

THE BEST OF ENEMIES

The idea that people playing in bands together hate each other's guts is as old as the hills. The difference with **Dokken** guitarist **George Lynch** and the band's singer **Don Dokken** was that they didn't care who knew it. *Paul Elliott* talks to both musos about a lifelong mistrust and how their volatile relationship still managed to yield 20 million album sales!

FOR ONE OF THE great rock bands of the '80s there was always a problem. No matter how high they flew, selling millions of albums and playing on the world's biggest stages, there was undeniably something rotten at the core of Dokken, a bitter feud between the singer who gave the band its name, and the guitar hero who never liked the vocalist in the first place and grew to dislike him even more as fame, money, ego and drugs took hold.

Don Dokken and George Lynch made some great music together. In a decade when fellow LA bands such as Mötley Crüe and RATT were at their commercial peak, Dokken delivered some of the best albums of the era in 'Breaking The Chains', 'Tooth And Nail', 'Under Lock And Key', 'Back For The Attack' and the double live set 'Beast From The East', all of which have been reissued by Rock Candy Records. But the friction between the singer and the guitarist was the band's undoing, and although there have been brief reunions over the years, the animosity between them still lingers to this day.

THE STORY begins with two very different personalities, shaped by difficult childhoods, coming together in the late '70s in the fabled Sunset Strip rock scene. Their early days in bands were a struggle. To get a record deal, Don had to go to Germany, and it was there, during the recording of the first Dokken album in 1981, that he ended up playing a role in the creation of the Scorpions'

classic album 'Blackout'. A year later, with Dokken's future not guaranteed, George auditioned for Ozzy Osbourne, but lost out to Jake E. Lee. It was another heartbreak for the guitarist whose earlier band, The Boyz, had been courted by Gene Simmons before Van Halen stole their thunder.

A change of fortune came when Cliff Burnstein, co-manager of Def Leppard, signed Dokken and got them a deal with major label Elektra. George's place in the group was finally secured because both Burnstein and Elektra wanted him as part of the package. But as the band's popularity soared, so the rivalry between Don and George escalated. Don realised he was in a sober-ish minority of one as George partied hard with drummer Mick Brown and bassist Jeff Pilson. In 1988, when Dokken opened for AC/DC on a UK tour, Don and George came to blows in a parking lot at Wembley Arena. And after Dokken's humiliation on that year's Monsters Of Rock stadium tour, when they were blown off stage time and again by the band that preceded them, Metallica, an acrimonious split soon followed.

DOKKEN REUNITED in the '90s, but the grunge-influenced 1997 album 'Shadowlife' was George's last studio recording with the band. Since then, Don has made five Dokken studio albums, backed by an ever-changing cast of musicians. In 2016, he and George

"DON WASN'T LIKE A NORMAL GUY YOU COULD TALK TO. IT WAS STRAINED AND WEIRD. HE HAD TO CONTROL THE CONVERSATION IN THE ROOM. ALL EYES HAD TO BE ON HIM. THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A LITTLE BULLSH*T GOING ON."
GEORGE LYNCH

Photo: IconicPix/PG Brunelli



The band photographed backstage at Wembley Arena, London, March 1988. But was this before or after the car park fist fight?