



THE LAST KISS

Kiss have decided they're leaving the stage for good when their current 'End Of The Road World Tour' wraps up, bringing the curtain down on an incredible 50-year live career. So what better time for *Andrew Daly* to sit down with vocalist, bassist, and part-time demon **Gene Simmons** for a wide-ranging in-depth interview about one of the most iconic rock bands of all time?

AFTER AN HOUR OF fascinating chat with Kiss bassist and singer Gene Simmons, the man known as 'The Demon' wraps things up with a sly admission. "I'm the luckiest b*stard on two legs," he tells me. It's easy to see why he thinks that.

"As a child growing up, the idea of playing music for a living didn't exist," says the 73-year-old rocker, who started his life journey in Haifa, Israel as Chaim Witz. "That wasn't even on my radar, and I could never have imagined something like that. My early childhood was more geared towards simple survival. I had no idea about things that existed beyond Haifa. The world was enormous, and I'd go on to have these big dreams. But I didn't know it then."

Kiss was the band that would make Gene Simmons world famous, a group built on hard work and a refusal to give in to established norms. Formed in New York City in 1973 and guided by Simmons and his musical partner, the guitarist and vocalist Paul Stanley, Kiss always strived to be exceptional.

"We were way ahead of our time with our music, stage show, and personas, although at the time we didn't know it," says Simmons of the band that was completed by

guitarist Ace Frehley and drummer Peter Criss. "Just a couple of years after our first album ['Kiss'] came out in 1974 we were headlining Anaheim Stadium in California above bands that had been around for 15 years. We went from living in roach-infested conditions to being on the cover of magazines – and in some ways we weren't prepared for it. But at the same time, it was everything we'd ever wanted."

"YOU SHOULD QUIT WHILE YOU'RE THE CHAMPION. DON'T WAIT UNTIL SOME CHUMP KNOCKS YOU OUT."

HAVING DECIDED that the band will quit touring for good in 2023, Simmons and 70-year-old Stanley – who've been flanked by drummer Eric Singer and

guitarist Tommy Thayer for over 20 years – seem fully wedded to the decision to go out on their own terms. And while the band's current and longest-lasting line-up has its detractors, Simmons doesn't seem to care.

"We're having a great time," he says. "Tommy Thayer and Eric Singer have infused the band with new blood. They've made Paul and me realise that we're the luckiest guys on planet earth. They show up on time, they're professional, and they don't complain about anything. But the best thing is that we like hanging out together. There's no drama. Nobody smokes, nobody