

Karla Tallas

HISTORY

MY LIFE WITH(OUT) AEROSMITH





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I'm thinking back to the time of my childhood ... to the moment of my first encounter with the music of AEROSMITH, the band that influenced and changed my entire life in an absolutely fundamental way. Even in the very first moment, I feel their music will accompany me for the rest of my life. When I listen to it, I feel very strong emotions that I don't share with anyone, but very often come back to on my own. I shut myself away in my mind and try to survive in a reality in which I can hardly find fulfillment. I dream about a world that I don't know anything about, a world of big opportunities, a world without the borders that "my" real world has. AEROSMITH, to me, is the embodiment of everything I dream about secretly, of everything unknown and so remote. At the same time, it also embodies all the emotions I experience in the real world, but also those I miss so much. Although in this period I still don't understand the lyrics and don't have a chance to learn more about the band, in fact I understand everything and deep down identify absolutely with every single tone... Even after all these years, I can hardly put those emotions into words.

My first contact with AEROSMITH's music happened around the time of the release of the "Pump" album. The band had a very successful tour in Europe in 1989 for the first time after having overcome a very difficult period in their careers. AEROSMITH toured Europe exactly at the time of Eastern Europe's awakening, where

the communist system had just fallen. It was very different compared to these days. Excluding other Eastern European countries, we had no chance to travel abroad for shows -- something that only became possible for us after 1990. From one point of view, I was fortunate because I was a teenager when the borders were opened. I had to wait for my turn to see AEROSMITH and the other bands I loved.

The very first time AEROSMITH performed in my country, it was 1 year after the release of "Get a Grip" on May 27th, 1994 in Prague. It was an unforgettable night, where we also had the chance to see EXTREME perform, who were also really big at the time. I was so hoping for the opportunity to meet the band. I had escaped from school after I found out Steven Tyler was going to greet fans from his hotel balcony. There would be no chance to meet after that. They had another show in a different city, which I hoped to see too. Unfortunately, I had to go back to school. 3 years later, AEROSMITH returned to our country during their "Nine Lives" tour. I entered every possible competition to win a meet'n'greet with the band. It couldn't be very easy to win of these competitions, so I wasn't on any list of winners. Everybody was telling me that I'm naïve and crazy if I think I could ever meet a celebrity like Steven Tyler. I mostly didn't respond to these silly reactions to my dream. For a long time, there was no one in my life who shared the same passion for music. I didn't know any other



Las Vegas, 1999 (Photo: Karla Tallas)



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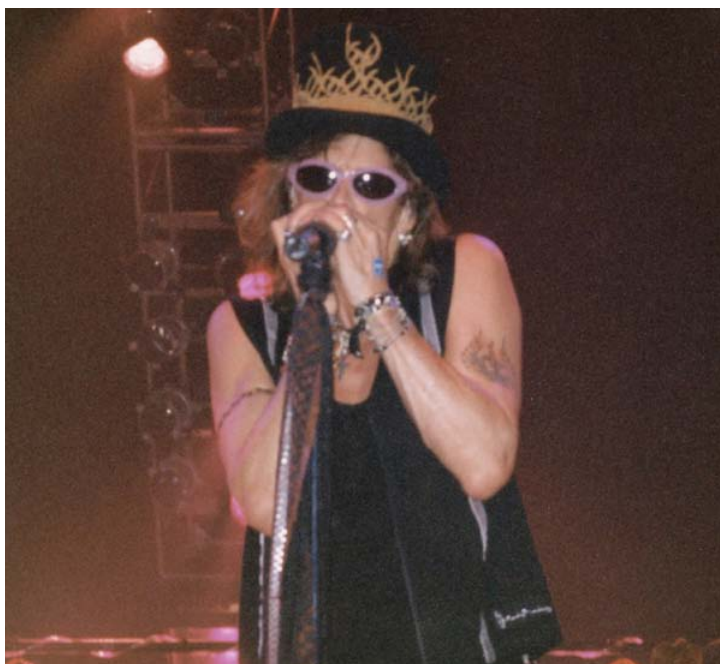


Los Angeles, Hollywood Bowl, 1999 (Photo: Karla Tallas)

AEROSMITH fans. This might sound quite strange to Americans, as AEROSMITH is still their greatest rock'n'roll band to this day. The words 'border' and 'impossible' became my nightmares – the codes that were hard to get rid of in the background of limited possibilities, surrounded mostly by closed minds.

After the AEROSMITH show in 1997 in Prague, I was thinking about my chance to meet the band even more intensely than before. In the "Nine Lives" CD booklet there was a flyer with the possibility to join the AEROSMITH official fan club, *Aero Force One*. I sent my application form in on the spot. One day, in the beginning of 1999, I received a letter with the announcement of a US West Coast travel package with the possibility to meet'n'greet the band. 4 shows in 4 different cities in 1 week! Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix and San Francisco. For some inexplicable reason, I had a dream to visit San Francisco since I was 12 years old. My aunt used to be the director of a travel agency, so she had the possibility to visit some countries even when it wasn't possible for others in our country. I remember how much I wanted to go with her to California at the age of 12. I didn't even know why back then – why I wanted to see San Francisco so much. I just remember me being very sad and disappointed when my father decided I couldn't go. Ever since, San Francisco had a place in my heart. Seeing the whole announcement about the upcoming US West Cost package, I wasn't able to

think about my work or anything else that day. After a couple of hours of still staring at the flyer, I called my former boyfriend. I was crying so much that it was impossible for him to understand what I was saying. He thought something serious had happened. I finally told him about the letter and then he hung up. About 1 hour later, he called me back and said he couldn't stop thinking about it either, and that if I really wanted to go, he could help make it possible for me. I couldn't believe my ears. But how could we do it? The package was so expensive for us. Back then, the air tickets were twice as expensive as they are now. We made an agreement not to say anything to my parents until everything was booked, to make sure there was nothing that could put our plans in danger. He wanted to go with me, but due to our financial situation it was not realistic. Anyway, nothing was more important to me than the fact that I could go. But there was another big obstacle to overcome. It wasn't that clear if I could even get a visa. Many people didn't receive visas without any explanation. You had to prove you had no intention to stay in the US or to get married there. It was easier for people with a long-term work contract. I was working as a freelance accountant back then, so I had a few contracts with some companies. It would have been understood that I would come back. I had to complete an interview about my US trip at the American embassy. They asked me why I had to go to the USA to see AEROSMITH when



Las Vegas, 1999 (Photo: Karla Tallas)

they have already performed in Prague twice. I thought they were joking with me. Luckily, 1 week later I got my visa, so there was nothing else what could stop me from going.

I couldn't sleep the night before my flight – I simply couldn't wait for this kind of adventure. "D Day" arrived on May 2nd, 1999, and for the first time in my life I flew such a long distance alone. Some people warned me to be careful at the US airport and not to speak that much, something I usually love to do, because they could send me back home. Nothing like that happened and I safely made it to Las Vegas.

I finally arrived at the glittering Hard Rock Hotel in Las Vegas. I hadn't seen any place like it before. A huge building full of bars, restaurants, shops and, what was of course the most impressive item from the first moment on, a ton of stuff collected from famous rock'n'roll icons. I couldn't stop staring at the guitars on the walls, all the clothes, and there was also a bike from Axl Rose. Rock music was on everywhere and it brought me to tears to listen to "Stairway to Heaven" while walking into the hotel elevator for the first time. By the way, AEROSMITH's video clip for the song "Full Circle" was recorded by the swimming pool at this hotel. Aero Force One members were directed to a room where we introduced ourselves to the crew and got some surprises like a travel package bag, official T-shirt, stickers, photos and our tour pass. You couldn't miss the room because AEROSMITH's songs from



Las Vegas, 1999 (Photo: Karla Tallas)

their live album "A Little Soul of Sanity" welcomed us right after we stepped out of the elevator. We were 89 Aeroheads from all over the world. Most of the people came from different parts of USA and Canada, but many of them were from Japan, some from the UK, 1 girl from Italy who I shared a room with in every city, and just me from the Czech Republic. The first evening we had a welcome party at a nice hotel bar.

The first show took place on May 3rd at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. Thanks to our membership in Aero Force One, we got exclusive seats in the front rows. It was the first time I had experienced a rock concert from a reserved seat. In Europe, we mostly have places for standing, especially in the main area in front of the stage. I had never before been as close to the band as I was that night. I of course risked taking my camera with me, something that wasn't allowed. Back then, it was even stricter than it is now. I was ready. I took some extra batteries and extra film with me that I hid in my bra.

We couldn't stop talking about what an outstanding show we saw in Vegas and couldn't wait to see the next one in 2 days in Phoenix. But a horrible surprise was waiting for us. We got the news that the show scheduled for the Blockbuster Desert Sky Pavilion was canceled due to illness of two band members. Luckily our AF1 crew was trapped in a sun-dipped desert with a pool. We blasted AEROSMITH on high volume all day long poolside. We tried to



Prague, 1997 (Photo: Petr Hanzlík)



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leave our sorrows behind and enjoyed the evening at Alice Cooper's restaurant, Cooperstown, with Cinco de Mayo spirit in the air. It was the 5th of May, an annual celebration that commemorates the Mexican victory over the French empire at the Battle of Puebla in 1862.

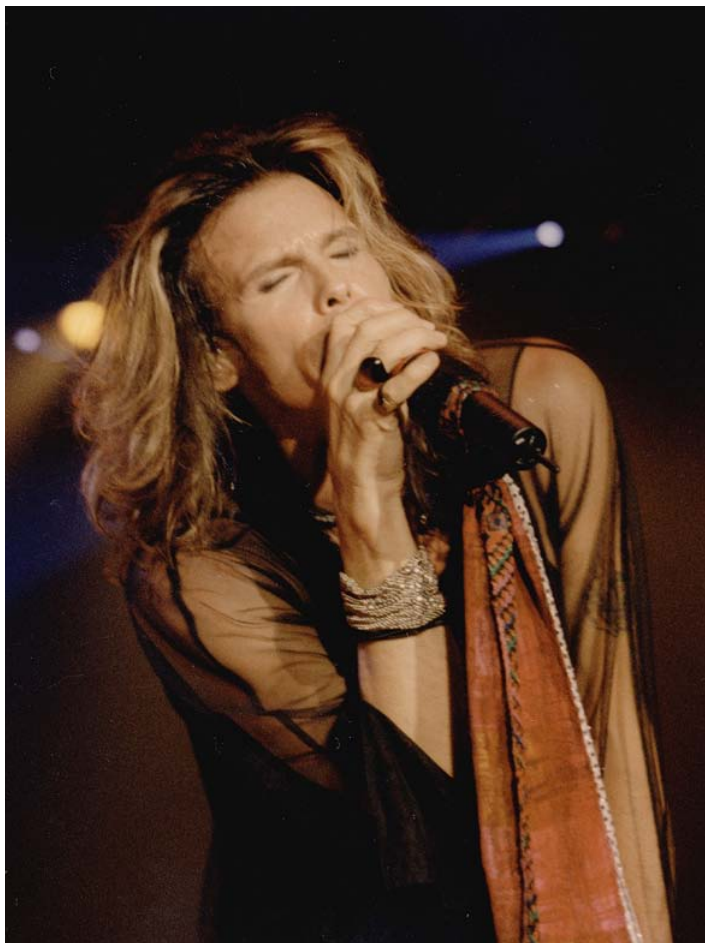
The next morning, we all boarded the bus for Hollywood to the fabulous Hyatt on Sunset. We learned about the Sunset Strip Tattoo Parlor across the street. Plenty of our crew, myself included, engraved our love for the Bad Boys from Boston. I hesitated for a while which song or album to choose. I decided for "Get A Grip" because it was the first time I could see AEROSMITH live. The next show happened on May 7th at the Hollywood Bowl. That was something that surpassed my wildest expectations. Having the possibility of being at the show of my all-time favorite band in one of the front rows close to the stage of such a legendary place, it totally blew my mind. Numerous Hollywood stars joined the cheering crowd.

The time had come for our final destination, San Francisco. I was impatiently awaiting the chance to finally see the City by the Bay. But we got another piece of shocking news. Our final show was canceled again. That was a big disappointment. There was no meet'n'greet as the band had promised before. We headed to headquarters of AF1 to lick our wounds. The Aero crew regained better spirits just in time for a phone call from Tom Hamilton, who expressed his humble apologies for the band's not

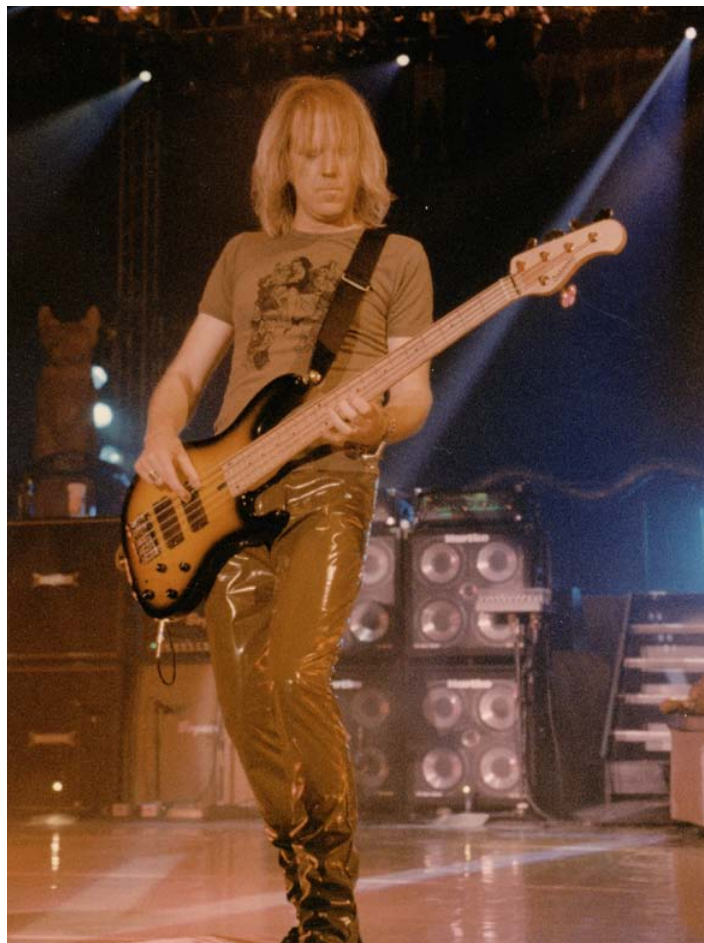
being able to make it. He also answered as many questions from us as he could. Afterwards, we all were escorted to San Francisco's own Hard Rock café. At our last party we all enjoyed the moment as much as we could. All of us, 89 people, were singing all together "Love in an Elevator" which became our cry battle.

The experience is indescribable, and perhaps for the first time in my life, at least for a while, I was living my dream. Coming home was very difficult for me. Deep down I longed for a different life. I was not being fulfilled by my work as an accountant, my current relationship, or the people around me who did not understand me at all. The fact that people in the USA have so many opportunities to always go for shows and events that are only happening there and nowhere else, to see big stars packing small clubs from the time to time, while I can't, it was totally breaking my heart more than ever. Also, the fact that people are so friendly on the streets, they are all smiling and talking to you. You are not a stranger, no matter what clothes you are wearing. For the first time in my life I didn't have to deal with the prejudice you could run into at every corner in our country. I so enjoyed my days of freedom. And I finally could buy all the books about AEROSMITH, something that was priceless for me.

I couldn't deal with the fact that I was so close to the possibility of meeting the band but it didn't work out for me yet again. AEROSMITH was about to start



Prague, 1997 (Photo: Petr Hanzlík)



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the European leg of their tour, shortly after the US tour was over. I didn't let myself get discouraged and called AF1 headquarters in London. There was a very nice lady working there and she really tried her best to help me. She was so supportive and full of understanding. I explained to her the whole situation and how difficult it was in my situation to make it to the US for the travel package, and that I had to pay a loan for another 3 years for it. Without it I absolutely couldn't afford that luxury package. She was shocked to learn our average salary back then, which she found out on her own after our call. Then she called me back and said she really feels for me and understands my love for the band and their music. She offered for me to come to Brussels, Belgium for the show. The fan club meeting with the band was planned there and she assured me this time it would 100% happen. I had another 4 shows on the list in Germany and Austria, so I added 1 more in Brussels.

And the meet'n'greet with AEROSMITH finally happened on June 28, 1999. Aerosmith's US West Coast tour and meet'n'greet the band in 1999 was the point that turned my life upside down. Now I feel a strong desire to share my emotions and to pass something on to others. Not being endowed with sufficient musical talent, I decide to pass on my thoughts through written text. AEROSMITH motivated me in my resolution to get involved in the music business. But my journey in the music world is a different story.



Prague, 1997 (Photo: Petr Hanzlík)

I have seen several AEROSMITH shows over the years. It was the Summer of 2013 when I suddenly had a strong feeling inside me, when I said to one lady who is one of the closest people in my life: "remember my words, I'm going to meet Steven Tyler again, at the latest in September 2015." Eventually we got to August 2015 and she remembered my words and told me that my vision is probably not going to happen because there was no announcement about any upcoming shows. With a smile on my face I just said there is still enough time till the end of September. It was close to midnight in the middle of August when I suddenly saw Joe Perry's announcement about a special anniversary show in Moscow on September 5th. My heart was beating wild and I couldn't fall asleep the whole night. I immediately knew that I was going to meet Steven. I didn't know how and where, but I strongly felt it would happen anyway. The next morning, I called the lady to inform her that I would send her a pic of me with Steven Tyler on the evening of September 4th. I absolutely had no doubt about it, but there was no plan. I just knew they were expecting 100,000 people to come for the show at Lubyanskaya Square. After arriving to Moscow, I found out AEROSMITH were in the hotel just one block behind my hotel and that they were going to have a press conference there the next morning. I couldn't believe it. Right after breakfast I went to the hotel and was waiting there all day long till Steven Tyler actually showed up. He came



Prague, 1997 (Photo: Petr Hanzlík)



Aerosmith's US West Coast tour in 1999.

My Italian roommate Francesca Avati is since then one of my most dearest friends.



straight towards me and a real mass of people started to form. People started to fight as the crowd of probably more than 100 people wanted to be close to Steven. For a while I couldn't even feel where my legs were. I just thought to myself, I can't give up and lose the chance to give Steven the book I was intensely working on for the whole week and to talk to him for a while. I was holding onto his scarf, just trying to keep right behind him. He was one of a kind and told his bodyguard that it's ok and took me upstairs to the hotel door with him. I have never experienced a fight that hard in my life. In the end I met him 3 times over the 3 days, and most importantly I enjoyed another nearly 2 unforgettable hours while AEROSMITH were rocking Moscow and celebrating the 864th birthday of the city. And I sent the photo of me and Steven Tyler to the lady on September 4th, just as I had promised her.

Although I love many artists and listen to many kinds of music, there is something unique in the case of AEROSMITH, something that I haven't found anywhere else. The combination of the greatly talented and such diverse personalities in the band, their music and specific sound, underlined with the contagious energy of Steven Tyler, who in the male world embodies everything that Janis Joplin brought to the female world. There will never be another band like AEROSMITH. I'm so thankful that I get to walk the Earth in their time, no matter the fact that I was born on the other side of the world.



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