



ROCK STAR
FRONTMAN
ALICE COOPER
REUNITES WITH
THE SURVIVING
MEMBERS OF HIS
ORIGINAL GROUP
AND PRODUCER
BOB EZRIN.

BY IVOR LEVENE

THE REVENGE OF ALICE COOPER

JENNY RISHIER



It's been an opinion for far too long that rock music will never be what it once was in the 1970s, a decade where the genre quite possibly had reached its creative zenith. And what do we write a lot about here at *Goldmine*? Legacy rock acts with reissued product. Because let's face it, rock fans, our best days are behind us, right? Wrong! The thing we wished to have continued into the late '70s through the 1980s has happened. It's happened to me, and I am sure it's going to happen to you when you hear the new Alice Cooper group album, *The Revenge of Alice Cooper*. This album puts the reunited group right back to 1972. Songs about sex, drugs and rock and roll, it's all in there. It makes you believe that the best years don't have to be left behind. Above it all, it touches a place that you thought was gone — your head, your heart and that little thing inside you that has no name, when the needle drops, you feel it.



Alice Cooper

JENNY RISHIER

Due to hit stores on July 25, *Revenge* is going to become an instant classic. This is an album that could have been made in 1972, at the height of the group's creative period. Some may argue that it was either earlier or later than that, but let's pick a date right in the middle of it. To quote Bruce Springsteen, "I ain't bullshitting back here. I want to go to the river of sanctification, the place where there are second chances. We're gonna have a rock and roll revival!" And revival is exactly the word to use to describe this album.

Do we, as journalists, sometimes stumble over each other in our glorification of classic rock artists' albums, kind of giving their output a pass because we're just thankful that they got together and produced another album? Perhaps. "Best album since ..." is a term often used, but rarely really applies, but is appropriate in this case.

A couple of years ago, the seed of recording a new album was planted, and in July 2025 it bears fruit. That seed is composed of Alice Cooper, Dennis Dunaway, Neal Smith, Michael Bruce, a posthumous Glen Buxton, and the sixth member of the band, producer Bob Ezrin, who is and was as vital to the sound of the Alice Cooper group as the musicians themselves. They have also added a new gunslinger to fill in that two-guitar formula, a guy by the name of Gyasi. As a bonus, there's an appearance on the title track by Doors guitarist Robby Krieger. This writer is of the opinion that anyone reading this should preorder the album, or find your local record store, show up on July 25 and buy the record. You will love this album. You will feel like you did when you were a teenager and first heard "School's Out." Instead of wondering how an album like this was made possible, I'll let the ensemble speak for themselves.

GM: *My first and most obvious question is, why now, after all these years?*

ALICE COOPER: I've always kept in touch with these guys. They've all had their own projects and everything, but on the last four Alice Cooper albums, the guys played on some of those tracks. I finally just said, "Why don't we just do an album? We'll get Bob Ezrin and see what it would be like if we did an album." Not really knowing what that would sound like after 50 years, but, you know, there

it was. We started writing and it just fell into place; it sounded like Alice Cooper in 1975. That's just the way these guys play and the way I sing when I'm with them. This album came as a pleasant surprise.

NEAL SMITH: Well, we've been working on it since the Hall of Fame. Writing and things just sort of evolved. Dennis had a great book that was out that sparked a lot of interest. I got a house in 2015, [and] it was a good chance to get together with Mike and Alice to write some music. A lot of these songs started during that period. Everybody's been writing, and we're always together. We've played some wonderful shows together.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: I'm not sure what Alice's hurry is. (Laughs) I told him we wanted to do an album 50 years ago. I guess he thought, "You don't have to keep reminding me every 10 years!" But it's like Neal said, it's great that the coming together has been a little-by-little, step-by-step process. We all feel like it's about time because we've been ready to do this for a long time, and it was a blast. Getting back together in the studio, there's no catching up; we just continue as we did back then, using the same approach. Everybody has the same specialties that we all do. And it was a full collaboration. There was nobody making a final say. It was all of us listening to everybody's suggestions and then jumping on whichever one we all thought was the best.

MICHAEL BRUCE: I think it's kind of like a marriage. You fall in love with someone and maybe things don't work out, and you start to get back together, and you remember things you loved doing with that other person — it's kind of like that. It never goes away, and you have that longing, longing to reconnect. That was definitely in play with the band.

GM: *It sounds like you had this music bottled up inside you as a band for 45 years. I just listened to the album an hour ago and it's a killer album, to take a term from your past, just killer!*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: And did you love it to death?

GM: *I did love it to death! How long before this happened, did you know that this was going to happen? When it was official?*

NEAL SMITH: It was about a week (laughs).

BOB EZRIN: I would say that the moment where we all felt that this had to happen would've been during the recording of *Detroit Stories* in February of 2021. That spirit just carried on into this project. We already started talking about it back then, and we started listening to songs and talking to each other about what kind of music we wanted to do, and where we wanted to do it, so we just picked up the conversation where we'd left it the last time we were in the studio together.

NEAL SMITH: It came out of the blue. We had done so many things together from the Hall of Fame to the Dallas show with Christopher Todd Penn. And then playing in London with Alice in 2017. And then 2019 Alice Cooper's Solid Rock show with Johnny Depp and Joe Bonamassa, and the songs of course that we recorded on Alice's albums *Welcome 2 My Nightmare*, *Paranormal* and *Detroit Stories*. Those were all stepping stones leading up to this point. Bob Ezrin was key in it; it makes a huge difference, because Bob is like a member of the band and to have him involved in it was a key part. It was as important as Michael's songwriting, and Dennis and I as a rhythm section and songwriters. Those are key elements of what the group was all about. With Bob Ezrin recording it and putting it all together, it was a natural evolution for us.

ALICE COOPER: I think we started working on this album a year ago, maybe a year and a half. And honestly, once we got in the studio, everything just kind of flowed. It's almost mysterious how this album just turned out the way we wanted it to turn out. And honestly, we didn't even know how it was gonna turn out. Everything fell into place. Dennis is such a unique bass player. Neal has his own type of drumming, and when those two get together, it adds to the bottom.

GM: *Did any of you bring any riffs, beats or lyrics to this session?*

BOB EZRIN: Everybody brought songs in. Typically, Alice and I co-write when we're doing his solo stuff, we co-write with a guitar player or two, because neither of us are that great of a player. We're better at melodies and lyrics than guitar riffs and things like that. Riffs are helpful, they really inspire us, and they

help us to get a handle for a particular song. In many cases. It would come in one way, and then we would work together on it, and it would be a different song by the time it was done. But in some cases, the songs were kept pretty close to the way they came in.

ALICE COOPER: Dennis has always been writing, so Dennis brought in songs. Neal brought in songs, Mike brought in songs. I had songs. It was just, "Let's try everything and see what sounds good." With Bob Ezrin at the helm, he makes everything sound good.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: We all did; we all brought our songs to the table. We chose the best songs that we all agreed on, and that got us inspired to work on them. We even spontaneously did a few songs that weren't even really in existence, until it happened in the studio. This has been a secret well-kept for two years now, and I'm exploding with excitement that I can finally talk about it.

GYASI: The songs were pretty well written for the most part when I got 'em, so my job was to come up with riffs and solos. For me, most of the collaboration on this record was with Bob. We did a lot of sessions where it was just me and Bob.

GM: *This story comes out just before the album drops. What do you want to say to your fans?*

NEAL SMITH: I want to thank our fans that have stuck by us all these years, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame that supported us. Equally as big, if not bigger, is dedicating this to Glen Buxton, our brother, he was really the spirit of the band. We lost him in 1997, and we have two songs that are dedicated to him in the album. He is always with us both in spirit and in the recording studio. That is an element that always draws us and keeps us together and inspires us. I'm amazed by Dennis and Michael's songwriting, I think it's better than ever, and Alice sounds better than ever. This really is like the eighth Alice Cooper group album.

ALICE COOPER: We're talking about four guys that never really quit playing, had their own styles, and when we put it together, it sounds like Alice Cooper did back in the 1970s. I think you can tell that we were having a lot of fun on some of these songs, you know? You can hear it! We hope fans are going to love it!

DENNIS DUNAWAY: The album gets about two thirds of the way through, and then all of these songs relate more and more to our early days, and get more and more “Glen Buxton,” until the final thing where you might have a tear in your eye. The album is essentially our tribute to him.

GM: *I’ve heard it mentioned that this is a successor to Muscle of Love. I don’t think it is. I think it goes back further, to perhaps 1971. What do you think it’s a successor to?*

ALICE COOPER: There was a point there when we had *School’s Out* and *Billion Dollar Babies*, back-to-back and both monster albums. And then I think we all kind of got into our own space, and we weren’t listening to each other. When *Muscle of Love* came out, it had nothing. The production on it was great, but it wasn’t Bob Ezrin. To me, it didn’t have the glue that held those other albums together; there just didn’t seem to be a theme. It was lacking that “Alice Cooper” sense of humor. I feel that this is the album that should have come out after *Billion Dollar Babies*.

MICHAEL BRUCE: Well, we certainly touched our Yardbirds influences with “I Ain’t Done Wrong,” and our own roots with “Return of the Spiders.” I think that was very cool.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: I think that it’s totally new, but it sounds like us because it is us, and because we use the same approach. I even used the exact same bass that I used back then, the billion-dollar jazz bass, Herco picks, which are almost impossible to find these days, and an Ampeg B-15 amp, which I used on those albums back then. So, as far as the bass is concerned, that was part of the bass sound sounding the same, but it has to do with the vinyl. Vinyl is a big reason that we can do an album, put it out and be able to sell enough to make it profitable. *Goldmine* magazine has always been like the vinyl bible for everybody, and I’m very, very proud that we can do something on vinyl, and kids will still be able to get it, because that’s the other part of the formula. We used to put out vinyl albums, and you had the big picture on the album that you could look at, and that would almost become your shrine, and you would play it over and over. I’m glad that we are able to have that size of

artwork on it. I’m glad that people will be spinning a platter like they used to on our albums back then.

MICHAEL BRUCE: Oh, I can’t spin mine on the platter, I already turned my turntable in to Goodwill (laughs). I have to go buy another one.

GM: *So, what was that first moment like when you got together? I know that you’ve recorded, and you played live, but this is an official Alice Cooper group album. What was that first moment like?*

ALICE COOPER: We fell right back into place instantly. I think everybody was more up for listening to what the other guy said and trying it. We’ve had our own language in the band for years, and it was just right back to that again. It was really fun to do this album. I forgot how funny the band was. I forgot how funny Dennis, Neal and Mike were. Our sense of humor is what got us through everything, from our early days right up until the present. We always had our own language in the band for years and years and years, and it was just right back to that again.

NEAL SMITH: Well, I think it goes back to 2010. We had to all agree when we were in the studio, whether it was in the ’70s or the present, it’s the exact same vibe. I think the exciting thing is that when we get together, that chemistry is still there, with our silly sense of humor. Dennis and I lock together as the rhythm section. We’ve done it so many times. Same professionalism, understatement. It’s in our DNA, we know to work with each other and it’s always a blast.

BOB EZRIN: These guys have known each other since they were teenagers; they’ve been through an awful lot together. They’ve had a lot of adventures, including the formation of the band, having to survive living in Phoenix, which was a cow town back then. Alice likes to say that it was a battle between the cowboys and the greasers as to who was gonna kill the long hairs, who was gonna beat the crap out of Alice. Then, they moved to Los Angeles at a really important time in the history of the Sunset Strip.

GYASI: The first time we met in the studio, we played the Yardbirds song called “I Ain’t Done Wrong.” That was the very first song we played together on that first day. It was the first time I was in the room with these guys, so that was kind of

special to me. We weren’t playing Alice Cooper group hits, we were all doing The Yardbirds together, we were collectively playing one of our influences. It put us all on the same page instantly.

GM: *Let’s talk about the studio, tell me what that was like.*

BOB EZRIN: We recorded most of the tracks at the Carriage House in Stamford, Connecticut, which is very near to where Neal and Dennis live, and also down the street from where I used to live. It’s a place that was very familiar to most of us. Alice came with Sheryl [Cooper], I came with my wife, and we all hung out. It was a very familial feeling. We did the rest of the tracking at Soultrain Studios in Nashville, another studio that I was very familiar with, where Alice and I did a couple of his solo albums.

ALICE COOPER: We essentially play live in the studio, I’ve always liked the band playing live, and Bob Ezrin does, too. I think that there was a misconception about the original Alice Cooper band. We played almost all of that stuff in the studio live; we were a good live band. Bob is a perfectionist, but he is not a perfectionist on the level of, “This has got to sound perfect.” He’s a perfectionist more on, “How does this feel? Does it feel right?” We always work that way.

GYASI: Since I spent the majority of my time with Bob Ezrin, I can say he’s a very smart guy, a producer’s producer. He’s multitalented. How many producers do you know that can also add backing vocals, keyboards and do arrangements. There’s nobody like him; he is a very smart cat!

GM: *I’ve gotta say that this blows away 50-some-odd years of what’s come before. Tell me about Robby Krieger. How did Robby Krieger end up on this album?*

BOB EZRIN: They’ve known each other forever. The Doors met and befriended them when they first moved to L.A. and were very kind to them, helping them out, which is one of the reasons why it was so great to have Robby on the record. We wished we could have had more, but he doesn’t travel anymore by choice.

ALICE COOPER: The only guitar player that could play on this was Robby Krieger. As far as I was concerned, it had that slinky Doors kinda *Strange Days*

sound to it. So, he was the perfect guy to play. And it kind of came full circle. We knew The Doors, we opened for The Doors for a while; they were friends of ours.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Robby has been a friend since we did three shows with The Doors back in '68. We hung out backstage and became friends in the L.A. days. We've all known Robby all these years, and I would go see him when he would play in New York City, go backstage and hang out. For this particular song, "Black Mamba," we wanted to get this creepy, slinky thing, and the name Robby Krieger came up. We all said, "Yeah, that's the guy!" I get chills up my spine when his guitar part comes in.

GM: *What about the new guitarist, Gyasi? A guitarist who really looks the part, and sounds it, too. How did you connect?*

NEAL SMITH: Well, Dennis and I went to Nashville to record the Yardbirds song "I Ain't Done Wrong." There was a technical screw up on the drums for the song "Intergalactic Vagabond Blues." And so, we had to rerecord the drums on that, and we rerecorded it together. Bob found this guy through friends that he knew. I think he asked like two or three people, "Who's the upcoming guitar player in Nashville?" And they kept mentioning Gyasi's name. I was a little skeptical when he came in, that this guy was gonna come in because we needed somebody to play rhythm on it. It turned out that he's a huge Yardbirds fan, which is kind of cool.

BOB EZRIN: One of the things that we were all conscious of was the empty stool. The spirit of Glen hung over the entire project in a very lovely way, but we needed to fill that empty stool. We needed someone in that role of the psychedelic, unpredictable, slightly dangerous guitar player. We had talked about Robby, but we weren't going to be making the record

in Los Angeles, so that that wasn't an option. We kicked around a bunch of ideas of people that we knew, and we all came up blank. I had an idea to call Mike Grimes from Grimey's Records in Nashville, which is the big vinyl store that has a club in the basement. I called and just said, "Mike, you must have seen someone in the last little while, with all the bands going through there. You must have seen someone that made you think, *God, that guy reminds me of Glen Buxton*." In about 30 seconds,

he said, "As a matter of fact, I have. His name is Gyasi. He's kind of glam, he's kind of psychedelic, but he's also got all kinds of other chops, you should check him out." The first time I saw a picture of him on Instagram, I thought, if he plays anything like he looks, that's our guy; he had that whole glam meets the dangerous side of glam. He would've fit right in with us in 1971. I reached out to

him, and he sent me some music, and I thought, "We may have found our guy!"

He came in later in the project. He's an exceptionally good guitar player, and he became our secret weapon on the record. He occupied that stool, and he did a really good job of it.

NEAL SMITH: He ended up fitting right in. When I heard him play the lead on "I Ain't Done Wrong," I said, "Wow, this is great!" He nailed Jeff Beck's parts and did some really cool stuff. That's about the only cover song that I would've ever agreed to do, because I love The Yardbirds' first album, and that was one of the highlights, even more than "I'm a Man." I love that song. But Gyasi did a great job. And then he went in the studio with Bob and recorded some more leads on the album.

BOB EZRIN: The Alice Cooper group were basically a Yardbirds cover band to start with. And in fact, they opened for The Yardbirds once in Phoenix, and all they played were Yardbird songs (laughs). I don't think The Yardbirds were that happy. You know, they played all their material before they had a chance to play it themselves.



Dennis Dunaway



Michael Bruce

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Neal and I were a little bit skeptical, but then when we got in the studio and laid down the track, we thought, “Oh, OK, yeah, this is good.” But then that night, Neal and I went to Gyasi’s show in Nashville and saw him perform live, and then we said, “Oh, this is the guy!” He’s super cool. But it was Bob Ezrin that had asked around Nashville. Bob brought him in just so we could see what the chemistry was and see if there was anything there. And that day, with the chemistry, his playing ability, and then seeing him perform, Neal and I were on board.

MICHAEL BRUCE: I have not seen him, but he certainly sounds the part. I love the different styles that he plays; he’s a great player. I loved it.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: I do want to emphasize the different styles he’s capable of. When we went to see Gyasi play in Nashville, he opened the show with just him playing Delta blues, first on a Dobro guitar, and even a cigar-box guitar. It was very authentic and very impressive. But then he goes in the back room, and then comes back out, all glammed out and it’s like a different person. We have a song on the album called “What a Syd,” which is for Glen, and it’s got this jazzy kind of thing, kind of a “Blue Turk” kind of a thing. And Gyasi plays these very jazzy lead guitar parts on it. And I thought, *Oh, wow, that seems a little way out of his wheelhouse.* But he is also a big fan of Django Reinhardt.

GYASI: When I got the call for this, I started watching the documentaries and

diving in. I started by listening to those early records and getting a picture of the theatricality of the band. They were so groundbreaking; the whole story is just fascinating.

ALICE COOPER: I pick all the best players, and they’re all best friends. So there’s never any conflict. There’s never any egos. And every single night, our attitude is, “Kill this audience!” And we do.

GM: *Were there any preconditions before you entered the studio? Did you have to leave any drink or drugs at the door?*

ALICE COOPER: Not a bit. I know everybody was straight; we’ve all gone past all that. I made it a big deal in the past, only because hopefully it would influence other kids that maybe had thought that they had to get high to be creative. I made it a very big deal to let them know that I was sober for 42 years now. Dennis might have had some champagne, Neal might have had a beer once in a while, but it certainly wasn’t like the old days, like back in the ’70s when everybody was on a different drug and it was even hard to tune up. But that was just the ’70s. So no, there were no preconditions about anything.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: I didn’t; it was, “show up and start recording,” which surprised me. I thought we were going to decide what songs we wanted to do and whip them into shape. But no, we just started recording, and there wasn’t any *leave your egos at the door* or anything, because we all revert to the high school kids at the back of the class, and it was a blast. We had so much fun. Even though when we work, everybody’s focused on the job at hand, but we also joke around a lot.

NEAL SMITH: I also want to just add that I think that everything that’s been — even when we first went in the studio with Frank Zappa for *Pretties for You* — we had all been in studios recording before. This is not our first rodeo by any stretch of imagination. We are all seasoned professionals. We’ve had gold, platinum, double platinum, triple platinum albums. So being in the studio is one of the most fun things that we can do, other than performing live onstage and writing music. So, to go in the studio and do what we do, if I have any beers, it’s after the recording session. We go in as professionals to do our job, we take it seriously, but at

the same time try to have as much fun as possible. But that's just part of our DNA, that's just who we are. Whenever we get together, we always have a great time. We lived under the same roof for seven years. You can't live under the same roof for seven years if you don't like the people that are around you.

GYASI: For me, it was just a case of trying to fit in and be on the same page musically. I wanted to make it exciting for the listener. These guys have been together since they were teenagers, so you have to just communicate musically.

GM: *As far as Frank Zappa goes, I imagine that must have been a slog, because I've heard he was just an absolute perfectionist in the studio. He didn't tolerate any mistakes.*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Not on our album. (laughs)

NEAL SMITH: Yeah, he gave us pretty much free rein on the record.

MICHAEL BRUCE: He let me make a mistake, I think it was on the song, "Beautiful Flyaway." I made a small mistake, and I wanted to do it over. And he let me, I guess maybe because he was shocked that I asked.

GM: *So, what were the parting words when you had this all wrapped up and you left the studio?*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: For me, it was such a whirlwind. We went in and we had like 70 songs to pick from. We laid down song after song and just barreled right through. The day after we split, I was sitting at home thinking [that] I couldn't even name all of the songs that we recorded, it happened so fast. It was quite an experience; you could hardly believe that it had happened. It was kind of like a storm came through town, and the next day everything was back to normal.

NEAL SMITH: Dennis still can't remember the songs that were on the album.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: (Laughs)

MICHAEL BRUCE: I had a little bit of a struggle because I was flying from Arizona. I could only bring my guitar. But John [Montagnese] at the studio had a lot of nice old vintage stuff. Unfortunately, a lot of it was just a little too fuzzy because we had to upgrade it. It's been a great deal of money to do that. So, my challenge when I got back, I had to redo my parts, and I was

fortunate to work with Clarke Rigsby. He's worked with a lot of people on the West Coast. That was my first flight after COVID and having a bad knee. It was a little daunting for me. I struggled, but we rallied together and made it happen.

GYASI: I feel like there was at least talk of doing a few special shows in sort of the landmark cities. So that's all I can tell you.

ALICE COOPER: There were overdubs that had to be done, there were things like that. Everybody was very just kind of saying, "Bob, do what you have to do." We might need a guitar here; we might need a harmonica on that. We might need this on this. It was mostly just tweaking, but all the bed tracks were done, all the bed tracks were laid out. And when Bob Ezrin is OK with the bed tracks, that's a feat in itself. (laughs)

GM: *The band dynamic very much comes out on this album. You guys sound 25 years old again on this album. A lot of bands that are your age, and I'm not gonna name any bands, put out an album, get mad props for just showing up at their age, and the album is quickly forgotten. The fans inevitably compare it to what they did in 1972 or 1960-something, and it never stands up. This is the first album that I've listened to it in a very long time that does that. It stands up to anything that you guys did in your heyday. What gives?*

ALICE COOPER: Normally, a lead singer that breaks away from a band, he doesn't do so well. Even Mick Jagger didn't do well when he broke away from the band and did his own albums. We never really broke up. There were no lawyers, no letters, nothing. In fact, on one of the albums, the original band did "I Hate You." Each one of us picked one of the other guys, and we said all the things we hated about that person, and we couldn't stop laughing, you know? It's not like that with British bands. British bands, when they break up, they take it personally. They won't talk to each other. They never wanna be in the same room with each other. And then you ask them why, and they say, "Well, his bottle of wine was more expensive than mine." I don't think American bands think like that. In fact, we did a press conference and somebody said, we were "doing one of these one-off albums," and I went, *Whoa, whoa, whoa!*

"What makes you think it's a one-off album? If this album does as well as I think it will, and the band wants to do it, I'll certainly do another album with 'em."

NEAL SMITH: One of the biggest challenges was being in my mid-seventies when we recorded this album, especially Dennis' song, "Wild Ones." When I was 18, it would be freaking hard to play that song. I don't know where I came up with it, but we got it. And when we started laying it down, because it's a great rhythm section between Dennis and I. It came out great! We've played this song over the years; that's one of the more vintage songs that we've been trying to get on one of the albums. We had a tempo for it, but Bob Ezrin wanted it even faster. I'm sitting there trying to play my ass off on a song that I know very, very well, and he upped it. So, sometimes I would need to take maybe five or 10 minutes between takes to get the energy back up again to recuperate. (laughs) Yeah, I had to recuperate, as Dennis has said. But it had to be done. We never look at it as an obstacle, it just had to be done. I think that's the one thing that I bring to a song, energy. And I agree with you, most bands, and not to name any, they put albums together just to put albums together for their fans or whatever. I wanted it this to mean something like it would be an album that has its place in rock and roll history, and that it has everything that we ever had. In the end, that wasn't even a challenge. It has a lot of great feel to it and a lot of swing.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Concerning tempos, when I would sit in with — and I'm sure this happens to the other guys as well — when you have other musicians sit in and play "I'm Eighteen," "Schools Out" or "Under My Wheels," they always tend to play the songs faster than we recorded them. It's just that we locked into a groove that made the song sound strong. The fastest speed wasn't necessarily the proper speed.

GYASI: I was just talking to Bob about this the other day. He informed me that he had been working with Deep Purple, the "original" lineup, and he had placed a younger guitar player into the group, which kind of revitalized them. So, he was hoping for the same thing with me, even though I don't think they needed revitalizing.

GM: *Let's go through some of the other tracks. Track two, "Wild Ones."*

GYASI: Another track that really stood out for me.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Pedal to the metal, man! When Neal would say he needed to take a break, I didn't say anything, but I needed to take a break, too. (Laughs)

GM: *I guess that's the beauty of having today's technology combined with your classic sound on this album.*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: One of the things, speaking about the drums, that I love, compared to the *Love It to Death* and *Killer* era back then, because of technology, there was a tendency for the drums to be a bit buried by my bass back then, but not on this album. On this album, you can hear the drums well, and that makes it extra strong.

GM: *I remember speaking to Bob Ezrin in 2018, talking about putting the drums in a men's room to get those effects. Now you can just dial that up.*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: That was "Halo of Flies." (Laughs)

NEAL SMITH: Yeah, the drum solo in "Halo of Flies" was actually in the girls' bathroom at RCA studios in Chicago when we were recording the *Killer* album. I know because I had a Kotex machine right next to my head when we were recording it.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: We had to take all the drums downstairs to this restroom downstairs in this corporate building. The night watchmen had no clue what was going on. I just remember being in the control room listening to the talk-back for Neal. He's in the bathroom downstairs and he says, "Oh, this is great. I can also take a leak whenever I want!" (Laughs)

GM: *There's a lot of great guitar work on this album, and Michael, you've been kind of quiet.*

MICHAEL BRUCE: Well, like I said, I had a rough time during the recording. I didn't have COVID, but I'd just gotten over it, and I had a septic knee, so it was a rough little ride. I really kept it to the basics. I had to really stay with the group; I couldn't go out too far musically. I was never really a lead guitar player, but I played a few riffs in there, so they

blend in well on the tunes. I was very happy with the sound. Listen, what I did was no Jimi Hendrix on the national anthem or anything, but because Gyasi was such a great guitarist, I didn't want to get that clouded or muddled up. I wanted to keep it nice and simple; a lot of times it's what you don't play as well as what you do play.

NEAL SMITH: Michael is a little humble about what he does with this band.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: I think that's one thing that's very different from the old days. Michael has always had a very special guitar tone that, even when he's got distortion on it, it tends to always cut through everything.

GM: *For decades, the Alice Cooper concerts have been very much about the theatrics. Do you think that this album is strong enough that you could go out and tour on it, and dispense with all the theatrics? Do you think we'll see that?*

NEAL SMITH: I think everything's hypothetical at this point. We haven't really talked about touring. I don't want to put the cart before the horse here, or the horse before the cart, whichever the freaking way that's supposed to be. But the songs do stand on their own. But no theatrics? That's not us. We have to add a little theatrics, even if it's subtle. And I can imagine that there's a lot of these songs that really lend themselves either to a video or a live stage show that would certainly add some theatrics to them. We can create that easily, but we're just excited about the album being released and all the promotion that's going along with it. earMusic is doing an amazing job, and I think we would be as excited if there would be a sequel to it. As opposed to possibly a full-scale tour; probably unlikely. Maybe some targeted cities somewhere in the United States, Canada or maybe Europe. But don't really foresee a full-scale tour. But the, the songs are great, and I hope the people just dig what we've put on this album.

GM: *I couldn't agree more!*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Neal had mentioned the thing that we did for a book event in Dallas in 2015. They filmed that, but it wasn't supposed to be a film, and it wasn't supposed to be a record, but everything came out so well that that's what

happened. You can see in that film that we could carry it without theatrics. But like Neal says, that's not what we do. We like theatrics, and we like adding things. And as far as anything happening for us live, all it takes is a phone call. We're ready to go, right Alice?

GYASI: We have never actually all played together live, so I think that will be the real moment where it will all come together, but no one really knows what that is going to look like.

ALICE COOPER: I don't even know if we would even want to do that, because when you look at a tour now, and it's a hundred cities, I'm in shape for that. I don't know how physically in shape everybody is for that. I could see doing one-off shows, like Detroit, London, Toronto ... you know, the cities that we were sort of really huge in. I could see doing some kind of a thing like we did at The Turf, or at a big record store, surprise shows and things like that. That would be very easy to do.

GM: *Nice to hear you name Toronto as one of the important markets. I was born and grew up there.*

ALICE COOPER: I'll tell you what Toronto is, being from Detroit, and the band did break out of Detroit because of CKLW. We owe a lot to Canadian radio for helping Alice Cooper break.

GM: *I'll tell you what Alice Cooper was to Toronto back then. I grew up next to the biggest Air Force base in Canada, and they had their own movie theater; it was only for the military families who lived on base. Word got out that they were going to screen the Welcome To My Nightmare film, so a group of us decided to breach the perimeter to get in. We could have been shot or killed.*

ALICE COOPER: (Laughs) Wow, you really are dedicated!

GM: *Back to the songs. what about the track "Kill the Flies."*

ALICE COOPER: "Kill the Flies," that was Neal, that's almost part two of "Ballad of Dwight Fry." You know, it's almost that same character that's in an insane asylum, and now his worst enemies are the flies. He can deal with anything except these flies.

GM: *"Up All Night." I picked up the word*

motorvating in it. Was this a little nod to Chuck Berry?

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Probably, because Alice has always cited Chuck Berry's lyrics. It's also a tip of the hat to Glen, because we all love the Bowery Boys, and the Mugsy character always mixed up words like that, but probably Chuck Berry.

GM: *I wondered why the title wasn't "Keep It Up All Night." Because when you see the song title, you think he is up all night, but then when you listen, it's something totally different.*

NEAL SMITH: That's too, too blunt, we like to be a little more subtle. Is there a hidden meaning? I know it's not very hidden (laughs).

DENNIS DUNAWAY: It's not hidden at all.

NEAL SMITH: In that essence, Alice is doing his thing with some tricky songwriting lyrics and that's cool. That's not a problem. The music for this song was written by Michael, and I think that again, it's a powerful song. It came out great and every song just developed as the album went along. This was one of the better ones, too. They're all great.

ALICE COOPER: "Up All Night" was just one of those total teen, rock and roll songs. It was absolutely dyed-in-the-wool '70s, teenage male bravado. We kind of thought that was a very funny song, us all being *in* our seventies. I learned to write lyrics listening to Chuck Berry, because Chuck Berry could tell a story in three minutes, and make it funny or make it heartbreaking, as in "Memphis, Tennessee." He could do that in three minutes. And so, I learned how to write a song, sometimes backwards, write the punch line first, and then write it backwards. I always loved the way that Chuck Berry syncopated everything, and if he couldn't think of a word, he'd make one up, like "Don't give me no botheration."

GM: *"Blood on the Sun." This sounds like it was a workout. It's very drum centric with a few tempo changes, and it sounds like it must have killed the band, especially Neal. How do you all manage to keep up a tempo like that?*

NEAL SMITH: Well, it's another song that Dennis and I have been

working on over the last couple decades. And it's a great theatrical piece. It's almost like a new rendition or inspired from "Halo of Flies." But you're right on, with the tempos speeding up and slowing down, that's a very difficult thing to do. But like Bob Ezrin said, the whole group moves together like a school of fish or a flock of birds moving at the same time, slowing down and speeding up, and it's highly unusual to have it that accurate.

ALICE COOPER: Dennis wrote it, and if you listen to it and start picking it apart, it's all movie titles. Every single line in that song is a movie title. In terms of the tempo, I'm physically in great shape; it's not hard for the vocals to have that tempo. Basically, the

adrenaline is what is what you're living on.

BOB EZRIN: That song was Dennis's song; it was already written. I think Alice and I changed one line, to tie it all together.

DENNIS DUNAWAY:

It's about putting words together that make you imagine things, but it's not necessarily about anything, it's open to your own interpretation. Glen Buxton kept *TV Guides*, and back in the days when you got a booklet that told you what was on television that week, Glen always had all of his *TV Guides* that he had collected all in chronological order on the floor of his bedroom, to the point where you had to be careful walking through the room so you wouldn't knock a stack of them over. But, so in that spirit, I got a *TV Guide*, and I went through it, and I picked out titles of movies that were going to be on television. I just wrote down all the most interesting ones, and then I went through and chose ones that went together. The entire song is movie titles.

GYASI: This was a song that I really loved playing; it's a really cool song.



Neal Smith



Michael Bruce on guitar
and Neal Smith on drums



IN THE STUDIO

(l to r) Michael Bruce, Neal Smith, Alice Cooper, Dennis Dunaway and Bob Ezrin



Michael Bruce

Alice Cooper with producer Bob Ezrin



Dennis Dunaway and Alice Cooper



GM: “Crap That Gets in the Way of Your Dreams.” My first reaction to this is, “Who’s the Kinks fan?” You can practically hum “You Really Got Me” over the top of it.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Yeah, definitely.

NEAL SMITH: Well, all of us are huge Kinks fans.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: We all are huge Kinks fans!

NEAL SMITH: In 2016, that was one of the first that Michael, Alice and I worked on. This was one that Alice brought to the table. It’s pretty self-explanatory lyrically, and along with the guitar playing, you could certainly hear our ’60s roots.

ALICE COOPER: We started writing that song probably, oh ... 10 years ago. I remember writing that one. That’s how long ago we were still writing with each other.

GM: “Famous Face” and “Money Screams.” These seem like A- and B-sides to the same thing. It seems like they’re a cautionary tale about the pitfalls of fame. What is it about?

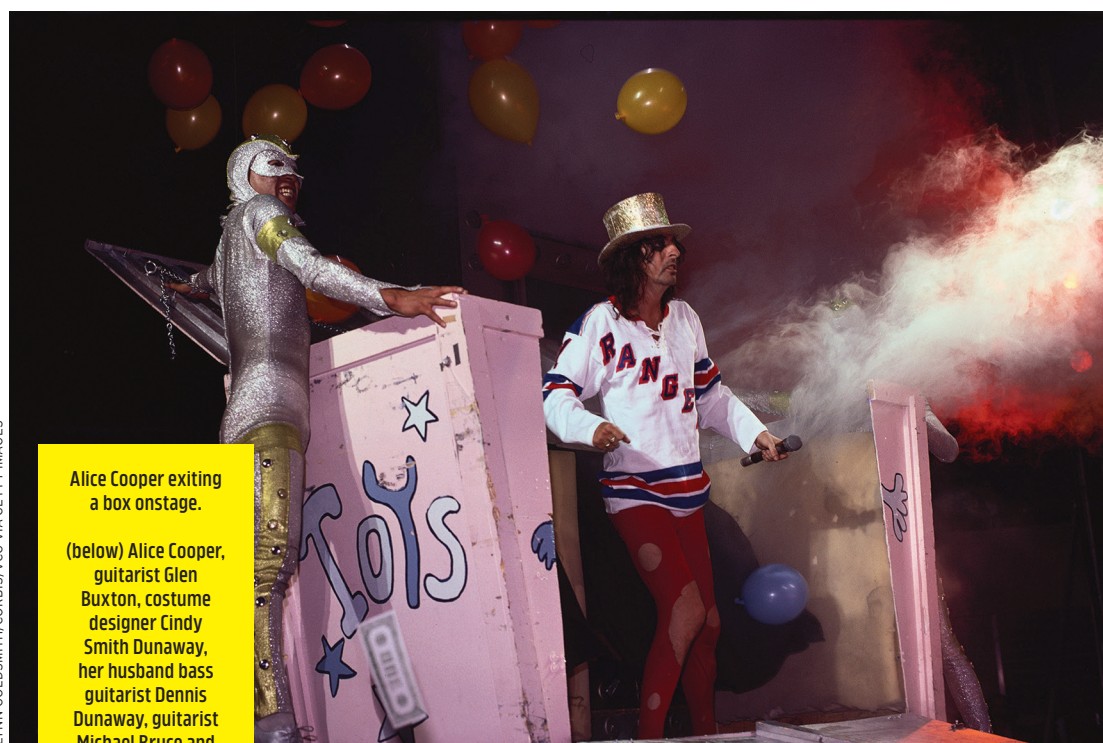
NEAL SMITH: Well, “Famous Face” is Michael’s. Let him talk about it.

MICHAEL BRUCE: Well, that was about celebrity and using that celebrity to be on television and promote whatnot. During COVID, everybody was promoting everybody and everything. It’s in the spirit of John Lennon, sort of a cutting satire about the state of affairs of celebrity endorsements. There was one line in there, particularly semi-directed to Alice, when he was doing one of his car ads. I said, “I wish you’d get off my TV with your car ads. There are enough car ads on TV, Alice. You don’t need to do those!” Of course, it was all in fun; it is a different kind of a piece. The guys said, “Go ahead and sing it.” Bob encouraged me to sing it, so I did. Alice came right on board with it and sang some nice background stuff.

BOB EZRIN: Mike brought that in pretty much complete. We didn’t have to change anything. Mike did that. It’s his. He wrote it and sang lead on it, which is a bit of a departure for the way that we used to work. It was always Alice singing lead, but this just felt right, we just needed to play it together.

ALICE COOPER: “Money Screams” was another one we started writing 10 or 12 years ago at my house. Mike brought “Famous Face” into the thing, Mike has always been really good at writing hits. He is sort of our Beatle influence. He

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VEG VIA GETTY IMAGES



Alice Cooper exiting a box onstage.

(below) Alice Cooper, guitarist Glen Buxton, costume designer Cindy Smith Dunaway, her husband bass guitarist Dennis Dunaway, guitarist Michael Bruce and drummer Neal Smith at The Fifth Avenue Hotel. The band were relaxing between their early and late shows at the Academy of Music in New York City.

LEONARD M. DELESSIO/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES



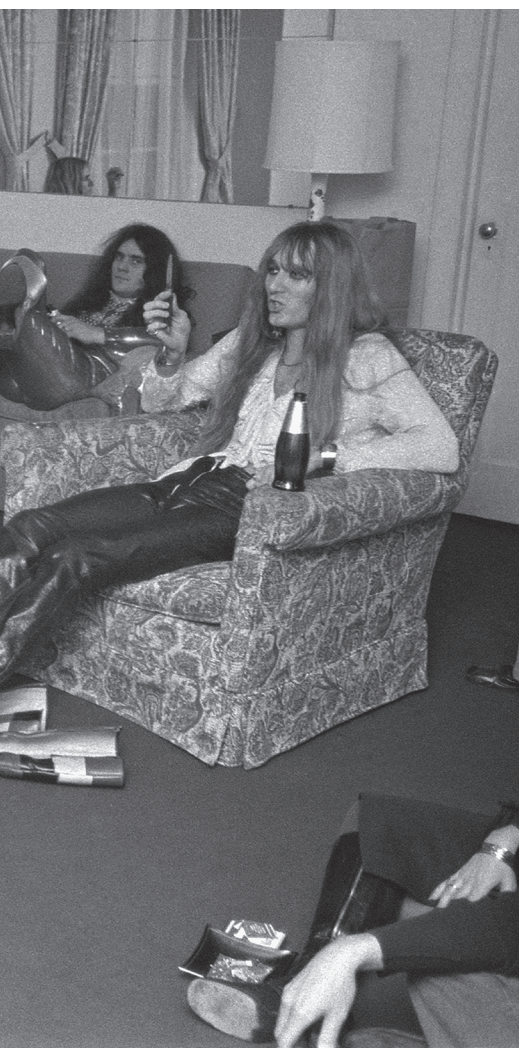


TV TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

(top) Alice Cooper dressed in a vampire costume on the set of *The Muppet Show* at Elstree Studios, Hertfordshire, circa 1978.

(right) Alice Cooper posing in his hotel room, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1972.

(bottom) Cooper performs onstage in New York in 1975.



GUSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS



RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS



"The Return Album The World Was Afraid Of"

Album Tracklist

- 1-Black Mamba (feat. Robby Krieger)
- 2-Wild Ones
- 3-Up All Night
- 4-Kill the Flies
- 5-One Night Stand
- 6-Blood on the Sun
- 7-Crap That Gets in the Way of Your Dreams
- 8-Famous Face
- 9-Money Screams
- 10-What a Syd
- 11-Intergalactic Vagabond Blues
- 12-What Happened to You
- 13-I Ain't Done Wrong (Yardbirds cover)
- 14-See You on the Other Side
- 15-Return of the Spiders (bonus track)
- 16-Titanic Overunderture (bonus track)

wrote some songs that were very powerful, like “Be My Lover,” “No More Mr. Nice Guy.” Songs that were simple and yet powerful. As much as we loved The Beatles, we were never going to be that three- or four-part harmony band. We were gonna be much more of the two-part harmony band, much more Yardbirds or The Who.

GM: *“What a Syd.” This sounds like the Alice Cooper group meets The Stray Cats. It’s got a bit of a vamp in it, and it’s mentioning a bag of weed and long blonde hair. I figured Dennis must have written this one.*

NEAL SMITH: Dennis wrote the music for that song, and then Alice did a great job with the lyrics on it as a tribute to Glen.

GM: *I’m a little bit surprised that you left those kinds of lyrics in Alice, given your sobriety. But then again, I guess this is the old band. This is how it was.*

MICHAEL BRUCE: Blame it on us.

NEAL SMITH: You have to remember something: When Alice is with us, he gets away with a lot more than he would normally do solo. And we can take a lot of brunt for that because I don’t really give a crap what anybody thinks about what our songwriting is. We love it, and Alice has never been better at his lyrics. It gives him a freedom that I think he just feels. Even my drumming is different when I play with Michael and Dennis. I think everybody just has a freedom as a group, as we did with the original band for seven albums. Listen to those albums; there were no restraints or anything. It was just all hell breaking loose, doing whatever we wanted to do. Free-form art for those seven albums, even the first two, *Pretties for You* and *Easy Action* with Frank Zappa. Being creative and just imagination was what it was all about and creating a whole new genre of music.

BOB EZRIN: “What a Syd” is a phrase that Glen used to use when he was basically saying, “What a doofus, what a dork.” But in Glen’s very Bowery Boysesque language, that person was a “Syd.” When we did this song, we channeled Glen in every way. Whenever we were thinking about Glen, we were reminiscing, but with humor, there was always an element of humor with Glen.

ALICE COOPER: When we lost Glen, I think we lost a big personality in the band. Glen was sort of our Keith Richards. Glen was sort of a character that everybody had their own relationship with and loved that relationship. When we saw Glen kind of falling apart, there was no way that he was ever going to get fired out of the band. We just kept working around him, you know? So that’s why this album is dedicated to him, because we just all respected him so much. He was like our own Syd Barrett. The other thing that the title refers to is when there was somebody that Glen thought was a jerk, he’d go, “What a Syd.” In other words, anybody named Sydney was a jerk to him, except Syd Barrett, who he loved to sit and play echoplexes back and forth with.

GM: *“What Happened to You.” That was the track that had Glen Buxton on it. Dennis, you had a tape with a Glen Buxton track on it, right?*

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Yeah, I had a cassette tape of Glen and I from 1973, and it was just a late-night jam. It was just me and Glen. He had this exciting riff, and we just kept playing it over and over trying to see if we could take it somewhere. I told Bob Ezrin that I had this. I had just had the tape restored because it had disintegrated somewhat, but it did have quite a bit of Glen playing this riff. I asked Bob, “Can we use this?” He said, “Oh yeah, let’s use it.” The song is written around that, and it feels a lot like the kind of stuff that Glen would’ve done back in the early days, when he was the main musician in the band. That’s actually from before Michael joined the band.

BOB EZRIN: You can hear all of us reacting to the tape of Glen doing that riff. I made a loop out of it, and I added some rhythm to it, and then we all started thinking about what it should become. It just came out of us.

ALICE COOPER: We did get Glen on the album, because Dennis never threw anything away. Dennis had all of these tapes, going all the way back to The Spiders and The Nazz. There were a lot of guitar parts that Glen had played on that we isolated. We brought those guitar parts out and made sure that they fit into another song where we could use that guitar solo.

GYASI: That one really stood out for me, although I can’t really remember every-

thing because it all happened so fast. I don’t even have a copy of the finished album yet, but this song really did stand out for me.

GM: *“See You on the Other Side.”*

NEAL SMITH: That was a song that I began writing right after Glen died in 1997. He was the first guy in the band that I became really close with. Dennis, Glen, Alice and I all went to Glendale Community College in Arizona. Professionally, we knew who each other was, but we never really met. And so, when Glen and I started talking, I found out he was from Akron, and that helped us form an immediate bond. We were both ex-greasers from Akron, Ohio, that liked to carry switchblades and play rock and roll; we bonded pretty tight. Losing Glen was like losing a brother, as I’m sure everybody in the band felt. When he passed, I was on the golf course, and I got a call from Alice telling me that Glen had passed away. I immediately went down to my studio and started running the beginning of this song. Then Dennis got a hold of it and started working on it, too. By the time we did a version of it at one of the Glen Buxton memorial weekends at the Whisky in Los Angeles, Dennis and I, and Joe Bouchard, had a band called Bouchard, Dunaway and Smith, and we had played the song there. Dennis does a great rendition of it, and Bob has done an amazing job with it. I’ve never been prouder to play on a song in my life. The drums are freaking killer. The melodies, the background singing, all the work that these guys did, I’m getting chills thinking about it. This is kind of like the volcano finally exploding.

GM: *So that was the track that stood out for you?*

NEAL SMITH: It’s a killer rock ballad. That’s about all I can say about it.

ALICE COOPER: Since this album is dedicated to Glen, and this song was so much about him, it very much stood out for me. The whole album was kind of a tribute to Glen.

BOB EZRIN: It’s very heartfelt and it’s about Glen, knowing that he’s there and that one day we’ll join him. It’s a very emotional song. It’s lush and has very big vocals.

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Yeah, it’s got a lot

ALICE COOPER SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Current market value for records in Near Mint condition

of emotion. Neal came up with the song and the concept, and then I helped. You can tell that I helped because there's a key modulation in the song, which I didn't totally realize fully until I was singing the background vocals, which were at the peak of my range. And then there's a key change. And then I had to sing even higher (laughs), and that was not easy.

GM: Did anyone else do any backing vocals?

DENNIS DUNAWAY: I think Bob Ezrin, and maybe Alice?

NEAL SMITH: Yeah, I think Alice sang on it. I wasn't in the studio when the backing vocals were added to the song.

ALICE COOPER: Yes, I did some of the backing vocals on that, which is kinda funny.

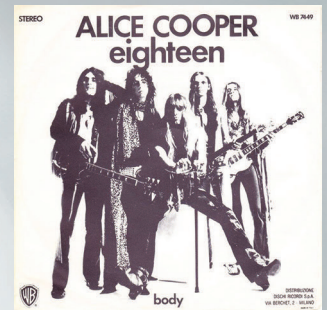
GM: "Return of the Spiders" must have been all of you going back to your roots, right?

DENNIS DUNAWAY: Before Neal was in the band, he was in a surf band, and their big song was "Wipeout," which Neal killed. When Neal first got into our band, the first thing we wanted to do is play "Wipeout," because Glen had a twin reverb so he could kick it and get that crackly sound that's on the beginning of The Safaris' version. I thought, "Neal, this is great, we've got to incorporate this into a song." So, that "Wipeout" drumbeat ended up on the recorded version of that song, but with a different drum groove entirely. I even forgot we ever did it.

NEAL SMITH: Yeah, I forgot that we did it also. But the other thing that's interesting about this version of it is that there's hints of the beginning of "School's Out" with Glen playing the guitar riffs through this version of the song.

GM: Thank you guys so much. I love the album, and I can't wait to see what happens when it drops. We love it here at Goldmine!

ALICE COOPER: Well, thank you. I called the guys up and I said, "Guys, we're number one in presales in America, England and Europe." And they said, "What does that mean?" I said, "I don't know. I'm used to selling records." The album doesn't come out until the end of July, and we're already number one in presales this many months out. I think people will love it, although we didn't really know at the time whether people are gonna love it or not. ●



Albums

ACCORD

■ SN 7162 Toronto Rock 'n' Roll Revival 1969, 1981, \$30.00

STRAIGHT

- STS 1051 Pretties for You, 1969, \$200.00 —Yellow label stock copy
- STS 1051 Pretties for You, 1969, \$300.00 —White label promo
- WS 1840 Pretties for You, 1970, \$150.00 —Pink label stock copy
- WS 1845 Easy Action, 1970, \$60.00 —Pink label stock copy; "Alice Cooper" in white on cover
- WS 1845 Easy Action, 1970, \$60.00 —Pink label stock copy; "Alice Cooper" in black on cover
- WS 1845 Easy Action, 1970, \$300.00 —White label promo
- WS 1883 Love It to Death, 1971, \$100.00 —Pink label stock copy
- WS 1883 Love It to Death, 1971, \$350.00 —White label promo
- WS 1840 Pretties for You, 1971, \$50.00 —Green label; comes in "Straight" cover
- WS 1883 Love It to Death 1971, \$75.00 —Version 2: Green "WB" label; same as above, but has a white box reading "Contains the Hit 'I'm Eighteen'"
- WS 1883 Love It to Death, 1971, \$150.00 —Version 1: Green "WB" label; cover has Alice's thumb sticking out
- WS 1840 Pretties for You, 1973 \$35.00 —Burbank palm trees label; comes in Straight cover
- WS 1883 Love It to Death, 1971, \$40.00 —Version 4: Green "WB" label; with "I'm Eighteen" box and Alice's protruding thumb airbrushed off the cover
- WS 1883 Love It to Death, 1971 \$35.00 —Version 3: Green "WB" label; cover has large white areas at top and bottom with lower half of the photo cropped out

WARNER BROS.

- BS 2567 Killer, 1971, \$150.00 —Early copies have an attached 1972 calendar/poster
- BS 2567 Killer, 1972, \$80.00 —Later copies no longer have the calendar/poster

- BS 2623 School's Out, 1972, \$50.00 —No panties, with song titles listed
- BS 2623 School's Out 1972 \$35.00 —Back cover does not list song titles, but panties are missing
- BS 2623 School's Out, 1972, \$200.00 —With paper panties intact; back cover lists song titles
- BS 2623 School's Out, 1972, \$250.00 —With paper panties intact; back cover does not list song titles
- BS 2685 Billion Dollar Babies, 1973, \$60.00 —Green "WB" label
- BS 2748 Muscle of Love, 1973, \$35.00
- BS4 2685 Billion Dollar Babies, 1974, \$150.00 (quadraphonic)
- BS4 2748 Muscle of Love, 1974, \$125.00 (quad)
- W 2803 Alice Cooper's Greatest Hits, 1974, \$25.00

Singles

WARNER BROS.

- 7398 Shoe Salesman/Return of the Spiders, 1970, \$80.00
- 7449 Eighteen/Body, 1971, \$35.00
- 7490 Caught in a Dream/Hallowed Be My Name, 1971, \$35.00
- 7529 Under My Wheels/Desperado, 1971, \$30.00
- 7568 Be My Lover/Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, 1972, \$30.00
- 7596 School's Out/Gutter Cat, 1972, \$40.00
- 7631 Elected/Luney Tune, 1972, \$40.00
- 7673 Hello Hurray/Generation Landslide, 1972, \$25.00
- 7691 No More Mr. Nice Guy/Raped and Freezin', 1973, \$40.00
- 7724 Billion Dollar Babies/Mary Ann, 1973, \$25.00
- 7762 Teenage Lament '74/Hard Hearted Alice, 1973, \$25.00
- 7783 Muscle of Love/Crazy Little Child, 1974, \$25.00
- 8023 I'm Eighteen/Muscle of Love, 1974, \$15.00 —Warner Bros.
- GWB 7141 Eighteen/Caught in a Dream, 1972, \$10.00 —"Back to Back Hits" series; green label
- GWB 7141 Eighteen/Caught in a Dream, 1973, \$10.00 —"Back to Back Hits" series; Burbank palm trees label
- S 2748 Muscle of Love, 1973, \$125.00 —Part of "Little LP" series (LLP #235)
- S 2748 Working Up a Sweat/Never Been Sold Before//Muscle of Love/Teenage Lament, 1973, \$125.00 —Jukebox issue; small hole, plays at 33 1/3 rpm