

Malcolm Dome was in Dallas back in 1991 when **Guns N' Roses** mania was at its absolute height. After jumping through more than a few hoops he was granted an audience with guitarist **Slash**, but the interview was never published. Now for the first time you can read it...

BACK IN 1991 THERE was no doubt which band's new recordings were the most anticipated worldwide. It was almost four years since LA's Guns N' Roses had changed the rock'n'roll landscape with the release of their debut album, 'Appetite For Destruction'. Emerging at a time when commercial hair metal dominated US radio and video channels, 'Appetite...' broke all the rules about what was acceptable in the business of rock. Its songs spoke of nasty sex, surviving on the streets and cavalier drug use, all delivered with a liberal sprinkling of unabashed cussing. In many ways it opened rock fans' eyes to the way that heavy music had been progressively sanitised and subordinated to the rules of what was acceptable to MTV. 'Appetite For Destruction' was as attitudinal as you could get, but it was also anchored by clever songwriting, insistent melodies and a deep knowledge of rock's varied heritage. And above all, it sounded like Bon Jovi had never existed.

GIVEN THEIR hard-earned status of 'The Most Dangerous Band In The World', the trajectory of Guns N' Roses was never going to be super smooth. Despite the band's spectacular success there were always stories of

heroin problems, internal fighting and stupid, needless rock star behaviour. Drummer Steven Adler was fired in July of 1990, supposedly because he couldn't keep his drug habit under control. His replacement, former Cult drummer Matt Sorum, came in to record a huge number of songs for what would eventually become a twin bonanza of 'Use Your Illusion I' and 'Use Your Illusion II', 30 songs released as two separate albums on the same day, 17 September 1991. Right until the last minute it seemed that even the band had no idea in what format these songs would be released. And even when it was finally decided that two separate albums was the way to go, problems with perfecting a mix that everyone in the band was happy with considerably delayed things. That meant Guns were forced to begin their world tour in support of the 'Illusion' project even before the music had been released.

THE TREK began at the 37,000 capacity Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy, Wisconsin on 24 May 1991. The lack of new product made no difference to the public's enormous enthusiasm for the band and American fans turned out in their droves to see Guns. But it didn't take long for more problems to arise. Guitarist Izzy Stradlin had given up his drug habits by this point and was struggling to keep his head straight when so many others were still losing theirs. Then on 2 July at a gig in Maryland Heights, Missouri, frontman W. Axl Rose got into a fight with a member of the audience and

walked off the stage mid-show. A riot ensued.

By the time I flew into the US to catch two Guns shows at the Starplex Amphitheatre in Dallas on 8 and 9 July, the feeling was that things were definitely starting to fray around the edges. The idea was that I'd interview Axl and guitarist Slash after watching the first show, but the performance was such a shambles that all interviews for that day were postponed. Axl had arrived at the venue hours after the rest of the band and was in such an agitated mood that by the time Guns went on stage - extremely late - he was clearly not in any mood to entertain. As a result, Guns were way below their best and were easily upstaged by openers Skid Row, who'd finished their set more than *two hours* before the headliners took to the stage.

After that performance Guns N' Roses locked themselves in their dressing room and heated words were exchanged. One member of the band's road crew told me that drummer Matt Sorum had even pinned Axl against the wall that night and had to be physically restrained from hitting him!

It was a somewhat novel way of holding what might be called 'clear the air' talks. But whatever went on in that dressing room, it seemed to have

the desired effect. On the second night in Dallas Guns were magnificent, delivering a breathtaking performance - and on time as well! My interviews with Axl and Slash had been rescheduled for later that night, but both band members declined to do them. Slash told me that we could speak the following morning at the band's plush Four Seasons hotel. The band's manager, Doug Goldstein, said that Axl would prefer to do an interview later in the year when the album was out. Unsurprisingly, that never happened.

ALL THE same, the following day, 10 July, at 10am I headed to room 407 of the hotel to meet up with Slash. When I entered his room he was reclining on his bed, bare-footed and wearing a black T-shirt and jeans. Inevitably the rock star shades were in place. Despite the roaring sunshine outside the curtains were firmly drawn and the light was on.

Slash was strumming an acoustic guitar, playing Bob Dylan's 'All Along The Watchtower'. He seemed calm and convivial. He carried on noodling away on the guitar throughout the interview, but it didn't feel like a distraction as Slash and I had what felt like a decent chat. I got the impression he was *trying* to be honest, while at the same time looking to avoid anything that might have upset the precariously balanced Guns N' Roses apple cart. Reading between the lines with the benefit of hindsight, though, it's pretty clear that all was not well in the G N'R camp in the summer of '91...

"NO OTHER BAND HAS EVER HAD SUCH A FAST RISE. ONE DAY WE'RE NOTHING AND THE NEXT WE'RE THE BAND EVERYBODY WANTS A PIECE OF. WHO ELSE HAS EVER DONE THAT? NOT EVEN ZEPPELIN."

SLASH

THE LOST INTERVIEW

Photo: Getty Images/Robert Knight Archive/Redferns

