



UWS Academic Portal

The Rock Band KISS and American Dream Ideology

James, Kieran; Briggs, Susan P.; Grant, Bligh

Published in:
European Journal of American Culture

DOI:
[10.1386/ejac.37.1.19_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/ejac.37.1.19_1)

Published: 01/03/2018

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

James, K., Briggs, S. P., & Grant, B. (2018). The Rock Band KISS and American Dream Ideology. *European Journal of American Culture*, 37(1), 19-37. https://doi.org/10.1386/ejac.37.1.19_1

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

“The Rock Band KISS and American Dream Ideology”

by

Kieran James*

University of the West of Scotland

Kieran.James@uws.ac.uk

Susan P. Briggs

University of South Australia

Susan.P.Briggs@unisa.edu.au

and

Bligh Grant

University Technology Sydney

Bligh.Grant@uts.edu.au

*Address for Correspondence: Dr Kieran James, School of Business and Enterprise, University of the West of Scotland, Paisley campus, Paisley, Renfrewshire, PA12BE, Scotland, tel: +44 (0)141 848 3350, e-mail: Kieran.James@uws.ac.uk and Kieran.James99@yahoo.co.uk

Acknowledgements

We thank Frances Miley, Andrew Read, conference participants at the *International Conference for Critical Accounting (ICCA)*, Baruch College, New York City, 28 April 2011, this journal's two anonymous reviewers, and this journal's Editor for helpful comments. This article is dedicated to the late Eric Carr (1950-1991).

“The Rock Band KISS and American Dream Ideology”

Abstract

This article is a collective effort on the authors' part to remember KISS, one of the most important hard-rock bands of the 1970s and 1980s. Influenced by the glam-rock movement which preceded its rise, arguably KISS was the first major act in rock music history to present rock music as Entertainment Product firstly and music only secondarily. We discuss the original, democratic concept of the Fab Four - Gene, Paul, Ace, and Peter - as well as Gene Simmons' and Paul Stanley's subsequent American Dream ideology. We go on to analyse the current version of the band in the light of the original line-up and appearance. The data we use in this study is based on extensive systematic study of the customer reviews of KISS albums on Amazon.com plus all of the known published books written about KISS and books by current and former KISS members. We find that the KISS fan base is divided with some fans accepting Simmons' current view that the four personas can be utilized by anyone chosen by the band's leadership; a second group which tries to correct the alleged historical injustices committed against Frehley and Criss; and a third group which is cynical about the current version of KISS but finds it fruitless to rehash old debates.

Keywords *American culture; American Dream; Heavy-metal music; Ideology; Marxism; KISS; New York City.*

“[W]e had always been the quintessential American band, of the people, by the people, and for the people” – Gene Simmons, *Kiss and Make-Up* (2002), p. 225.

“Gene and Paul have largely written the history of KISS, and in their version the rap on me is that I was a complainer” – Peter Criss, *Makeup to Breakup* (2012), p.291.

Introduction

This article is a collective effort on the authors’ part to remember KISS, one of the most important hard-rock bands of the 1970s and 1980s. Influenced by the glam-rock movement which preceded its rise, arguably KISS was the first major act in rock music history to present rock music as Entertainment Product firstly and music only secondarily. We discuss the original, democratic concept of the Fab Four - Gene, Paul, Ace, and Peter - as well as Gene Simmons’ and Paul Stanley’s subsequent American Dream ideology. We go on to analyse the current version of the band in the light of the original line-up and appearance. We put forward our opinion that the “cloning” of the Space Ace and Catman personas in perpetuity within the current version of the band fails to give sufficient respect to the inventors of those personas, Ace Frehley (lead guitar) and Peter Criss (drums). The data we use in this study is based on extensive systematic study of the customer reviews of KISS albums on Amazon.com plus all of the known published books written about KISS and books by current and former KISS members. We find that the KISS fan base is divided with some fans accepting Simmons’ current view that the four personas can be utilized by anyone chosen by the band’s leadership; a second group which tries to correct the alleged historical injustices committed against Frehley and Criss; and a third group which is cynical about the current version of KISS but finds it fruitless to rehash old debates.

Originally formed in New York City in 1972ⁱ (Criss, 2012, chapter 4, pp. 54-69; Stanley, 2014, chapters 9-15, pp. 68-105), out of the remains of Wicked Lester (Criss, 2012, p. 55; Lendt, 1997, p. 34), the hard-rock band KISS has endured, in one form or another, for over 40 years. Band leaders Gene Simmons (bass / vocals) and Paul Stanley (guitar / vocals) have been the only members of KISS present since its inception. Arguably, the band redefined popular entertainment, operating according to Simmons’ self-styled rules for a capitalist Entertainment Product suitable for his own North American youth consumer market. Simmons (2002, p. 254) himself indicates clearly that: “[f]rom the beginning, from 1973, I was less interested in respect ... than in brand”. It is a moot point whether KISS should be viewed as a qualitative, or merely a quantitative, change (Mao, 1937/1971, pp. 123-4) in the creation of musical entertainment product, wherein the overall product or brand begins to outweigh the actual songs.

After the first three studio albums saw only modest sales, the double *Alive!* album of September 1975 saw the band reach platinum status (one million record sales) for the first time (Criss, 2012, pp. 106-7, 113; Stanley, 2014, pp. 172-6, 188) while the follow-up studio album, the Bob Ezrin-produced *Destroyer* (March 1976), was another strong-seller being certified double-platinum and features Peter Criss performing vocals on the surprise hit single “Beth”. (The ballad “Beth” was originally released as the B-side to “Detroit Rock City”.) Another significant event was the release of four solo albums simultaneously by all band members on the same date (18 September 1978), a feat never achieved before or since in rock history (Criss, 2012, pp. 175, 179).

The band has gone through a number of distinct eras as follows:

(a) the *original era* (1974-79), which involved the four original band members wearing make-up which was based on the four unique personas chosen by each individual (Simmons as Demon; Stanley as Star Child; Frehley as Space Ace; and Criss as Catman);

(b) the *transition era* (1979-83) of fading popularity which saw first Criss and later Frehley leave the band to be replaced, in the first instance, by the late Eric Carr and Vinnie Vincent respectively (this era was characterized by new members taking on brand new personas with new make-up so that Carr was the Fox);

(c) the *non make-up era* or *hair-metal era* (1983-96, although the band's hair-metal look and musical style only extended up until around 1991) which saw the make-up removed; Simmons shifting his attention to his acting career (Stanley, 2014, chapters 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, pp. 279-83, 295-300, 301-7, 311-6, 317-27); and guitar players coming and going;

(d) the *reunion and farewell tour era* (1996-2001) which saw the original four reunite with the classic four personas and make-up and hugely popular and successful tours across America and the world: and

(e) the *modern era* (2001-present) where Frehley and Criss are out of the band once more and Eric Singer takes on the Catman persona and Tommy Thayer becomes the Space Ace. A defining feature of this era is that the four original personas are retained in perpetuity and, in sharp contrast to the transition era, incoming band members do not create fresh personas for themselves.

Dedicated fans might want to add further eras but we argue that the main phases, highlights, and lowlights of the band's eventful life are captured at least adequately by our categorization. The band's Wikipedia page currently expands our five eras into nine.

Each real-life individual in early KISS originally selected a persona he could relate to. Furthermore, as the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2008, pp. 38-9) writes, the very act of taking on a mask or an alias can cause an individual over time to begin to identify with that mask or alias. Criss (2012, p. 74) says exactly the same thing: "What's scary is that the more we got into our roles and the makeup, the more we actually became our alter egos [personas]". The fact that the four classic personas of choleric (Demon); sanguine (Star Child); phlegmatic (Space Ace); and melancholic (Catman) were all represented added to KISS' social-realism and communicated subconsciously to the fans that each personality type had a right to exist and to express itself. This was, in itself, the most empowering and, dare we say it, most American of messages. We had an identity-play going on to cite one of this article's anonymous reviewers. Lendt (1997, p. 48) expresses this balancing of personalities as follows: "The combustible mix of personalities in Kiss created an unusual dimension to their appeal, transcending what came across in their records". Marsh and Swenson (1979, p. 28) claim that the Beatles also had four recognizable personas – George the heavy mystic; Paul the light-hearted romantic; Ringo the buffoon; and John the acidhead. Obviously KISS took the concept of a personality band made up of four personas to its logical conclusion.

We put forward our opinion that the "cloning" of the Space Ace and Catman personas within the current version of the band fails to give sufficient respect to the inventors of those personas, Ace Frehley and Peter Criss. It also lacks existential authenticity. These are our considered opinions despite the fact that KISS owns the trademarks to both characters and the associated face make-up. The reason is that the inventors of these personas, Frehley and Criss, originally chose characters which reflected and magnified aspects of their actual pasts. (Frehley was known as a flaky, spaced-out character and at his audition he claimed he was from the planet Jandel (Criss, 2012, p. 60; Stanley, 2014, p. 108) while Criss was a former gang member in Brooklyn who, like a cat, cheated death on several occasions and was fortunate to live beyond his gang years (Criss, 2012, pp. 21-4, 65; Leaf and Sharp, 2003; Stanley, 2014, p. 108). Stanley (2014, p. 108) maintains that: "The images [personas] all enhanced or reinforced characteristics in each of us, and in that way, they weren't just

costumes”. Furthermore, both Frehley and Criss “filled out” their persona characters further still onstage as the years passed. We argue that newcomers to the band should develop and use new personas in the same way that the late Eric Carr used a Fox persona.

Purpose

This article undertakes three somewhat daunting tasks: (a) to explore KISS as a sociological and economic phenomenon within late-capitalist America from a broadly Marxist perspective; (b) to reflect upon the band members’ usage of the American Dream ideology; and (c) to analyse the current version of the band. The primary theoretical framework adopted is the Marxist worldview regarding capitalism and surplus-value production. We also utilize the related Marxist concepts of “dialectic” and “ideology”.

We aim to integrate the scholarly and the personal reflection parts of the article into a reasonably coherent whole, following in the tradition of the various academic philosophers who contributed to the edited book collection *Metallica and Philosophy: a Crash Course in Brain Surgery* (2007).ⁱⁱ We follow on the tradition of that Metallica book in that we aim to produce a scholarly article whilst at the same time combining it with our reminiscences as devoted fans whose growing-up years were coloured and inspired by KISS fandom. Because of our historic position as fans we cannot claim any perfect neutrality or objectivity although we believe that KISS is a band worthy of serious academic attention as indeed Metallica is. We try to juggle and harmonize our perhaps conflicting roles as fans and academics and admit that this is far from an easy task. Our analysis will remain coloured to some extent by some subconscious romanticisation of KISS and of our own childhoods. As Stanley (2014, p. 358) writes about the 1996 reunion tour, his band had to compete “not just with [their] past, but with people’s recollections of [their] past”. Please also note that the second-mentioned co-author out of the three is not a KISS fan.

Literature Review: American Dream

The reality is that there have always been two versions of the American Dream (Beach, 2007, p. 151). The first version, based on the radical content in Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence*, emphasizes how one’s hard work and entrepreneurial talent allows oneself to provide a better standard of life for oneself and one’s descendants. This version argues that race, religion, ethnicity, and political orientation (the hallmarks of social stratification back in the old countries) are not forces strong enough to prevent a person from attaining the success promised by the American Dream. However, Beach (2007, p. 151) argues that contradictions within American society (and even in Jefferson’s own mind) right from the beginning meant that the seeds of a more conservative version of the American Dream (the “counter-ideal”) were also contained within the same *Declaration*. Jefferson’s notion of agrarian democracy assumed a world of exploitation of slave-labour and indentured servants by plantation owners, and his educational vision in reality extended only to propertied white males. Even his model University of Virginia was built by slave-labour and was whites-only until the early-1970s (Beach, 2007, p. 151). As Beach (2007, p. 151) writes:

“This counter-ideal can be labelled the conservative American Dream and it was shaped by the contradictions of the American experiment. This ambivalent and conservative vision reinforced a ‘selective’ and ‘hierarchical meritocratic system’, whereby (to use Jefferson’s own language) only the ‘best geniuses will be raked from the rubbish’”. This other American Dream was based on aristocratic principles such as authority, order, inequitable property distribution, submissive masses, and a ruling elite”.

Beach (2007, p. 151) comments that: “Meritocracy, the conservative notion of the American Dream, praised self-reliance, hard work, frugality, dutiful industry, success, and prosperity”.

By the 19th century this conservative version would push aside Jefferson's more radical American Dream and become "the binding ideology of the nation" (Beach, 2007, p. 151). The radical critique focuses on how this counter-ideal has always served ideological functions because one's actual ability to take advantage of opportunities is a function of pre-existing living and working conditions and related factors such as ethnicity, religion, race, gender, political orientation, and location. In his brutally direct manner, which more politically correct and sophisticated authors would eschew, Simmons (2006, p. 67) tells us that: "Not everyone can climb Mount Olympus; somebody's got to wrap fish". The ideological functions served by the American Dream concept are thus to ensure that people remain hard-working, law-abiding, and ever-hopeful; and that they blame themselves or bad luck rather than the system when they fail to achieve their life-goals.

Bygrave and Macmillan (2008, Abstract, p. 93) argue that "what we now have is a materialistic, self-serving American Nightmare that has inspired a wealth-creating society that is spinning out of control". They point out that one-third of Americans no longer believe in the American Dream in the sense that they believe it is harder to get rich now than in the past; and that most Americans will not be able to achieve the benefits of the Dream lifestyle. Furthermore, these authors (p. 95) argue that the events of 9-11 and the Enron and WorldCom corporate frauds have led people to seek out alternatives to the myopic pursuit of material and status gains. They put forward the view that the European Dream is more worthwhile than the American Dream; and that the spirituality in the workplace movement is "both a cause and an effect of the decay of the American Dream" (Abstract, p. 93).

Savolainen (2000) finds that the positive effect of income inequality on male homicide victimization rates is moderated by strong institutions of social protection. Nations which protect the underclass from the brutality of the free-market experience lower male homicide victimization rates. Messner and Rosenfeld in *Crime and the American Dream* (1997) use an earlier definition of American Dream which reads as follows: "a value orientation characterized by the universal achievement goal of personal monetary success" (cited in Savolainen, 2000, p. 1022). Weak social institutions and low levels of welfare spending make the mood in the society more predatory. The economy dominates other institutions and this is more conducive to high rates of crime because criminal motivations are not restrained. By contrast, stronger noneconomic institutions (the author compares Finland with Mexico, two extreme cases) provide "stakes in conformity in the form of meaningful social roles" (p. 1022). High violent crime rates are a by-product of myopic pursuit of the goals of the American Dream when the government restricts itself to regulating and protecting property rights and fails to institute a strong social support system.

Research Method

The primary source of data was customer reviews for all official (non-bootleg) KISS studio albums, live albums, and books (authorized or otherwise) published on Amazon.com. This content analysis data collection procedure commenced on 17 March 2010 and concluded on 24 September 2011. We are not unduly concerned by the fact that most of these reviews were published many years after the albums were released (except for the more recent few albums such as *Sonic Boom* (2009) and *Monster* (2012)). In fact this is even desirable to the extent that the reviews are more likely to represent the considered views of long-term fans after sufficient time has elapsed for each album to have been appraised at length and to have settled into its assigned place in the KISS canon ("essential classic albums", "superior albums", "good albums", and "albums to avoid" to use the terms adopted by *Classic Rock* magazine (see, for example, Issue 212, Summer 2015, pp. 102-3)). We also consulted secondary sources including every known book published by or about KISS as well as every known book published by or about any one of the band's current or ex-members. Books by

and about KISS were traced by Amazon and eBay searches and by following up on quotations or mentions inside other books and online.

Findings and Discussion

The Original Makeup Era (1974-79)

Whilst Simmons' and Stanley's vision for the band is and has always been hegemonic, we also are very aware of the fans' affections for the idiosyncratic "Kiss outcasts", the foundation members Ace Frehley (lead guitar) and Peter Criss (drums). Frehley and Criss both re-joined the band for the 1996 reunion before later leaving for the second and we presume final time. Criss, in fact, left twice during the reunion era and has left the band an incredible three times overall (Simmons, 2006, p. 253). Frehley's "Space Ace" and Criss's "Catman" makeup are currently being worn by new members of the band Tommy Thayer and Eric Singer respectively (who are employees of KISS rather than 25% equity-partners as Frehley and Criss originally were (Criss, 2012, p. 77; Lendt, 1997, p. 131; Simmons, 2002, p. 80; Stanley, 2014, p. 159)).

The four made-up personas of early KISS originally represented a tacit acknowledgement by the band members that madeup personas were more palatable and interesting to fans than real-life human faces. This might be perceived as being indicative of the "estrangement" and "alienation" that philosopher Karl Marx saw in the capitalist mode of production (Heimann, 1961; Israel, 1971; Marx, 1867/1976, 1844/2007; Ollman, 1976). KISS makes visible the magical aspect of capitalist commodity relations where relations between humans become and appear as mystical relationships between things (Marx, 1867/1976, chapter 1, part 4, pp. 163-77). However, the KISS face-masks are not such an obvious acknowledgement of alienation as the nine masked men of today's Slipknot, who all wear red-boiler suits with numbers on their backs. A KISS concert has always been an obvious display of celebration (Stanley, 2014, pp. 213, 344, 454). Historically there was authentic tension between Simmons' blatantly capitalist worldview and the four band members' authentic, outer-borough, working-class, but not lumpenproletarian, roots. Only with the American Dream ideology firmly in place, which occurred around 1985, can these two conflicting elements be held in place since the American Dream is (theoretically) open to everybody.

The egalitarian and democratic aspect of early KISS was a countervailing force that much reduced the cynical and blatantly capitalist aspects of the entire KISS vehicle which have since reached new heights and continued on unchecked. There is now no natural balance in the band which had previously been achieved through the tension between the "businessmen's clique" of Simmons and Stanley and the "rock-and-roller clique" of Frehley and Criss. Simmons and Stanley have now reduced the "robust opposition party" within the band (a role once performed admirably by Frehley and Criss) to merely salaried wage-labourers (Thayer and Singer). In this way genuine internal critique, internal opposition, and conflicting ideas have been repressed.

While KISS undoubtedly took the logic of commodification within late-capitalism to a further place of extremity, it was understood originally that each of the four members had the right to develop his own onstage persona within certain limits. As mentioned, early KISS had a strong democratic and egalitarian aspect (Lendt, 1997, p. 131), and each one of the original four, as first proposed to the band by manager Bill Aucoin, was a 25% equal financial partner (Criss, 2012, p. 77; Lendt, 1997, p. 131; Simmons, 2002, p. 80; Stanley, 2014, p. 159). In fact, Lendt (1997, p. 131, emphasis added) refers to KISS as "a *personality* group of four distinct but equal personas". Undoubtedly, the early fans did not object to the triumph of face-painted masks over naked, facial flesh. In fact, the very act of wearing makeup, and the

prohibition of the taking of photographs without the makeup, created historically its dialectical opposite in that fans wanted to know more about the reality of the four living and breathing human beings behind the masks (Lendt, 1997, p. 40; Simmons, 2002, p. 97). V.I. Lenin (1915/1976, pp. 357-61, emphasis original) explains the dialectical law of identity or unity of opposites as follows:

“The identity of opposites (it would be more correct, perhaps, to say their “unity,”—although the difference between the terms identity and unity is not particularly important here. In a certain sense both are correct) is the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, *mutually exclusive*, opposite tendencies in *all* phenomena and processes of nature (*including* mind and society). The condition for the knowledge of all processes of the world in their “*self-movement*,” in their spontaneous development, in their real life, is the knowledge of them as a unity of opposites. Development is the “struggle” of opposites. The two basic (or two possible? Or two historically observable?) conceptions of development (evolution) are: development as decrease and increase, as repetition, *and* development as a unity of opposites (the division of a unity into mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal relation).

... The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute”.

It was manager Aucoin who first suggested that the band never be seen or photographed without the makeup on (Stanley, 2014, p. 124). At one time there was an alleged USD25,000 “reward” for a photo of the band members without makeup (Simmons, 2006, p. 82). In fact, as Lendt (1997, p. 40) writes: “The hype was self-perpetuating. The more Kiss’s identities were shielded, the more interest there was in trying to photograph them”. Simmons (2006, p. 82) adds, with the importance to him of capital accumulation being very obvious: “The more we kept the mystique alive, the better our tickets and merchandise sold”.

The Non Make-Up or Hair-Metal Era (1983-96)

We note how Simmons has not only positioned KISS as a marketable commodity, but he has done it in such a way that it conforms to his own self-conscious understanding of the (ideology of the) “American Dream”. To illustrate this point, Simmons (2002, p. 258) concludes his autobiography *Kiss and Make-up*, prior to the new bonus chapter on the making of *Destroyer* added for the paperback edition, with the closing comment: “And to America, sweet America, thank you for making a poor little immigrant boy’s dreams come true”. Simmons (2006, p. 6) goes on to add in his follow-up book *Sex Money Kiss* that: “I am living proof that the American dream is not only alive but alive and well, thank you”. These statements of course serve ideological functions which is *not* the same as saying that they are either purely self-serving and/or insincere. Žižek (2008, pp. 64-5) might argue that Simmons, a former theological school student at the primary-school level, retained a Jewish acknowledgement of the Big Other; Simmons simply secularized the identity of the Big Other, viewing it not in terms of Jewish Yahweh but in terms of “sweet America”. The fact that American troops literally rescued Simmons’ mother from a concentration camp in Eastern Europe at the tail-end of the Second World War (Simmons, 2006, pp. 20-1) continues to cast a shadow, even today, upon Simmons’ exposition of the American Dream ideology. We are *not* suggesting here that Simmons consciously uses his mother’s and family members’ suffering as a cynical tool for contemporary marketing purposes. Instead Simmons appears to sincerely believe in the American Dream ideology but at the same time he is quite willing to utilize the Dream narrative, which is forever linked in his mind with his mother’s story, to back-up both the “message” and the history of KISS (as a home-grown American

success story). His mother's story gives his American Dream ideology vital historical and humanitarian aspects which would be lost if the American Dream was to be assumed to be equal to simply the acquisition of more material goods. Indirectly then Simmons' inclusion of his mother's story in books can be interpreted as facilitating the viewing of the present-day activities of KISS through a specific lens which is both historical and ethical.

The American Dream ideology, as promoted by Simmons and Stanley, relies on the notion of the Working Man going back home after a hard day's work to his loving spouse or partner. As the hair-metal era KISS song "Uh All Night", from 1985's *Asylum* album, makes clear: "If you work all day you gotta' uh all night".ⁱⁱⁱ On 1992's *Revenge* album, Stanley credits the song "Take It Off" to the "hardworking women in the strip clubs" (cited in Leaf and Sharp, 2003, p. 391) and there is no reason to suppose that the word "hardworking" is used here in any mocking or disrespectful fashion. This honouring of the American work-ethic was not fully developed in KISS' early years when the "rock and roll all night and party everyday" ethos prevailed. Leaf and Sharp (2003, p. 2) state that the 1975 song "Rock and Roll All Nite", from the band's third studio album *Dressed to Kill*, sums up not only the band's appeal but also its "philosophy" about life. However, this ethos failed to provide an ethical basis or ideology or worldview which could satisfactorily ground KISS' "message" and history once the band's two party-animals, Frehley and Criss, had departed and the two remaining originals and many of the early-era fans had reached middle-age.

The honouring of the work-ethic is more consistent with the personalities and ideologies of the totally focused Simmons and Stanley (the "businessmen's clique") than the more erratic and idiosyncratic Frehley and Criss (the "rock-and-rollers' clique") who have always been less willing than Simmons and Stanley to view KISS in dull, careerist terms or as personal fulfilment of the American Dream. Frehley and Criss are, by and large, traditional musicians who have lived out the haphazard and spontaneous lifestyles and attitudes of rock-and-roll cliché (Lendt, 1997, p. 41). By contrast, Simmons and Stanley have always been extremely determined and dedicated in their united efforts to see KISS establish itself as a worldwide success and income generator. In interviews, both Simmons and Stanley come across as more articulate, self-consciously reflexive, and self-controlled than the vast majority of rock musicians. Leaf and Sharp (2003, p. 46) write that: "Perhaps more than anything else, it is Gene's ambition that fuelled KISS's rise to the top". The same authors add that: "Gene's self-confidence has always been one of the key elements that propelled KISS to success" (Leaf and Sharp (2003, p. 49). Gebert and McAdams (2010, p. 243) conclude that: "Gene deserves the most respect [of the original four] because he really is the brains behind KISS and always was. KISS wouldn't have lasted a year if it wasn't for him". The same authors (2010, p. 35) paint the contrast between the two KISS cliques as follows: "Gene and Paul wanted to be the Beatles; Ace and Peter wanted to be the Rolling Stones. Gene and Paul were salt. Ace and Peter were pepper. Gene and Paul were sober. Ace and Peter were really fucked up!"

Simmons' understanding of the American Dream ideology, very conveniently for him, provides room for his two chosen lifestyle excesses, which are, to summarize concisely, bedding every woman in sight and maximizing the rate of return on capital. Leaf and Sharp (2003, p. 140) write that: "Gene and Stanley are the epitome of American entrepreneurial spirit[;] they are the epitome of drive, commitment, and persistence".

In a very real sense, the young Simmons was, following sociologist Georg Simmel's "stranger-observer" figure, both an insider and an outsider. He had lived in Israel under his birth name, Chaim Witz, from 1949 until his mother Flora's emigration to New York City in 1958 (Leaf and Sharp, 2003, pp. 4-10; Lendt, 1997, pp. 41-2; Simmons, 2002, pp. 6-35). Simmons spent much of his childhood and teenage years trying to understand the incomprehensible American culture (Criss, 2012, p. 58; Leaf and Sharp, 2003, pp. 4-10;

Simmons, 2002, pp. 22-35). The Dream ideology was discovered by him as something foreign and fresh and it seems to have been viewed with the innocence that one might expect from an immigrant child.

Simmons (2002, p. 3) also explains his support for the idea that one must work hard by one's self for one's successes and not depend upon favours from others as being the young Gene's initial response to being put-down as a child for his foreign strangeness and poor English skills. He recalls that his mother, a Hungarian Jew and concentration camp survivor (Criss, 2012, p. 58; Simmons, 2006, pp. 20-1), would often tell him: "*You can be anything you want to be. You're better than everybody else. Don't let the people outside get to you*" (cited in Simmons, 2002, p. 57, emphasis original). Simmons' pragmatic definition of revenge, phrased as usual in business-world rather than rock-and-roll terms, is that "they end up working for you" (Simmons, 2006, p. 256). Amazon.com customer reviewer, Konrad Baumeister, writes as follows: "[H]is being raised an only child to a single mother with little money and having to learn a new language in his youth goes a long way to explaining everything since then".^{iv}

In an interview with Paul Elliott for his 2009 book *Kiss: Hotter than Hell*, Simmons expounds upon his American Dream beliefs as applied to both KISS and the fans:

"The reason why the American message is accepted so readily by everybody in the four corners of the world is because it espouses those great universal truths which we all aspire to. Life is better worth living well than not, and aspiring to greatness doesn't mean that I'm better than you are, but that everybody should have a chance to get up there. The great American dream is that anybody can be President, anybody can be a millionaire. In America, you're damn right! ... I also don't understand suicide. Why would anybody want to end their life when every day above ground is a gloriously wonderful day? I can't understand anybody who doesn't get that. You may have to dig ditches on a highway, but when you get back home you have a great meal, you have a woman in bed ... all those things that make life worth living" [cited in Elliott, 2009, pp. 14, 21].

The explicit "message" underpinning hair-metal era KISS is that we should all go out and do what we can to emulate Simmons and Stanley. However, not everyone, even in the fullness of time, can end up rich. However, as Simmons informed us (as cited above), we can all work an honest, nine-to-five job and then come home to our woman (or man). This seems to be an ideological recompense or substitute for the fact that even in America we all cannot end up rich. As Simmons (2006, p. 67): "Not everyone can climb Mount Olympus; somebody's got to wrap fish". Although we would love to be rich, and a select few can and will be, *it doesn't really matter*, according to Simmons, as we can at least "work all day and uh all night". This presumption is connected to Hall's (1988) thesis that Thatcherism succeeded as ideology because it convinced people that to simply hold a "lottery ticket" whereby the winners of that "lottery" would become successful entrepreneurs was *already* a sign of belonging to the community. Similarly, Žižek (2008, p. 215, n. 4) writes that: "[C]apitalism is never 'pure', it is either caught in the illusion of organic unity [as in the ideology of Thatcherism] or it perceives itself as a universe in disintegration".

The lyrics to "Uh All Night" (1985) begin as follows: "Everywhere around the world / everybody's doin' time / Freedom come at 5:15 / Prison starts at quarter to nine". This is the "work-is-drudgery" thesis associated, on the left-wing of philosophy, with the neo-Marxian scholar Herbert Marcuse (1964, 1966). Loverboy expresses a similar idea in its famous 1981 song "Workin' for the Weekend" where enjoyment of the weekend and romance are the reasons why we work hard during the working week. Literally, we are "workin' for the weekend" which gives the working week its purpose only when its literal ending is kept in view. Of course the Loverboy perspective, as presented here, makes the hit song completely

suitable for Friday night, ball-park consumption but not quite so encouraging for that Monday morning drive to the factory or office. Modern, retro-traditional metal band Canada's Cauldron provides an excellent acting-out of the "work-is-drudgery" thesis in its 2011 video-clip for "All or Nothing" where the band members are each woken up at 6am on a freezing cold Canadian morning, go to their respective jobs, and then are all fired or resign within the first hour or two, only to regroup and perform their new song together.^v

The lyrics to "Uh all Night" continue as follows: "Well, there's just one thing that money can't buy / When your body's been starved feed your appetite / When you work all day, you gotta Uh! All night". Significantly and perhaps surprisingly, according to KISS in "Uh all Night", sex per se is *not* proposed as the ideological solution to the "work-is-drudgery-but-necessary" dilemma. Money can buy sex, according to the ideology of the song, but it cannot buy sexual love, and that is the only possible meaning here. We accept that Stanley co-wrote these lyrics, and not Simmons, whose attention was diverted in the mid-1980s by his Hollywood acting efforts (Simmons, 2006, pp. 102-3; Stanley, 2014, chapters 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, pp. 279-83, 295-300, 301-7, 311-6, 317-27). Obviously these cited lyrics are *prima facie* more compatible with Stanley's sensitive Star Child persona than with Simmons' hateful Demon persona. However, it is reasonable to assume that Simmons would have rejected the song for the *Asylum* album had he disagreed strongly enough with the lyrics.

The ideology presented in the song "Uh all Night" and arguably in Simmons' later interviews assumes monogamous "closed relationships". Simmons (2006, p. 126) in fact acknowledges that: "The prevailing American notion is of a monogamous relationship". Therefore, KISS, by this time (1985), was obviously selling the fans something (i.e. monogamous relationships) *completely different from what the band members themselves were experiencing*. By September 1979 Criss had even divorced Lydia, his Italian-American beauty from Brooklyn, whom he had married in 1970, two years prior to the formation of KISS (Criss, 2012, pp. 183, 186).

Ideology, for it to be effective, does *not* require that the people disseminating it either believe in it fully or not believe in it fully. For example, Stalin and his successor the reformist Nikita Khrushchev appeared to have sincerely believed in Marxist-Leninism whereas Lavrentiy Beria, the notorious head of The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD), at least according to his son Sergo (Beria, 2001), did not. If KISS fans have regular work it also means, of course, that they have more money with which to buy concert tickets and the ever-increasing array of KISS merchandise. The ideological "solution" presented in the 1985 song "Uh all Night" and in Simmons' later interviews then works out nicely.

The previously cited Amazon.com customer reviewer, Kit Sullivan of Kissimmee, Florida, contrasts, perceptively, the "real story" of KISS with "the homogenized, revisionist-history crap that Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley spew at every opportunity".^{vi} The "homogenized" "revisionist" history is closely tied to the utilization of the American Dream ideology. The "revisionist KISSStory" of Simmons and Stanley, to cite Peter Criss (2012, p. 77), charts KISS' "planned" and "calculated" journey to mega-stardom, whilst placing conspicuously less emphasis upon the band's and band members' messy early years; the "troubles" involving ex-members Frehley and Criss; the unfortunate early deaths of several band members (Eric Carr, Mark St John) and lawsuits involving another (Vinnie Vincent) (Lendt, 1997, p. 301); and the plunge in KISS' popularity in the early-1980s (which led firstly to the removal of the makeup for 1983's *Lick It Up* and eventually to the 1996 reunion of the original four with the makeup back on). In our view Stanley's 2014 autobiography goes only part of the way towards correcting the problems of the revisionist KISS history.

Lendt's (1997) unauthorized book tells of the depressing fall from grace of the band, focusing on the period from 1976-86, and he provides detailed analysis of financial and

accounting issues associated with various tours and discusses as well the financial situations of each of the band members. Unlike many acts which fell from grace and went from extremely rich to only moderately so, KISS' past and present members cannot point to any major fraud perpetrated upon them but only to their own wild expenditures, at both the personal and band levels. Gebert and McAdams (2010, p. 50) state that: "The point is, though, that no matter where Ace was, he could find a way to waste money". Amazon.com customer reviewer, Uncle Elmer, writes that: "Gene Simmons tends to gloss over the reality that he too participated in the financial fiasco that was their 79 tour".^{vii}

Furthermore, the timeliness and originality of the original KISS of the mid-1970s meant that its dialectical opposite must also occur (Lenin, 1915/1976, pp. 357-61). By the early-1980s KISS was generally perceived as being behind the times, anachronistic, and a product of the 1970s (Stanley, 2014, pp. 240, 280-1). The dire straits (pun intended) that KISS was in by 1983 can be seen by the fact that the *Lick It Up* album and tour were marketed on the basis of KISS' makeup now being *removed*, which was a rather strange attraction to be promoting (Lendt, 1997, pp. 289-91; Stanley, 2014, chapters 41-42, pp. 287-94, 295-300). Younger and hungrier bands, mostly from Los Angeles' Sunset Strip such as Mötley Crüe, Ratt, Dokken, and Stryper, and later Guns'N'Roses, were winning over the younger generation at the same fast rate which KISS had done in the previous decade.

By the hair-metal era (mid-1980s) we can say that Simmons' and Stanley's homogenized KISS ideology had begun to emerge as a coherent body of beliefs designed to specify the band's purpose and enhance its legitimacy. This ideology has only increased in importance since then, especially after the excitement of the various reunion/farewell tours had begun to subside circa the beginning of the new millennium. Once KISS' "transgressive sub-cultural capital" (Kahn-Harris, 2007) had begun to dramatically decline, the American Dream ideology may be seen as an attempt to boost the band's "mundane sub-cultural capital" (Kahn-Harris, 2007) by linking on to an upper working-class/middle-class ideology which would seem reasonable to many old-time fans now aged in their 30s to 40s and in positions of responsibility at work and/or at home.

It is important to remember also that, despite the band members' self-confident and brash New Yorker attitudes (Stanley declares that he is "nobody's fool" on 1979's "Sure Know Something"), KISS has always appealed greatly to the young working-class in full-time employment in Midwest industrial cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, and Indianapolis.^{viii} Simmons (2002, p. 110) comments on the band's popularity in Detroit as follows: "Detroit had taken us to heart immediately. People in New York and Los Angeles misread us – they affected a certain sophistication and felt that we weren't up to their standards". Lendt (1997, pp. 69-70) expands upon these early-years, Midwestern fans as follows [patronizing tone in the original]:

"And many of the fans led exactly that kind of life [i.e. drudgery]. Kiss developed a huge following in the [M]idwest's Rust Belt in older industrial cities like Detroit, Cleveland, and Indianapolis and a slew of small factory towns. Guys showed up at the concerts who were barely out of high school [before the band's audience grew to include grade school children accompanied by their parents, circa 1978-79], with grimy hands and in frayed work clothes – shift workers from GM, Ford, and food processing plants nearby. Girls came who were still in their teens, going to beauty school, working as hairdressers and manicurists, taking orders at the local Dunkin' Donuts, sales clerking at Woolworth's, or working the graveyard shift at factories and mills. Kiss gave them an escape from this bleak, dead-end world".

Clearly, many members of the demographic described here, as they aged, could be expected to find the American Dream ideology later postulated by KISS appealing.

The Modern Era (2001-present)

We have already portrayed Frehley and Criss as the “rock-and-roller clique”, as opposed to the “businessmen’s clique” of Simmons and Stanley. Frehley and Criss, alcoholic and drug-addict respectively as Simmons has on occasion portrayed them, still represent, although they are no longer part of the band, the “revenge of the human” or the “revenge of the unassimilable”. Both Frehley and Criss’s solo work appeals mostly to KISS fans even today and each keeps up a discourse that utilizes to some extent the old Space Ace and Catman imagery. For example, on his critically acclaimed 2009 *Anomaly* solo album, Frehley unashamedly rejoices in his own continuing identity as the Space Ace: “It’s like I told you / I came from outer space / That’s how I know your name / Just like I told you / I came from outer space / I wanna’ take you away”.^{ix} Likewise, the *Anomaly* album packaging is littered with stars in a faux, outer-space setting that juxtaposes interestingly with the post-KISS social-realism of the rest of the album packaging where Frehley is presented in the primary picture without makeup, clad in a leather jacket, and seated on a motorcycle. Therefore, it appears that we have two Space Aces on Planet Earth at the present moment.

Frehley and Criss will be remembered in the long-run primarily as original KISS members and they will be continue to be associated with their Space Ace and Catman personas. As mentioned, Frehley and Criss both self-consciously trade on the old Space Ace and Catman imagery. Frehley wrote an autobiography in 2011 (*No Regrets*) and Criss wrote one a year later (*Makeup to Breakup*). Both books have pictures on their respective front covers of their respective authors in their respective KISS-era makeup. The solo-era fans of Frehley and Criss are probably nearly entirely former and current KISS fans. However, legally, the trade-marked Space Ace and Cat makeup belong to KISS and not to the band’s former members. Simmons and Stanley would be only too aware of the fact that, in the years following the release of the solo albums, Frehley’s album has continued to outsell the other three and so they would be reluctant to banish the Space Ace persona from contemporary stages. To quote Megadeth’s Dave Mustaine: Ace Sells...and We’re Buying.

It is extremely significant that the modern-day hard-rock band Black Spiders released a song “Kiss Tried to Kill Me (it was Gene not Paul)” which appears on its 2011 studio album *Sons of the North*. Interestingly, in the chorus, the song exonerates Ace Frehley from blame in the alleged “murder” (“Kiss tried to kill me / it wasn’t Ace’s fault”). This song is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it shows the strong influence that the original KISS had on young Generation-X music fans in the late-1970s. KISS is arguably only the second band in rock history, after the Beatles, where it has been considered normal and sufficient to refer to each band member by her or his first name only. Secondly, the Black Spiders’ song shows that the KISS personas were widely understood and appreciated by young pre-teen fans of the band and that this understanding has not been lost over time. It is logical to the fans that the song says that Gene and not Paul “tried to kill him”, Gene being the hateful Demon and Paul being the romantic Star Child. The song title is a treat and a coded signal for those insiders who remember and appreciate not only Gene and Paul but their two onstage personas as well. The lyrical reference to Gene “killing him” could also refer to Simmons’ latter-day arrogance; his ideological comments pertaining to the American Dream and KISS history in recent interviews (see earlier discussion); his harsh verbal treatment of Frehley and Criss; and his “killing” of the marketplace (Criss, 2012, p. 314) through countless farewell tours and recycled Greatest Hits packages. The Amazon.com customer reviewer, Kit Sullivan of Kissimmee, Florida, writes perceptively although not without rancour that: “Simmons is ... the aggressive, single-minded success-driven money-making machine ..., and his strong-willed personality runs roughshod over those who don’t share his passion for success ... namely Ace Frehley and Peter Criss”.^x

However, hegemony is never total. Even in 2011 (the year when our content analysis concluded) Simmons was being forced to explain why the band's newcomers had not been given fresh personas but instead wore the Space Ace and Catman makeup (Moore, 2009, p. 208). Since Thayer once played the Space Ace in KISS tribute band Cold Gin (Moore, 2009, p. 208; Stanley, 2014, p. 336), it could be said that he has simply switched over to another KISS tribute band. Lendt (1997, p. 302) expresses Simmons' and Stanley's modern-day dilemma^{xi} in this way: "Kiss had successfully promoted themselves for years as a personality group, but the personalities were now constantly changing". Rather than inventing new personas, Simmons and Stanley (the band leadership) have decided to simply put new people into existing costumes. Even Stanley (2014, p. 436, converted to present tense) is forced to admit that: "[p]eople occasionally dismiss Eric [Singer] and Tommy [Thayer] as imposters".

We believe that Simmons' buying of Frehley's face (actually his face makeup and related trademark) represents the triumph of the worst and most cynical aspect of "KISS Capitalism" over the original relatively egalitarian and democratic concept of the "Fab Four". Moore (2009, p. 171) states, very clearly and simply, that: "Ace doesn't own the rights to his own make-up!" He cannot wear the makeup when playing solo concerts. Simmons (2002, p. 234) expresses it as follows: "We own the Spaceman". As another Amazon.com customer reviewer Uncle Elmer writes: "In the end, the great success of Kiss is not the bluster of Gene Simmons or [the] posturings [*sic*] of Paul Stanley but the dynamic of all four members--Ace, Peter, Gene and Paul".^{xii} Similarly, the Amazon.com customer reviewer, Rick Poss, reviewing Kiss' 2009 *Sonic Boom* album, writes that:

"No matter what line-up, Kiss always presented itself as four individuals. It sickens me to know that's no longer the case. The four original members had onstage personas that were honest reflections of who they were. Now we simply have actors playing the roles of those personas like they're fictional characters".^{xiii}

In what we regard as an extremely unfortunate and inauthentic situation, the current band leadership has effectively *re-essentialized* the Space Ace, cloning and channelling Frehley's *interpretation* of the persona in perpetuity. Frehley and Criss, now best friends in real life, are not part of the current version of the band. However, their memory will always remain, to remind the fans and even Simmons and Stanley of a more charming and humorous, less controllable, and less mercenary KISS. (Of course this does not mean that we claim that either Frehley or Criss are historically blameless or, God forbid, blemish-free people.) In fact, the Space Ace on stage is a permanent reminder of Frehley, a reminder which is much more obvious than if the current guitarist had been given a fresh persona in the same way that the late Eric Carr^{xiv} had a Fox persona and Vinnie Vincent^{xv} had a Wizard persona featuring Egyptian ankh makeup (Lendt, 1997, p. 256; Simmons, 2002, pp. 187, 192). Despite his various public statements disparaging Frehley and Criss, Simmons is probably aware of the situation that he has created: Frehley and Criss' raw humanity (which they creatively and authentically used to "fill out" their originally simplistic and straight-forward personas) are literally *re-essentialized* (cloned) and sold again each concert night for the financial gain of Simmons, Stanley, Thayer, and Singer. Criss makes the following remarks about KISS touring with new people wearing the Space Ace and Cat makeup as follows:

"No matter who they get to put stuff on their face, it ain't us. You can take the mask off the Lone Ranger and put it on someone else, but it ain't the Lone Ranger".^{xvi}

Amazon.com customer reviewer Rick Poss makes some important and sensible comments on the "identity theft" issue in his review of KISS' 2009 album *Sonic Boom* as follows:

“I was appalled at the idea of them hiring clones to imitate Ace and Peter. I didn’t like it, accept it, or support it, but I learned to live with its existence. I mean, all they’d really done was become their own tribute band - sad, but harmless. ... Everything about this album strikes me as incredibly phony; especially Tommy’s shamelessly Ace-sounding solos. If I want to hear Ace, I’ll listen to Ace (and his new solo album *Anomaly* is exceptionally good; I’d recommend it to any Kiss fan who [*sic*] still cares about integrity). Since all Tommy ever does is mimic Ace, I have no opinion of him as a guitarist because he’s given me nothing to base an opinion on. In Geoff Barton’s review in *Classic Rock* magazine, he writes that he doesn’t miss Ace and Peter on this album. Well of course you don’t, Geoff, because the album is filled with near-perfect impressions of them!”^{xvii}

Žižek (2008, p. 234) writes that: “Th[e] notion that other possible outcomes are not simply cancelled out but continue to haunt our ‘true’ reality as a specter of what might have happened, confer[s] on our reality the status of extreme fragility and contingency”. There are at least three “alternative histories” of KISS to the Really Existing History which presently exists as the modern-era version of the band:

- (a) KISS still functioning with Frehley and Criss;
- (b) KISS with Thayer and Singer both of whom operate with brand new personas; and
- (c) The current line-up removing the makeup again.

Our content analysis of Amazon.com customer reviews suggests that many (perhaps most) fans would regard any of these scenarios as preferable to the Really Existing History where Singer and Thayer wear the Space Ace and Catman costumes.

Hardcore KISS fans also remember the late Eric Carr’s sad early death, aged 41, from heart cancer in New York City’s Bellevue Hospital on the Lower East Side on 24 November 1991 (Lydia Criss, 2006, p. 354; Stanley, 2014, chapter 47, pp. 328-35). Carr’s death can be contrasted with Simmons’ and Stanley’s not unreasonable desire to keep their band ever young, ever pristine, and ever marketable. The ultimate answer to the unpleasant facts of aging and death for Simmons and Stanley might be for KISS to reproduce itself for all eternity like England’s Manchester United Football Club (MUFC), where old players are constantly being replaced by new and only the brand-name remains. It is not impossible that KISS becomes the first perpetual rock band of this type *with the makeup giving the band a considerable advantage over its competitors in this regard*. In Simmons’ (2002, p. 118) own words: “The master plan was [and remains] to create a [permanent] cultural institution that was [and is] as iconic as Disney”. Simmons (2006, p. 206) even accepts that he can foresee KISS continuing one day without even Paul and/or himself; and Stanley (2014, p. 455) foresees and is comfortable with the same possibility, i.e. KISS going on without him. The major difference between a KISS with no original members and a tribute band would appear to be the legal right to use the name in perpetuity and sue offenders.

Conclusion

If we can salvage anything lasting and positive from the career of KISS and even from the American Dream ideology, despite its problems, it is the comfort and encouragement one gets from the extreme and willed self-confidence of Simmons and Stanley and the charm and raw humanity of Frehley and Criss. The original KISS told us we all had the right to exist, regardless of our personality type, and to self-consciously express ourselves and pursue our goals in the world. Martin Popoff (2005, p. 369) writes that the enduring legacy of Twisted Sister vocalist Dee Snider to the heavy-metal music community remains his constant encouragement to believe-in-yourself. He could have said the same thing about KISS. However, being a fan does not mean, in our view, that we are not entitled to make informed and constructive criticisms.

From our analysis of our data sources we conclude that the KISS fan base is divided with some fans accepting Simmons' current view that the four personas can be utilized by anyone chosen by the band's leadership; a second group which tries to correct the alleged historical injustices committed against Frehley and Criss; and a third group which is cynical about the current version of KISS but finds it fruitless to rehash old debates.

Given this, we maintain that the "cloning" of the Space Ace and Carman personas in the current version of the band is of questionable merit and that KISS should explore and implement one of the three "alternative histories" we have put forward in this article. Given that a return of Frehley and Criss has a low probability of occurring, other possible futures for KISS are: (a) removing everyone's make-up and (b) keeping on the make-up and creating new fresh personas for Thayer and Singer.

References

- Beach, J.M. (2007), "The Ideology of the American Dream: Two Competing Philosophies in Education, 1776-2006", *Educational Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 148-164.
- Beria, S. (2001), *Beria My Father: Inside Stalin's Kremlin*, Gerald Duckworth & Co., London.
- Bygrave, C. and MacMillan, S. (2008), "Spirituality in the Workplace: A Wake Up Call from the American Dream", *Journal of Workplace Rights*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 93-112.
- Criss, L. (2006), *Sealed with a Kiss*, Lydia Criss Publishing, New York, NY.
- Criss, P. with Sloman, L. (2012), *Makeup to Breakup: My Life in and out of Kiss*, first hardcover edition, Scribner, New York, NY.
- Elliott, P. (2009), *Kiss: Hotter than Hell*, revised edition, Carlton Books and Metro Books, New York, NY.
- Gebert, G.G.G. and McAdams, B. (2010), *Kiss & Tell*, Pitbull Publishing, Fleetwood, NY.
- Hall, S. (1988), *Hard Road to Renewal*, Verso, London and New York, NY.
- Heimann, E. (1961), *Reason and Faith in Modern Society: Liberalism Marxism and Democracy*, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh and London.
- Israel, J. (1971), *Alienation: From Marx to Modern Sociology*, Allyn and Bacon, New Jersey, NJ.
- Kahn-Harris, K. (2007), *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, Berg, London and New York, NY.
- Leaf, D. and Sharp, W. (2003), *Kiss Behind the Mask: The Official Authorized Biography*, Grand Central Publishing, New York, NY.
- Lendt, C.K. (1997), *Kiss: and Sell: The Making of a Supergroup*, Billboard Books, New York, NY.
- Lenin, V.I. (1915/1976), "On the Question of Dialectics", in S Smith (Ed.), *Lenin's [Collected Works](#)*, 4th edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Volume 38, pp. 357-361, available online: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/misc/x02.htm> [accessed 14 October 2013].
- Mao, Z.D. (1937/1971), "On Contradiction" [矛盾], in Chinese Communist Party (Eds.), *Selected Readings from the Works of Mao Tse Tung*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, pp. 85-133.
- Marcuse, H. (1964), *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA.
- Marcuse, H. (1966), *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA.
- Marsh, D. and Swenson, J. (1979), *The Rolling Stone Record Guide*, Random House / Rolling Stone Press, Toronto and New York, NY.
- Marx, K.H. (1867/1976), *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1*, Penguin Classics, London (translated by Fowkes, B.).
- Marx, K.H. (1844/2007), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Dover Publications, Mineola, NY.
- Messner, S.F. and Rosenfeld, R. (1997), *Crime and the American Dream*, 2nd edition, Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.
- Moore, W. (2009), *Into the Void ... with Ace Frehley*, Pitbull Publishing, Fleetwood, NY.
- Ollman, B. (1976), *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Popoff, M. (2005), *The Collector's Guide to Heavy Metal Volume 2: The Eighties*, Collector's Guide Publishing, Toronto and New York City, NY.

- Savolainen, J. (2000), "Inequality, Welfare State, and Homicide: Further Support for the Institutional Anomie Theory", *Criminology*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2000, pp. 1021-1042.
- Simmons, G. (2002), *Kiss and Make-up*, paperback edition with new chapter, Three Rivers Press, New York, NY.
- Simmons, G. (2006), *Family Jewels: Sex Money Kiss*, revised and updated edition, Simmons Books / Phoenix Press, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Stanley, P. (2014), *Face the Music: A Life Exposed*, first hardcover edition, HarperOne publishers, New York, NY.
- Žižek, S. (2008), *Enjoy your Symptom!* Verso, London and New York, NY.

ⁱ Criss (2012, pp. 54-6) dates his first meeting with Simmons and Stanley at Electric Lady Studios at April 1972 whereas Stanley says it occurred much later. For Stanley (2014, p. 89), the Wicked Lester record was completed by the end of summer 1972. At this point Simmons and Stanley together quit Wicked Lester (Stanley, 2014, p. 89). Next they rented the rehearsal space at 10 East 23rd Street and changed their names from Stanley Eisen and Gene Klein to their now familiar stage names (Stanley, 2014, pp. 90, 93). In the fall of 1972 they ventured to the Catskills Mountains in search for a mythical lead guitarist suggested by Simmons (Stanley, 2014, pp. 95-6). Next we have the first meeting with Peter Criss (Stanley, 2014, pp. 97-8) so, in the chronology of Stanley, this event must have occurred *after* the fall of 1972 or around six or seven months after the April 1972 date given by Criss. The next date Criss mentions is November 1972 when the band of three played in its 10 East 23rd Street rehearsal loft for Don Ellis, head of Epic Records (pp. 59-60). Straight after this he recounts the audition of Ace Frehley (p. 60). He states that the first show, at Popcorn (name changed to Coventry) in Queens, took place at the end of January 1973 (p. 63). Stanley puts the performance for Ellis at late November 1972 (p. 99); the Frehley audition at December 1972 (pp. 100-1); and the first KISS show at 30 January 1973 (p. 103); so by these dates their accounts are in essential harmony. Harmonizing the accounts of Stanley and Criss presents as hard a task as harmonizing the life of Jesus accounts contained in the Four Gospels.

ⁱⁱ Irwin, W. (Ed). (2007), *Metallica and Philosophy: A Crash Course in Brain Surgery*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, MA and Oxford.

ⁱⁱⁱ It was around the time of the Asylum tour to support the *Asylum* album that Lendt (1997, p. 307) first labels KISS a "corporate rock enterprise". We rephrase this very apt term so that it becomes "corporate rock machine".

^{iv} http://www.amazon.com/Kiss-Make-Up-Gene-Simmons/dp/0609810022/ref=pd_sim_b_17 [accessed 10 August 2011].

^v The Cauldron YouTube video-clip can be viewed online at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GadSyHS6ow> [accessed 23 June 2011].

^{vi} http://www.amazon.com/Black-Diamond-Unauthorized-Biography-KISS/product-reviews/1894959922/ref=cm_cr_dp_synop?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending#R3SDSLZ2TC7GEF [accessed 1 July 2010].

^{vii} http://www.amazon.com/Kiss-Sell-Making-Supergroup-Watson-Guptill/dp/0823075516/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1312954998&sr=1-1 [accessed 10 August 2011].

^{viii} KISS broke the attendance record set by Elvis at Cobo Hall in Detroit (Simmons, 2002, p. 111, photo caption). The first show of the 1996 reunion tour was scheduled also in Detroit but at Tiger Stadium (28 June), and attracted 39,867 people (Criss, 2012, p. 283; Gebert and McAdams, 2010, p. 247).

^{ix} Lyrics taken from "Outer Space", available at: <http://www.metrolyrics.com/outer-space-lyrics-ace-frehley.html>, with slight modification by us to reflect how we hear the lyrics [accessed 23 September 2010].

^x http://www.amazon.com/Black-Diamond-Unauthorized-Biography-KISS/product-reviews/1894959922/ref=cm_cr_dp_synop?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending#R3SDSLZ2TC7GEF [posted 27 November 2009, accessed 1 July 2010].

^{xi} This phrase is a pun on the title of the 2009 Kiss song "Modern Day Delilah" from the *Sonic Boom* album.

^{xii} http://www.amazon.com/Kiss-Sell-Making-Supergroup-Watson-Guptill/dp/0823075516/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1277977470&sr=1-1 [accessed 1 July 2010].

^{xiii} http://www.amazon.com/Sonic-Boom-Kiss/dp/B002MR1J72/ref=sr_1_9?ie=UTF8&s=music&qid=1278667307&sr=1-9 [accessed 9 July 2010].

^{xiv} Carr replaced Criss as drummer in the early-1980s and was the first non-original member.

^{xv} Vincent replaced Frehley the first time around and played on *Creatures of the Night* (1982) and *Lick It Up* (1983).

^{xvi} <http://www.app.com/4074/august2008/features/petercriss.html> [accessed 6 July 2010].

