

INSIDE

Movies D4

Puzzles D4

TVs D5

Diary D6

The Southland Times

Unwind



STARS PREPARE
... to conquer D3



The 'best' of KISS



SAY what you will about KISS, but even after all these years, the face-painted foursome are still provocative.

This year, the band launched a first-ever fan-routed tour (which drew both praise and complaints) and released *Sonic Boom*, their first album in 11 years (which entered the pop charts at No 2, a career high for KISS).

If you ask Paul Stanley, KISS' co-leader, it's "KISS at its best" - with co-leader Gene Simmons at his side, as well as recent additions Tommy Thayer (guitar) and Eric Singer (drums).

Stanley talks about the tour, the band's new album and why critics and multi-generations seem to love KISS these days.

Q: I know you guys are a little more than halfway done with the tour, how do you feel it's gone so far?

A: In terms of worldwide, it's the biggest and most successful tour we've ever done. It's been not only a great show in terms of turnout and response from the audience, but I've never seen so many great reviews. You have to remember we're a band that's always been loved by the public and hated by most critics. All of the sudden, either those critics are out of a job, or they've had a change of heart, because it's suspicious to see so many over-the-top reviews.

Q: Along those lines, I've seen pictures on your website of little kids and families at your concerts. Thirty years ago, that wasn't the image people had of KISS.

A: KISS has always been about writing our own book as to who we are and what we are. It usually doesn't follow what other bands are doing. At this point, we are so multi-generational and proud of it. We do have new fans, meaning teens and 20s, but we also have older fans with their kids. For many people, KISS has always been the soundtrack to their lives, so it's passing something along to their kids. I couldn't be more proud of the band and what we mean to so many different people.

KISS are back: KISS have launched a first-ever fan-routed tour (which drew both praise and complaints) and released *Sonic Boom*, their first album in 11 years.

Continued, Page D2

Cavity searches and broomsticks

MATE
Mark Wilson



THIS is part two of a three-part series on the Kiwi drinking culture.

The debate on how to tackle New Zealand's drinking culture has polarised opinions and sparked a furious debate of late. How are we combating this problem? A massive focus on alcohol security at events is one tool.

Recently, I attended a Pearl Jam concert in Christchurch and witnessed the front line of the battle against the booze.

The operation would have made Napoleon grin, layers of guards doing everything bar a cavity search to ensure not one drop of regular-priced alcohol passed through, drugs not a problem but you better not have a drop of alcohol or they will have your soul.

Once inside, a separate and tightly controlled area existed to buy the more expensive event variety of alcohol, maximum two per person after a 20-minute wait.

You couldn't get drunk even if you tried. Another alcohol check and you were finally on the field, although not until your already-open-can had been emptied into a plastic cup hand-heated to 15 degrees and spilled on to the grass as you bumped through the crowd.

It wouldn't have to be Pearl Jam, it could be the one-day cricket, rugby games or New Year's Eve events all tightly policed by the same Gestapo-like controls.

Yes, the events are now free of comatose youths and the odd tussle is averted but have we solved the binge-drinking problem? One look at the street and I think not!

There is also the powerful focus on IDs at licensed venues and alcohol outlets such as supermarkets.

There is this one lady at a supermarket in Queenstown - let's call her devil lady. Frown lines permanently drawn she looks you up and down, like some form of criminal, whether you are 50 or 15 no-one is spared the piercing, suspicious, are-you-going-to-drink-this-and-commit-a-crime look.

Even on busy nights when there are lines resembling those at a women's toilet in a nightclub, she is there, broomstick under her backside, wand concealed in her blouse, holding up all the innocent shoppers just in case that bottle of wine with dinner may be going to a 12-year-old glue sniffer. The one thing in common with these and most of our innovations to combat Kiwi binge-drinking culture is their indiscriminate focus affecting those who don't have a problem, or who at least don't have a serious one: those who enjoy and deserve a social drink.

Like most regulations, the innocent are inconvenienced to stop those who don't follow the rules anyway. It's the same naivety that leads countries to thinking that licensing guns will end gun crime. Do you think the criminals think: "Crikey I'm not going to rob your shop because I don't have a gun licence."?

We still have a problem, teens are still getting boozed and knocked up, killing themselves and others on roads and causing a fair amount of general nuisance, so next time we will look at the options being explored and those who should be looked at.

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