KISS fans worldwide, and you're talking about at least 2-1/2 generations worth of KISS fans that "The Elder" hasn't sold enough copies for Gold or Platinum certification? I just find that doubtful.

And that they'll certify product like the "Millennium Collection, Vol. 1," a 10-song compilation from 2003 and "The Very Best of KISS," and not bother going back to a studio record that breaks their consecutive track record of success. It totally doesn't matter to us KISS fans; we're going to love the stuff and the material no matter what. I appreciate your time, Robert; it's been a fantastic conversation that's gone far outside the scope of just talking about "The Elder!" Where can people find you?

The best way to reach me is at www.robertvconte.com, or you can email me at info[at]robertvconte.com. I'm

working on my book, the title right now is called "My KISS Story" and it's due for release in the fall 2018. It's basically going to be a memoir mixed with minutia about all things KISS, and some really cool surprises. Hopefully it'll be a unique book that everybody will get something out of!



ROBERT V. CONTE is an editor, writer and pop-culture consultant who, armed with his vast memorabilia collection, utilizes his expertise on a myriad of officially licensed products, including **GODZILLA**, **KISS**, and **SESAME STREET**.

Robert's newest project include **ART OF ATARI** (Dynamite Entertainment) and **STAR WARS: THE ORIGINAL TOPPS TRADING CARD SERIES** (Abrams ComicArts), where he wrote the Afterwords, provided commentaries and supplied incredible images included each book available now.

Robert's future projects include the upcoming story, **REBUILDING ROBERT**, and an autobiographical graphic novel. He lives in New York and has three children. Please see Robert's works on Amazon.com.



THIS SPECIAL INTERVIEW, CELEBRATING THE ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF "[ODYSSEY: The definitive examination of "Music From The Elder," KISS' cult-classic concept album](#)" is a "THANK YOU" to all of those who have supported the project. It will be included in a future print edition of the book. The KissFAQ thanks Robert V. Conte for the time he generously gave us to discuss his work with KISS and on "The Elder" remaster.



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