

Aerosmith - A biography

For more than 30 years, Aerosmith has defined American Rock and Roll. Just a brief overview of their remarkable career is truly mind-boggling: over 100 million albums sold, countless awards (Grammy's, American Music Awards, Billboard Awards, MTV Awards), and a diehard fan-base in the millions worldwide. As the band embarks on yet another world tour to support their 25th release *Honkin' On Bobo*, they remain creatively vital, and are the platinum standard for artistic and commercial success in the music business. Through it all they have defeated the odds, silenced their critics and have undeniably withstood the test of time.

It began almost by chance back in 1969, in of all places, Sunapee, NH. Drummer/singer, Steven Tyler, then fronting a NYC band called Chain Reaction, dropped into the local dive, a club called the Barn to check out The Jam Band featuring guitarist Joe Perry and bassist Tom Hamilton. Steven was blown away; "The energy was just so intense. I looked and it was like Joe Perry was the electric guitar. If I can put that energy together with something that my father gave me, that classical influence, we might have something." By the next year, the three had joined forces. They recruited Tyler's old Yonkers buddy, drummer Joey Kramer, and christened the new band; Aerosmith, though one key slot remained open. Brad Whitford was a talented young guitarist from the Boston area who seemed destined to round out the Aerosmith line up. "The first time I played with Brad, it just seemed to work." says Joe Perry. "The Chemistry was right."

Brad climbed aboard, and with the legendary line up now in place, the quintet soon set to work establishing their reputation for fiery live shows and bad behavior. Sharing an apartment in Boston at 1325 Commonwealth Ave, the band lived and breathed their music. It was a time when the only sure things in life were the threat of eviction and their shared determination to rock the world. But as their reputation grew, it seemed only a matter of time.

Their time came in 1972 in NYC, the night the band played the legendary Max's Kansas City Club. In the audience that night was the famed record exec. Clive Davis himself, who was so impressed with Aerosmith that he signed them to Columbia Records on the spot. Remembers Tyler "After the show, Clive Davis put his arm around me, gave me a little squeeze and said, (as immortalized in the Aerosmith song *No Surprise*) 'Steven, you're gonna be a big star.'" They soon released their debut self-titled album, *Aerosmith*, and took to the road to spread the word, and spread they did. They toured relentlessly over the next two years, taking time off

only to record their follow up LP, *Get Your Wings*, which went Gold. Aerosmith was on their way, it seemed as though nothing could stop them.

1975 saw the band back in the studio working on their watershed album *Toys In the Attic*. Joe Perry: "When we started to *Make Toys In the Attic*, our confidence was built up from constant touring." "*Toys*" was a breakthrough album for Aerosmith, selling copies in the millions; Tom Hamilton: "We knew this album would launch the band like a missile ... it was an incredible time." The momentum continued with the 1976 release of *Rocks*. The band turned a significant creative and commercial corner in this era. The hits came fast and furious: "Last Child," "Sweet Emotion," "Back in the Saddle," "Walk This Way," plus the surprise re-released smash "Dream On," a gem that was overlooked from their first album. Their endless roadwork paid off in platinum and exploded into sold out pandemonium culminating before massive crowds of over 80,000 at the legendary *Texxas Jam*, and to a sea of over 350,000 at the famous *CAL Jam* in 1978. Aerosmith's status as one of the most popular live acts of the decade was achieved by word of mouth alone, a fact that was hard to swallow for the radio programmers, and the press who had somehow missed the boat on the Aerosmith phenomenon.

It wasn't long before the intoxicating pace of rock stardom took its toll. The fire that had fueled them began to burn them from within. "We were drug addicts dabbling in music rather than musicians dabbling in drugs," recalls Joe Perry. As the decade drew to a close, half-hearted albums (1977's *Draw the Line* and '79's *Night In the Ruts*), canceled performances, and internal strife dogged the band and began to weaken them at their core. After a final dressing room blowout in July 1979, Joe Perry announced his departure from the group to form *The Joe Perry Project*. Brad Whitford followed suit shortly thereafter to form *Whitford-St. Holmes*. The remaining 3 members soldiered on to eek out 1982's *Rock In a Hard Place*, but the magic was gone. Joey Kramer: "I wish somebody would have smacked us back then. But we were one of the biggest bands in the world. There was literally no one who could tell us anything." By the early 1980s, Aerosmith was all but over.

Brad Whitford: "People kept coming up to me and saying, "When are you guys getting back together? I just told them when Steven and Joe bury the hatchets." Remarkably, the ice slowly began to thaw over the next few years, and in 1984, Perry and Whitford rejoined the group, and Aerosmith hit the road for the *Back in the Saddle Tour*. "We paved the road so to speak," said Tyler. "So why not fucking get in our cars and drive down it again." In 1985 they signed a new record deal with *Geffen Records* and released *Done With Mirrors*, but things really began to take off in '86 with a most unusual collaboration. At the suggestion of *Def Jam's* Rick Rubin, Aerosmith and the groundbreaking hip-hop band *Run DMC* "walked their way" into

rock and roll history by remaking their classic, "Walk This Way" mixing in. The experiment was a success, and gave rise to a massive hit single and video that redefined MTV, not to mention, put Aerosmith back on the map for good. The song's timeless, groovacious, rhythm driven lyric became the landmark hybrid of rap and rock that has stood the test of time as evidenced most recently by Eminem's and Dr. Dre's master mix of "Dream On" into "Sing For The Moment."

The success of the "Walk This Way" remix with Run DMC sparked the same determination in the band that won them their first fame more than a decade earlier. Refocused, locked and loaded, they released 1987's Permanent Vacation. It was just the first in a string of chart-topping releases that brought them more fame, success, and accolades than ever before. Their videos tormented the sensors and raised the bar for music video excellence and controversy with the hot, edgy "Dude Looks Like a Lady," "Angel" and "Rag Doll." Never one to rest on their laurels, Aerosmith answered with 1989's mega smash Pump, which spawned hits; "Love in an Elevator," "Janie's Got a Gun," "The Other Side," and "What it Takes."

Proving that it's not all about Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll, Aerosmith made a statement of unyielding support for America's first amendment right for freedom of speech in 1992 when they stood up to defend and restore funding for a sexually explicit art exhibit at the List Visual Arts Center at MIT, whose original support was rescinded by the federal government. That same year, the band participated in campaigns for MTV's Rock the Vote, including the organization's groundbreaking massive national TV campaign encouraging America's youth to vote in the 1992 Presidential election.

The band's first musical offering of the nineties was the 13 Million selling Get a Grip, again loaded with radio slam dunks; "Livin' on the Edge," "Cryin," "Eat the Rich," "Crazy," "Amazing," Nine Lives followed in 1997, debuting at #1 on the Billboard charts, and boasted the hit singles, "Pink" and "Falling in Love is Hard on the Knees." Aerosmith's so called "second run" proved to be even more spectacular than their first go around in the seventies. Their concert dates sold out, not only North America, but in Japan, Australia, South America and Israel, They closed out the decade with a first in their career, a number one hit single "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing" from the Armageddon Soundtrack, and wrung in the new one with the release of Just Push Play, featuring the hit "Jaded."

By the time the band was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2001, they had already received 2 People's Choice Awards, 6 Billboard Music Awards, 8 American Music Awards, 23 Boston Music Awards, 12 MTV Video Awards, 4

Grammys, an Academy Award nomination for Best Song, "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing," as well as being selected as one of the Best Rock Bands by Rolling Stone and Hit Parader magazines. They were then chosen as the first rock band to be honored as MTV Icons.

Since 1972 they have toured so much that they've criss-crossed the globe nearly 36 times, almost nonstop, performed at 2 Super Bowls (reaching a combined viewing audience of nearly 2 billion), and turned on millions of fans along the journey. In the meantime they also pioneered the role of rock on the Internet with Aerosmith World 3D chat environment, and in interactive videogames such as Quest for Fame and Revolution X.

So how did a bunch of misfit rockers go from the Barn in Sunapee New Hampshire to the stage of the Super Bowl, not once but twice? Perhaps Steven Tyler sums it up best: "We weren't too ambitious when we started out. We just wanted to be the biggest thing that ever walked the planet, the greatest rock band that ever was. We just wanted everything. We just wanted it all."