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School's back in with Alice Cooper at the Embassy Theatre

The legendary rocker will perform Wednesday night.

By James Grant of The News-Sentinel
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It's only fitting that Alice Cooper, the man who chanted "School's out for summer," from his classic song "School's Out," should appear in concert next Wednesday at the Embassy Theatre during the height of summer.

Cooper, born Vincent Damon Furnier in Detroit, Mich., will perform a show filled with memorable "Alice Cooper bits" as he calls them, which include the use of a guillotine, wearing a boa constrictor around his neck and donning a straitjacket and bloodied butcher apron as some of his attire.

"My show is classic rock," Cooper said in a telephone interview. "It's all the hits that we had, plus the sort of classic Alice Cooper bits and things that are new. We always have new surprises. ... It's an all-out, high-energy, rock 'n' roll show.

"The show that we're doing there (Fort Wayne) will be a longer show," Cooper said.

"It'll be a lot of different things in it ... Which at one point, I have never done covers before, but we do four covers.

"But we're honoring four of my best friends that died — (Jim) Morrison, Keith Moon, John Lennon and Jimi Hendrix," Cooper added. "It's sort like of a very cool kind of way to honor them, but we were all in the same drinking club called the Hollywood Vampires."

Originally, Alice Cooper was the name of a heavy rock band which was fronted by Cooper under his given name of Vincent Furnier.

The group Alice Cooper was discovered in Los Angeles in the late 1960s by none other than legendary composer/performer Frank Zappa, who signed the group to his Straight Records label, which released their first two albums with little success.

The group finally reached stardom in 1971, when they connected with producer Bob Ezrin, who also later produced the group Kiss.

Alice Cooper created such well-known hits as "School's Out," "I'm Eighteen" and "No More Mr. Nice Guy," along with their No. 1 album, "Billion Dollar Babies."

In 1974, the original Alice Cooper group broke up and, by 1975, Cooper, who now legally went by the name Alice Cooper, went solo and took the Alice persona with him.

More hits followed, such as "Only Women Bleed," "You and Me," "I Never Cry" and, most recently, the song "Poison" from 1989.

In the over 40 years Alice Cooper has been making music, he has battled and overcome an addiction to alcohol, staked his claim as a survivor in the music business and been added as a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in March of 2011.

While he is proud of his induction into the Hall of Fame, he also keeps that distinction in perspective.

"I think my fans were more militant than I was about it," Cooper said of being inducted.

"Getting nominated is the hard part. We (the Alice Cooper Band) went in on the first ballot, ... which was great.

"We were the weird combination that we were the beginnings of all theatrical rock, but we also sold records, we sold a lot of records," Cooper added "We were a unique kind of thing.

"The fun thing is that you get up there (at the Hall of Fame ceremony) and, at the end, I'm doing a jam with Elton John, Neil Diamond, Bette Midler, ... and we're going 'Da Doo Ron Ron' — that's something you're never going to ever do again ever in your life.

"To me that was really fun to do."



More Information

AUDIO INTERVIEW WITH ALICE COOPER

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CONCERT DETAILS

What: This An Evening with Alice Cooper performance of music and memorable moments is part of his Raise the Dead Tour.

When: 8 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Embassy Theatre, 121 W. Jefferson Blvd.

Cost: \$29.50, \$39.50, \$49.50 and \$62.50. Tickets are available at the Embassy box office, Ticketmaster outlets, www.ticketmaster.com and 1-800-745-3000.

It may surprise some people, but Cooper is a born-again Christian who sees the role of Alice Cooper as a stage performance. Cooper's father became a minister when Cooper was quite young, and Cooper credits Christianity with aiding him in his recovery from alcoholism.

While it's true Cooper has become synonymous with a sort of mad vaudevillian character right out of Sweeney Todd, he is also the composer of a large back catalog of songs that has earned the respect of his peers as well as his fans.

No less an authority than Bob Dylan, one of the premiere songwriters of the 20th and 21st centuries, told Rolling Stone magazine in a January 1978 interview, "I think Alice Cooper is an overlooked songwriter" — high praise indeed.

In the end, Cooper says that with all the highs his music career has brought him, the most satisfying part of it has been its longevity.

"The high points are always this: The very first time you hear your record on the radio because you're a band that plays in bars and you're definitely an underdog, ... and then the next week you look on the charts and you're No. 30.

And then you're No. 20, ... and then it's embarrassing when you've looked at the charts and you're No. 3 and Led Zeppelin is No. 4 and The Beatles are No. 5, ... then the next big deal is your first gold album.

"The next big deal is your first No. 1. ... It doesn't happen to a lot of people, but, when it does, it's really amazing. Getting in the Hall of Fame is another one.

"Those are some high points. The only one I haven't done yet is I haven't won a Grammy. ... Hopefully, I'll win one someday."