

s f t w**MUSIC****MEETS GENE SIMMONS**EXCLUSIVE
by LAURA ARMSTRONG

BEFORE the Playboy model wife of Kiss hell-raiser Gene Simmons agreed to marry him after 28 years' dating, she had one demand.

Shannon Tweed insisted the 66-year-old rocker, who admits to bedding almost 5,000 groupies, must burn his secret collection of sex snaps.

And the bonfire at their home in Los Angeles went on for days.

Gene says: "I didn't do drugs in the crazy times but I did do sex. 'Did I sleep with 4,800 women?' So they tell me. I did have the Polaroids to prove it, oh yes. But most of them were burned."

"Shannon and I got together with them and we had a ritual."

As the frontman of hard rock band Kiss, Gene has spat blood and breathed fire – daubed in the band's iconic face paint – for more than four decades.

And with the help of the freakishly long tongue he flashes on stage, he racked up conquests even faster than the band racked up gold albums.

But 42 years after Kiss's debut album, Gene insists his days of wild sex with groupies are long behind him.

Since 1974, Kiss have had more gold albums than any other American band.

But Gene says his biggest achievement is his family.

He says: "I never knew what a big deal it was before Shannon and I had kids."

"I never cared about it, I didn't want to get married or have kids."

"But when they were born I was at the hospital crying like a 12-year-old girl."

'I don't care if I get hurt, I don't fear pain'

"Have Kiss sold millions of records? Yes. Are we the luckiest b*****s in the world? You're goddam right we are."

"I feel like the man on top of the highest mountain in the world, shouting out at the top of his lungs, 'Isn't this great. How did we get up here?'"

"But my kids are more important. Sophie is 23 but already has a song which has been downloaded nine million times. And Nick, who is 27, is writing a script."

"When they were younger, they would see me performing on stage and say, 'Oh God, there's dad sticking his tongue out again.'"

"Nick also gets asked if he has a long tongue – which he does."

"At first they didn't realise how big the band were but as they hit their teens they noticed that people who they thought were cool knew me."

"I can remember Nick saying once, 'Bob Dylan's really good.' And I was, like, 'Yeah, he's good. You met him when you were eight, he came over here.'"

"He was, like, 'What? Why didn't you tell me?' I replied, 'Nick, you were in the room.'"

Bob Dylan is just one of the millions who Gene and bandmates Paul Stanley, Eric Singer and Tommy Thayer have won as fans.

And Gene credits their success to the escapism they offer.

He says: "If you have been stuck in traffic or had an argument with your girlfriend the place you want to be is at a Kiss concert."

"I want people to forget about everything for a few magic hours."

"It's magic time, like an electric church. It's escapism for me, too."

"It's a bit like Jekyll and Hyde."

On stage I've caught on fire loads of times and once I fell off a 15ft flying rig



I've slept with 4,800 groupies...but my wife made me burn all the Polaroids

When I hear the roar of the crowd and smell the greasepaint, the adrenaline courses. It's a pure high.

"When you see me doing God Of Thunder – with the blood and the fire – I'm right there in that moment, I'm not thinking about anything else."

"At that moment I would be the last f*****g guy on Earth you'd want to fight because I don't care if I get hurt, I don't fear pain."

"On stage I've caught on fire loads of times and once I fell off a 15ft flying rig."

"You really have to have a loose screw to want to get up on stage. I do have that bit of insanity."

"And I don't have the shyness some people have. That comes from not wanting to be judged – and I couldn't personally give a f***."

This month sees the release of movie Kiss Rocks Vegas, filmed during their nine-show run at Hard Rock Hotel Las Vegas in 2014.

Gene says: "The shows in Vegas were a challenge for us because the space was small. Normally we have

to notify airports about our concerts because our fireworks go up 200ft and we could easily knock low-flying planes out of the sky."

"The film is a celebration, our way of giving back to the fans."

Kiss may be one of the longest-rocking bands around but they show no signs of slowing down.

And Gene, who says he's only ever got high in a dentist's chair, is clear on what he thinks about stars snuffed out before their time.

He says: "With drugs, you reap what you sow."

"I'd understand if drugs made you smarter, run faster, made your d**k bigger. But they don't."

"So I think it's f*****g pathetic that Michael Jackson, Jimi Hendrix,

Prince, Amy Winehouse all died because of them."

"No one came into their houses and shot them dead. No, they killed themselves. They were talented but they weren't around to enjoy what they achieved."

But when Kiss do eventually bow out, Gene thinks there is only one contender to take their place – as long as she picks up a guitar.

He says: "As soon as Lady Gaga gets rid of the disco stuff, she's a rock star. She can do things Britney and Madonna can't."

"If she had guitars behind her, she could knock it out of the park."

Asked about Kiss's own legacy, Gene adds: "Are there more deserving bands out there than us? Yes. Are there better writers? Yes."

"But I always think of it in terms of cooking. Yes, you can have cordon-bleu cooking that's all fancy. Technically, it's better. But personally, I prefer a Whopper."

●Kiss Rocks Vegas is in cinemas for one night only on May 25.



NEW MUSIC
By Jim Gellatly

INDIGO VELVET

WHO: Darren Barclay (vocals/guitar), Jason Tucker (guitar/vocals), Laurie Adam (bass), Billy McMahon (drums).

WHERE: Edinburgh.

FOR FANS OF: The 1975, Two Door Cinema Club, The Vaccines.

JIM SAYS: I'm forever bumping into the guys from Indigo Velvet at gigs.

They seem to be as passionate about seeing other acts as they are about making their own music. For me that's the sign of a band that's embracing the scene.

It's clearly rubbed off on them when it comes to their own live performances.

Starting around 2011 when still at school, they were originally known as The Kicks.

Initially with a more of a rock sound akin to bands like Kings Of Leon, they re-emerged with a new line-up as Indigo Velvet a couple of years ago.

Ditching their indie-rock by numbers sound they've developed into one of the most exciting young bands in the country.

With shades of Vampire Weekend and Bombay Bicycle Club, Indigo Velvet create a wonderfully upbeat sound that can't fail to put a smile on your face.

Styling themselves as "tropical pop", they've inadvertently found themselves part of a new wave of indie pop that includes Coasts and Dundee's Model Aeroplanes.

Frontman Darren Barclay



said: "The music has naturally developed throughout the years. After experimenting with our sound, we discovered what we want to be as a band."

"Every song we write or record, we want it to be bigger and better than the last."

They've again proved that with their latest single Easy Love, which has been picking up radio play across the country.

An early break for Indigo Velvet was getting involved with the Hit The Road youth music initiative a couple of years ago. Artists are mentored by music industry professionals and go on tour across Scotland. The programme's been pivotal in helping young acts break out.

Making their festival debut on the Hit The Road stage at last year's Electric Fields Festival in Dumfries and Galloway, Indigo Velvet's diary is already starting to fill up for this summer.

They showcase at the Xpo-North creative industries festival in Inverness on June 9. In September the band are booked to appear at the Lindsfarne Festival in Northumberland alongside acts like British Sea Power, Fatherson and Reef. Bass player Laurie Adam said: "They've helped us arrange a return bus from Edinburgh for our fans so that will be special."

Indigo Velvet's next gig is Sunday, May 29, at Sneaky Pete's in Edinburgh, supporting Lisbon.

●MORE: weareindigovelvet.co.uk
Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm.

amazingradio.com
jimgellatly.com



WATCH VIDEO OF BAND AT:
thescottishsun.co.uk