

# ROCK 'N' ROLL SURVIVORS

## NIKKI SIXX

Hardened rock journalist Neil Strauss—who has pried secrets from Dave Navarro, Marilyn Manson and Jenna Jameson—read an advance copy of Nikki Sixx's new memoir, *The Heroin Diaries*, and sent Mötley Crüe's founding bassist this email: "I love you because you are a sick motherfucker. Your book is dark and invigorating."

What could possibly impress this seen-it-all writer? Perhaps diary entries like the one dated Jan. 15, 1987, in which Sixx describes how he stopped in a Denny's bathroom to get a fix on the way to the studio:

"The shitter was disgusting—black rings and shit stains around the bowl and unclever graffiti all over the walls .... I put the bottle cap on the toilet seat in the piss and stains, and poured coke in it. I drew it up in the syringe, washed it out in the shitwater, put a little china white in the cap and cooked it, burning my fingers."

The "shattered rock star" who habitually sank to such depravity bears little resemblance to the responsible artist calling from his California residence. Now, at age 48 and sober for six years, he sounds like a cross between Whitney Houston and a D.A.R.E. officer. Sixx speaks in third person to emphasize important points; asks himself questions and then answers them like an attorney pleading a case for sobriety ("Why did I do drugs? It's really simple. I didn't feel good.") and declares song-lyric truisms, such as, "Those kids are our future."

To his credit, the "kids" this former hedonist is referring to aren't Hands Across America goodie-goodies, but runaways and homeless youth. These modern-day versions of the young Sixx will receive 25 percent of *The Heroin Diaries'* proceeds through the Covenant House, a nonprofit agency that helps kids get off the streets. It's a service Sixx could have used several times throughout his life, hence his desire to give back.

Full of good intentions, the arena-rock veteran can't escape his instinct for mass appeal. This reveals itself as Sixx tells the story of how he chose to make *Heroin Diaries*, the title for both the book and an accompanying soundtrack: "It was something that wasn't planned. I've kept the diaries since 1979-1980. I was kinda glancing through some of them. I was reading about how I had a dream and how I wanted to be in a band that was like AC/DC, the New York Dolls .... And, wow, it was happening, reading about how we played in front of 70,000 people and they knew our songs. And then I found the '86-era

ones—it went from a kid with a dream to a guy with a downward spiral. I was just controlling everything and I saw in that how the addiction had taken control of me. I was like, 'Wow, this could help somebody.'"

Drawing from more than 20 years of journals, Sixx's book reveals his rock-bottom, the most depraved—and thus most intriguing—portion of his life. Yet, instead of cash-cow sensationalism, the former junky exudes altruism: "If you see the dream and you see the car crash and you see that the guy survived and that it does something good. It shows that mistakes actually can be part of the solution."

But does a story about the sexy self-destruction of a decadent Apollo-Bacchus character glamorize



drugs? Maybe. Sixx, however, would like his audience to transcend rock 'n' roll stereotypes and abandon the idea of the drug mystique.

"It is ridiculous to keep imprinting old ideas on human beings," he says. "'If you don't do drugs, you're not a cool rock star.' If it's true that I am a rock star, and it's true that I am current and cool, and if it's true that I don't do drugs, then maybe I'm changing the model."

Even though Sixx repeatedly states he's not preaching, he agrees to give advice to young rock stars who follow in his addiction footsteps.

"The one thing I can say is: remember sitting in your room with your guitar, staring at a poster of your favorite band, trying to figure out that chord," Sixx says. "Remember when you first got your band together and people started knowing your songs; remember your dream. I like to say, 'If you're in a hole, put down the shovel'—'cause it doesn't get any better—and get back to the dream."

Sometimes this rock star-cum-philanthropist

gets a little overzealous, providing *Saturday Night Live* skit-fodder such as: "It's just a way of giving back; it's not a soapbox. It's just a moment in time where I'm saying, 'Hey, here you go—here's a little awareness.'"

Why do former addicts have to take sobriety so damn seriously?

Similarly, the soundtrack to the book, made with his band Sixx:A.M., sings self-pity in a minor key, which strikes a chord with listeners. "We get phone calls saying, 'Your single is the most added song on the radio,' and it's like, 'Wow, who would've thought? We didn't even know we'd released a single.' We were just making a body of work."

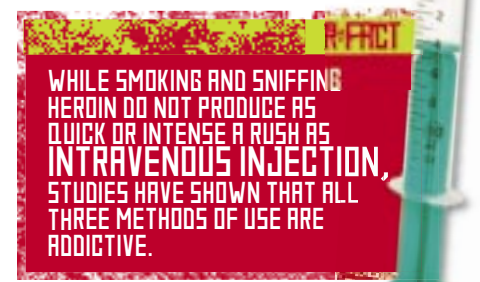
The dark tone of the album (which Sixx describes as "Danny Elfman meets a rock opera with narration") contrasts with the happiness he enjoys today. "I'm a very, very lucky man in that I'm able to be sober and I still get to walk down the street and people go, 'That guy's cool. That guy survived the music business; that guy survived drug addiction; that guy's a great father; that guy's still making really cool music.'"

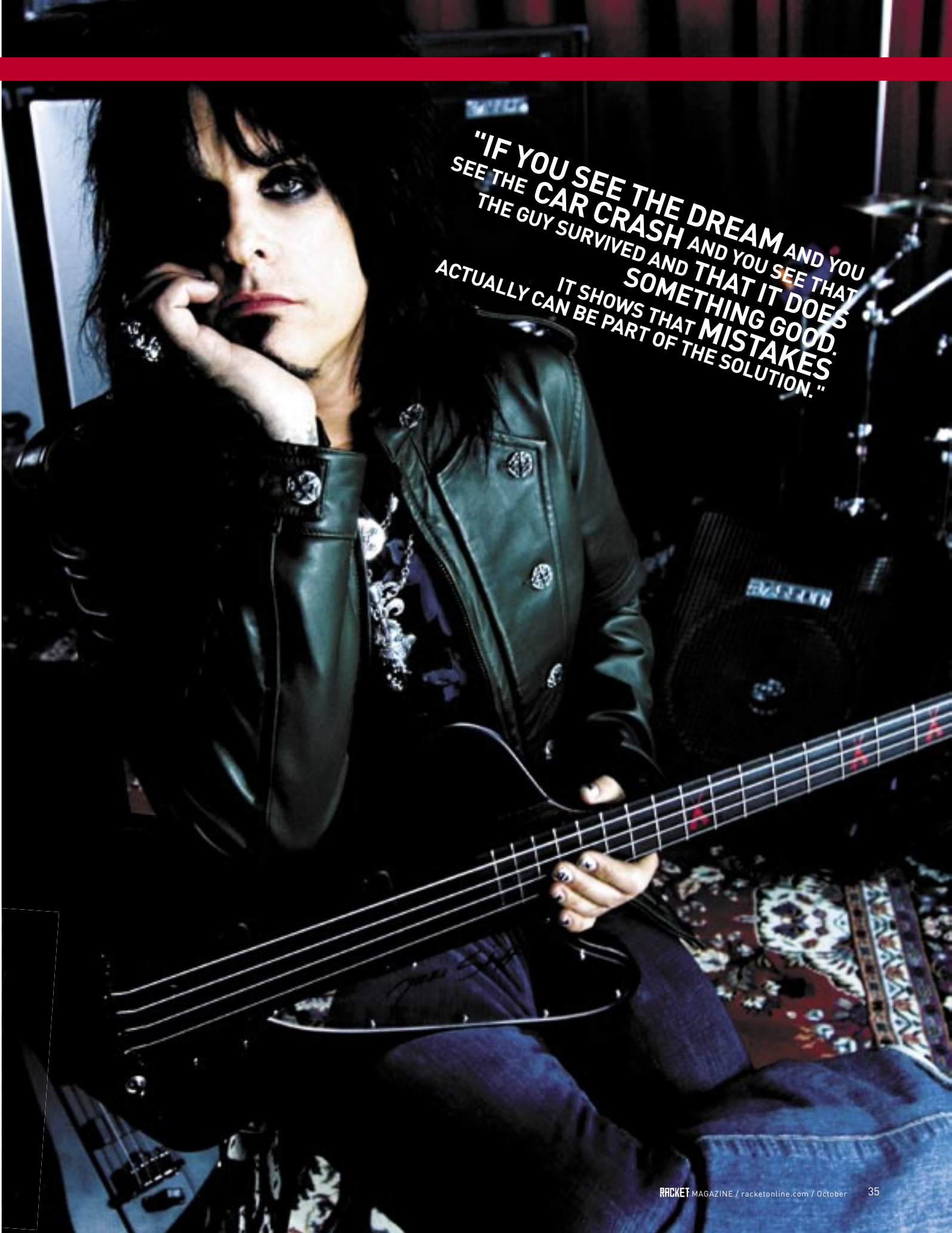
Sixx's memoir is not only composed of his original diary entries, but also the opinions of the people who were affected by his past drug use.

"It's interesting to get other people's commentary because I'm writing about what it feels like to have to go to the studio and be addicted and deal with making a record," Sixx says. "And then you get the other guys saying he would come to the studio and he was an asshole."

But does *The Heroin Diaries* answer the question everybody wants to know: "Why isn't this dude dead?"

"I just don't have an answer for that," Sixx says. "I'm sitting in my bedroom in my house and my daughter just walked in and brought me a cup of coffee. I didn't ask her to. Maybe that's why. Maybe because she's happy. Maybe this book's going to help somebody. Maybe this soundtrack is going to help somebody. Maybe nothing's going to happen. But I'm here for a reason and I don't know what it is. I think I'm happy that I don't know what it is."





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