

## Where Are They Now ...

### *Alice Cooper's*

# Neal Smith



by Bruce Jeansonne

**With** hits like "I'm Eighteen", *School's Out*, *Billion Dollar Babies*, and *No More Mr Nice Guy*, Alice Cooper sold over 25 million records, performed sellout concerts throughout the world, and charted the album "Billion Dollar Babies" #1 on Billboard, Record World, and Cash Box on the same week in 1973. Listen to the radio today and you will still hear these songs being played regularly in rotation along with the current rock of today. That says something of the quality of songwriting and musicianship that made up the band, Alice Cooper. Drum duties for the band fell on none other than Neal Smith.

After 2 albums for Frank Zappa's label, Straight Records, Alice Cooper recorded 4 songs for Warner Brothers for a demo. Included with these songs was "I'm Eighteen". The song was included on the next album "Love It To Death" which Neal says was recorded in two days. The rocket ride had begun. The "Killer" album followed with even more success, "Schools Out" climbed the charts even quicker, and "Billion Dollar Babies" topped everything the band had previously done. "Muscle of Love" was the final album the band was to record before disbanding.

While enjoying the success of the band, Neal had already begun his 2nd career, real estate. The financial benefit of being in the band, Neal says, allowed him to buy his first house and sell it 2 years later to triple his money. At this time the band was also buying and selling apartment units for business purposes. After the Cooper breakup, Neal continued in the music business recording the album "Battle Axe" with a new band called "Billion Dollar Babies". He went on to record with artist such as The Plasmatics, Buck Dharma, and Bruce Cameron.

Today, Neal still owns all of his drum kits from the Alice Cooper period. His 18 piece silver sparkle Slingerland was the recording kit for all the Cooper albums. Also in his collection is the 20 piece chrome Slingerlands he used for the live shows. The 21 piece mirrored Premier kit was the last kit of the Cooper days and



was used for the Billion Dollar Babies tour. Neal originally wanted this kit to resemble Budweiser cans. The band approached Budweiser for sponsorship, requesting only a case of Bud and a case of Michelob in the dressing room at each gig. The company's reply was that they would never sponsor a rock band, ever. Soon after, Dennis Dunaway, Cooper's bassist, had an idea to use mirrored tiles like the ones that made up a table in his room at the band's mansion in Greenwich, Conn. The tiles were 1/4" x 1/4", which came glued on a cloth back to make make it flexible. Each "larger" tile was 12" x 12" and was wrapped around each drum.



The kit Neal plays today is a 1980's birdseye maple Gretsch kit with 2 - 24" bass drums, 18" and 20" floor, 4 mounted toms, with a Gretsch chrome snare. One of Neals current music projects involves Dennis Dunaway from the Cooper band and Joe Bouchard from Blue Oyster Cult, with Ian Hunter from Mott the Hoople lending a hand. They have written and recorded over the last two years

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with the project now being in post production. Also recently released is Neal's solo album, **Platinum God**. Recorded at the same time as Cooper's solo record "Welcome to my Nightmare", the album was written by Neal, who also sang, and played drums and percussion on the tracks. The CD is available from his website [www.nealsmith.com](http://www.nealsmith.com). Another music project that Neal is involved with is called Cinematik with Peter Catucci and Robert Mitchell. The music features African, Eastern, and Middle Eastern percussion. The music, Neal says, is movie soundtrack style, sounding like Yanni meets jungle drums.

The Billion Dollar Babies album has just been re-issued and packaged with a live CD recorded over 2 nights in Texas. Neal Smith is in top form on both these recordings and the re-mastering of the original

album has the drum sound cooking.

Real estate became a career for Neal in the mid 80's. Specializing in luxury residential real estate, he can help one move from any location in the world to another. His website, [www.nealsmith.com](http://www.nealsmith.com), has been online for 4 years and features both the music side and the realtor side of Neal, with links to fellow Cooper members and bandmates. A must site for fans of the band.

2001 will bring us more of Neal Smith, the musician. New recordings and old ones being re-issued. Success in both the music business and real estate business. "I'm in the process of restoring my Slingerlands", Neal told me. Looks like you chose a good time to do so, Neal. Maybe we'll get to see them in action soon.



**LUDWIG & LUDWIG** Super-Sensitive Snare Drum in Streaked Opal Pearl . Circa 1930-35. This beautiful drum is a 5" x 14" and has a solid mahogany shell with ten tube lugs and single flanged hoops. It features two sets of snares, one under each head that can be operated separately or together. Each is controlled by a separate lever that enables you to throw on both snares, to throw them off, or to put them on or off individually. This drum finished in Streaked Opal Pearl, is very rare. The finish was offered by Ludwig in the 1930-35 catalogs and sold for about \$ 50.00. This beautiful snare drum belongs to Joe Luoma and is valued at over \$ 5,000.00.

**BIOGRAPHY ON STAGE** Presents **PETE BEST**. This live stage presentation with Pete Best has as its basis a narrative accounting of The Beatles' story during their formative years in Liverpool and Hamburg and is coupled with a concert performance of recordings that have found a special place in history. The format of this show pays very close attention to the details of Pete's time with The Beatles, but also deals in large measure with the evolution of music in England from skiffle to the British Invasion. This highly acclaimed presentation will begin touring the United States in September of this year. For tour schedule and more detailed information about this show visit [www.BiographyOnStage.com](http://www.BiographyOnStage.com). Also this website contains a wealth of information and pictures of Pete Best, The Beatles, and other bands and artist that have made a mark on American music. This is a "must" website! Check it out. [www.BiographyOnStage.com](http://www.BiographyOnStage.com)

Atlanta Vintage Drums will be participating in supplying items used to make up Pete Best' drumset for this show tour.....

