

# Poison gear up for 20th anniversary tour, reissues, hits CD celebration

by Cathy Bernardy

Somehow 20 years have already passed since Poison's debut, *Look What The Cat Dragged In*, was released. Its 101-week run on the *Billboard* charts was followed in 1988 by *Open Up And Say... Ahh!* (the original "demonic" tongue cover LP can still be found for reasonable prices on the secondary market) and *Flesh & Blood* in 1990, the three Poison albums that '80s rock fans are most likely to own, selling between three and five million each by 1991, before Nirvana and the Seattle sound took over the scene from the Sunset Strip. (Now reissued with bonus tracks.)

Back then, pre-Alanis Morissette's 16 million *Jagged Little Pill*, Garth Brooks' 14 million *Ropin' The Wind* and Santana's *Supernatural* comeback of 14 million, three million in sales meant that almost everyone you knew in school owned the album. All those same people also have the group's *Greatest Hits 1986-1996*, from 1999, which has sold nearly three million copies itself to date, on the strength of hits such as "Every Rose Has Its Thorn" (#1), "Nothin' But A Good Time" (#6), "Something To Believe In" (#4) "Talk Dirty To Me" (#9), "Unskinny Bop" (#3) and their cover of "Your Mama Don't Dance" (#10).

That was already more than five years ago, so Capitol has refreshed that record into *The Best Of Poison, 20 Years Of Rock*. Included are a few songs from the last decade and a recently recorded cover of Grand Funk's "American Band." Of course, being that Poison had so many hits in their heyday, 14 of the 18 songs are repeats from the first best-of CD. (It's still a really fun listen, though. They knew how to craft the catchy, rump-shaking tunes.)

The other songs different from the first compilation include one from their 2000 release, *Power To The People*, "The Last Song" and, from *Hollyweird* (2003) "Shooting Star" as well as a cover of Kiss' "Rock And Roll All Nite" from the *Less Than Zero* soundtrack.

The new *Best Of* is their best-selling release in the SoundScan era, delivering the band's highest chart position (#17 debut) since the #2 peak of *Flesh & Blood* in 1990 (also their first in the SoundScan era to hit the *Billboard* charts). After the first-week sales of nearly 40,000, a month in brought it to 100,000 copies sold.

As Poison geared up to begin their tour June 12 (starting at the arena in Mankato, Minn.), singer Bret Michaels took a few minutes to talk to *Goldmine*.



Courtesy of Capitol/EMI/Annamaria DiSanto

**Poison, in 2006, from left: Bobby Dall, C.C. DeVille, Bret Michaels, and Rikki Rockett.**

They're out with Cinderella until the end of August, and for people who purchase the 20th anniversary album reissues, inside will be a code to enter on [www.20yearsofrock.com](http://www.20yearsofrock.com) for a "buy one get one free" concert ticket offer. Also, in celebration of the anniversary, lawn tickets for each of the outdoor amphitheater dates are \$20 or less.

*Goldmine:* What do you have to go through to get ready for a major tour?

Bret Michaels: There is so much as Poison that we go through prepping for the tour, and a lot of it is timing. We are going to kick off our tour in Mankato. We kicked off there a couple of years ago, and it was incredible, obviously, a great sold-out show. We're going to spend about four or five days in the arena just going through our entire rehearsal, but we start with the music in Los Angeles. We'll all get together and go to the Poison rehearsal hall, and in this dank, great rock 'n' roll room we will go in there and argue through every song that we're going to do. We'll do 40 and narrow it down to the 16 or 18 songs we'll play live.

We'll always do the greatest hits, and

then we'll start looking for the B-sides that I love to play or the album cuts, the "Let It Play"s and "Good Love"s and "Love On The Rocks"es that I love to do, and obviously we'll add the new song, "American Band" in there and we'll mix that up with "Your Mama Don't," all the hits, "Unskinny" and "Every Rose." We go through the music first in the prep, then there's the photo shoots; there's interviews.

I have two beautiful daughters now, so it's also making sure I spend quality time with them, mix it in with what I'm getting ready to go on the road and do, and then that's it; we're in Mankato, spending four or five days with all the lights and pyro and lasers. We're bringing bar none the biggest show we've ever taken on the road. We up it every year, but this year we've got the screens, the lasers, the pyro, the moving phasers and lights, and it's going to be killer.

*How was the Kiss tour in 2004?*

A lot of bands tell horror stories about what happens with Kiss; with us, they treated us great. After the show I'd go back, meet a bunch of fans, party a bit and then I'd go up and watch Kiss' show,



and I'm thinking how strangely surreal this is. And they're looking over and giving me the sign, "Hey Bret, what's up," and I'm thinking, "These guys f\*\*\*ing rock." They're great. I've loved them since I've been a kid, and it was awesome.

*How do you keep yourself in shape on the road with your health issues?*

I've been juvenile diabetic since I was 6, and because I take insulin four times a day — really it only took me 40-some years to figure this out — it's a sense of balance....

I just have to balance [partying] with working out. I just get up the next day no matter how I feel and work out. If I'm a little bit hung over, God forbid, I get up and work out and get my blood sugar right back in control. But I also didn't want to go through my entire life being scared of everything. One thing I am not — I'm not a real fearful person, meaning I'm not like, "Oh my God, I can't eat this, I can't look at that, I can't get a tattoo." I just try to keep myself in decent shape and prepare myself for what could happen.... That way I know, if you get a tattoo, it could get infected, so here's what you've gotta do to make sure that doesn't happen. I just have to go the extra mile, and then I can enjoy things.

*On the new best-of, you have a new cover song, but will Poison be writing any new material together?*

If I have my way, we'll be writing new stuff. The reason I continue to do a lot of solo stuff on my own [*Freedom Of Sound* solo tour in 2005] is because I live to write music. I live to play music. On my property I have a room that's — did you ever see *MTV Cribs*? If you catch the *Cribs* thing they did, I have a 10-acre ranch and part of it is — and this is out in Malibu — there's part of it that is ded-