

The Flying Revolverblatt

The Mystery and Madness of Old-fashioned R'n'R

Suzi Quatro

YOU BETTER BE GOOD

The matchless Rock'n'Roll icon chats about 'Suzi Q', a new documentary about her life, reveals why Joan Jett copied her style and tells why it is OK to not having met Elvis.
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TFRB: How did it feel to work on the songs for your new record 'No Control' together with your son Richard?

Suzi Quatro (SQ): That has been a fantastic experience. We didn't know what was going to happen, thought we are just having fun, making a couple of demos and all of a sudden realised it was very serious and decided to make an album. He pressed my Suzi Quatro buttons and said he wants to remind me of who I am. My son was able to restart that original Suzi Quatro feeling in me. Not that it was gone. Suddenly we were flying. I wanted nothing planned on this album but everything to be organic. Let's just write and whatever comes out comes out. It's me but it's me today with everything I've learned along the way.

TFRB: My favourite song on the record is 'Macho Man'.

SQ: It's great. We do that live. The song opens the second half of the show.

TFRB: Is it referring to 'Can the Can' – or am I wrong?

SQ: You are absolutely right. It is in that same area without going backwards. It's me today, and this is what Richard brought to the table.

TFRB: Talking about the 'Macho Man': Was it hard for you to hold ground in an especially back then male-dominated Rock'n'Roll business?

SQ: I don't do gender and don't think of myself as a female musician. I never have. I kicked down the door because I didn't see the door. That's the truth. I didn't see the door and I don't see it now. 'I can't do that because I am a female' - that just doesn't cross my brain.

TFRB: There wouldn't have been a Joan Jett without what you've done?

SQ: Of course not. There's a lot of them. Chrissie Hynde, Joan Jett, The Talking Heads - if you look at my documentary every single one of these people is in there talking about me.

TFRB: How does that make you feel?

SQ: Makes me cry.

TFRB: And proud?

SQ: Damn proud but it also makes me cry because I'm watching my life of a screen and I'm going: Oh my god!

TFRB: Makes you feel older?

SQ: I don't feel old. I never ever played the age card and I don't do it now. I announce my age from the stage. I just don't care how old I am and feel proud how much I've done and what I've given to the world. It makes me teary. If I felt old, I wouldn't still be creating new music.

TFRB: Is it true that young Joan Jett followed you to the hotel to ask for

signing some pictures?

SQ: She was probably my biggest fan. Joan loved me so much. She saw in me what she could be

herself which is the whole point of the exercise. There were a lot of people doing what Elvis did after Elvis. So I knew that it would happen and that's fine. Joan took the original image of Suzi. That original first look. Everybody starts somewhere, and that was her beginning point. We are different now.

TFRB: Did she start out copying you?

SQ: Yes. If you watch the documentary Lita Ford, the guitar player says that Joan was identical to me. That she moved the same, she had her haircut the same. It then was the band that said: "Hey, you got to change a little. Stop taking her moves. You are great on your own. Let Suzi be Suzi and you'll be Joan. You know every person in this business sees somebody like Joan did me or like I did Elvis. There is something in there you can take on to you. She has done very well in her career. I might have started it but she made it her own.

TFRB: You've seen Elvis for the first time watching the Ed Sullivan Show?

SQ: When I was six.

TFRB: Your father was a Jazz musician beside his job at General Motors?

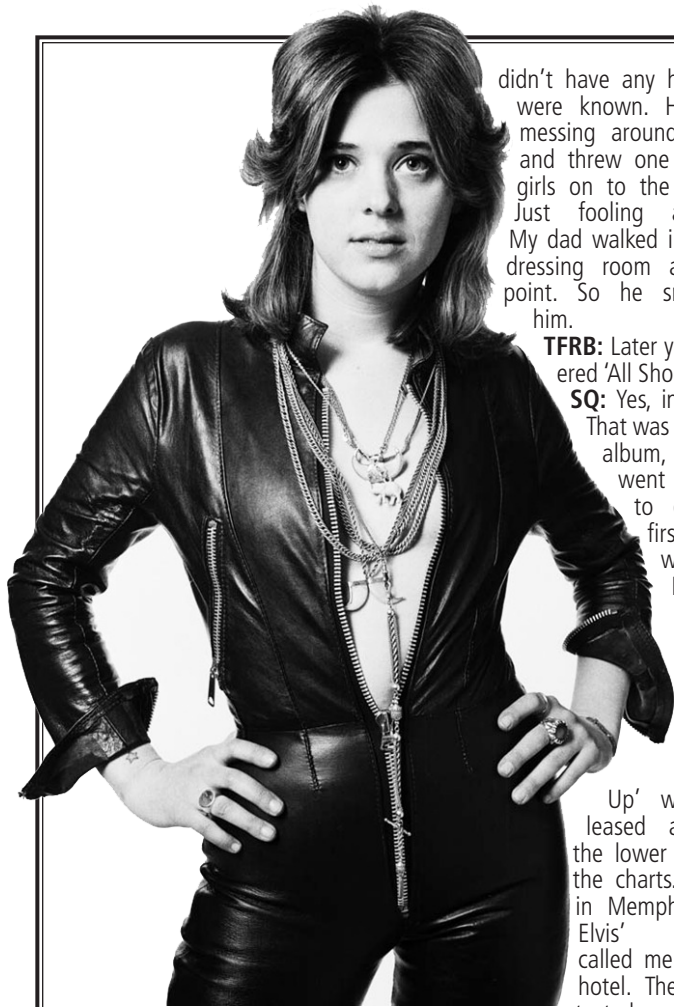
SQ: My dad was a musician and all of his five kids played various instruments. I was watching the Ed Sullivan Show. My elder sister was fifteen. She was screaming of course. I was watching and wondered why she was screaming because I was too young. But then I went into the screen and looked at Elvis. I had that epiphany moment. It didn't even occur to me he was a guy. I just thought I am going to do that.

TFRB: Starting out with The Pleasure Seekers aged 14. How did your parents react?

SQ: I didn't have any problems. With my father being in the business he was totally supportive. I didn't have to argue with him to be in a Rock'n'Roll band. He gave me my first bass guitar - a Fender 1957 Precision. The Rolls Royce of bass guitars. My father helped us buy our first van and helped us with our equipment. He taught me to be professional. He always said to me: 'This is a profession. Somebody is taking some money out of their pockets paying to see you. You better be good.'

TFRB: He also was very protective – even knocked down Chuck Berry once.

SQ: We were doing a gig with Chuck Berry supporting him obviously. We



didn't have any hits but were known. He was messing around a bit and threw one of the girls on to the couch. Just fooling around. My dad walked into the dressing room at that point. So he smacked him.

TFRB: Later you covered 'All Shook Up'.

SQ: Yes, in 1974.

That was my first album, and I went back to do my first tour with the English band back in my home country. 'All Shook

Up' was released and in the lower end of the charts. I was in Memphis and Elvis' people called me at the hotel. They contacted me and

then Elvis got on the phone. I nearly died. He said he loved my version and if I would like to come to Graceland and meet him. I said I was too busy because I wasn't ready to meet him yet.

TFRB: You've never met him afterwards, right?

SQ: No. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. I wrote a song which is pretty well known now called 'Singing with Angels'. A tribute to Elvis. I recorded it in Nashville with James Burton on guitar and The Jordanaires. If I had met Elvis, that song wouldn't have been written. It's an important song. Elvis impersonators sing it and it's played at funerals. My place in this whole was to do that and not to meet him.

TFRB: Do you remember when the news about his death spread?

SQ: Sure, are you kidding? I was in Los Angeles and had flown over from Tokyo to audition for Happy Days on my own money. They saw my picture on the cover of Rolling Stone and said that's the girl we are looking for. They were looking for a certain kind of actress. I went over to audition. Afterwards, they asked me to go back to the hotel but said they will call me. So I am waiting there in my hotel room. The TV is on. I pick up the phone and they tell me they don't just want me for two episodes but for fifteen. I was really excited. At that very same moment it came on the TV screen: The king is dead. It's crazy. I have all these epiphanies with Elvis. When I came back about three months later to do my first bit of filming, I was introduced to Nudie who would make all my outfits for the show—he was Elvis' personal tailor. Isn't this nuts? You can't invent stuff like that.

TFRB: What was the reason that nobody told you until The Pleasure Seekers broke up that there was the chance for a solo career?

SQ: They just hoped that Mickie Most would take the whole band, so they kept it to themselves. It was starting to dwindle and Mickie knew that it would break up, anyway. I then found out from my elder sister that he only wanted me.

TFRB: Let's talk about England and your time in London - would you consider yourself as part of the Glam movement? Many people still do but honestly, I don't.

SQ: Not at all. My chap and I have discussed that many times. I was always Rock'n'Roll and had no make-up on but a plain black leather suit. The complete opposite of what Glam looked like. But I was proud of that era.

TFRB: How was the atmosphere back then arriving in London? Everything's possible or rather disenchanting?

SQ: I never considered not doing what I was doing and would not go home until I was successful. I was very lonely, but that was the price to pay. I was absolutely determined. That's my nature.

TFRB: In Germany the Bravo magazine was important for you, right?

SQ: Absolutely. I think that was the biggest Magazine for that market. They had cut-out-pictures of me. They loved me and the fans loved me because of that. I got my Ottos displayed proudly on one of my pieces of furniture.

TFRB: You've experienced the wildest decades in Rock'n'Roll. How come you weren't into partying and drugs that much?

SQ: My father always said: 'You are a professional entertainer. This is what you do. Make sure whenever you go on that stage that you do the best job you can.' So I'm not a Sex, Drugs and Rock'n'Roll person. That's not who I am. Sure I had my moments, who doesn't. I do this job because I love doing it. I want to entertain and leave people with a good feeling. I am quite square that way and do all my wildness on stage - not off.

TFRB: Do you still follow and listen to current music?

SQ: I listen to everything because I have an 18-year-old granddaughter. Whenever we are sitting or driving somewhere, the radio is switched every five seconds. I listen to stuff but most of the time I'm busy just doing what I do.

TFRB: Are you still in contact with Motor City buddies like Alice Cooper or Iggy Pop?

SQ: Sure. In fact, I was talking to Alice the other day. He wanted me to do a couple of things for him. Not that long ago I did a Radio 2 series about Detroit so I went back there - met my Motown friends and the MC5 people.

TFRB: Is it long overdue to induct you to the Hall of Fame?

SQ: I would say so.

TFRB: Everybody would agree on that, right?


SQ: I think it has become humorous in a way. An organization like that which says they honour the right people—no they don't. How can you not honour the first person? For me, it's funny now and maybe I don't care anymore. It's up to them. But yes: it is a bit ridiculous. 



Photo Megan Garth