

Interview with former Runaway Cherie Currie

By Helen Marketti

Cherie Currie was the lead singer for the 70s band The Runaways with Joan Jett. She will be at The Foundry in Lakewood on Wednesday, August 7. Stop out to relive some rockin' memories! Watch for her on Live on Lakeside, Channel 3 on the morning of August 7 and also as a guest on WMMS, Rover's Morning Glory!

"I think the music of the 70s is the best music. The list goes on and on with Elton John, the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie and Alice Cooper. It was a time where we saw some extraordinary artists. A lot of great bands were born out of that decade and I appreciated all of them," explains Cherie. "You could listen to your favorite bands on the radio, watch them on TV or you went to their concert. All of them influenced me in some way. I loved the theatrics of David Bowie, Alice Cooper and Suzi Quatro. It was so magical back then. It was a great time to grow up."



Cherie felt an immediate music connection with David Bowie. "When I first discovered him, he was playing Ziggy Stardust. I found him to be bizarre, strange and beautiful all at once. He was androgynous. He was playing a character and that's what I liked. I have a twin sister and when we were growing up, she was always more outgoing than I was. I was trying to find my own identity and I think I connected with Bowie because he was so unique."

The Runaways were only teenage girls during the 70s when they were taking on a fan base of popularity that rivaled male bands. They served as an inspiration for other female artists who came along. "The fact that we were teenage girls gave people an excuse to brush us off but once they either heard our music or saw one of our shows, they gave notice," remembers Cherie. "It wasn't all about the guy bands. In fact, we were better than some of them. These guys didn't appreciate little teenage girls showing up and kicking their asses! We were young but we were strong players and it was fun." The line up for The Runaways during that time was Cherie Currie, Joan Jett, Lita Ford, Jackie Fox and Sandy West.

Cherie still keeps in touch now and then with some of her former band mates. Sadly, Sandy West who played the drums for The Runaways passed away in 2006 from lung cancer. Cherie worked with Joan during the film release about their lives and career in 2010, The Runaways. "I opened for Joan in 2010 at the Pacific Amphitheatre to a sold out show. At the time, I did not intend to come back into the business. I had reached out to Matt Sorum (Guns N' Roses, Velvet Revolver) to help me put a band together. After that, we worked on a record with Kenny Laguna who is also Joan's manager and they have Blackheart Records together. Kenny had also been my manager and one of my best friends for many years. We recorded an album but right now, it's in a holding pattern. I am not sure of a release date. I just want to get out there and thank the fans for sticking with us for 35 years!"

Cherie shares her thoughts of what it is like being on the road. "I am such a classic rock person. It's the only music I listen to because it takes you back to happier times when you were young and things were simpler. People come to see our show because they remember the music of The Runaways and want to have that feeling of when they were a teenager. It's the reason I do this and to thank the fans for keeping our music alive. I sat back one day and watched The Runaways on you-tube and I am amazed at how young we were and how good we sounded."



Raven Divito of Ravenzpunkpit.com

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“My son, Jake is in my band,” said Cherie. “He is a phenomenal singer, player, producer and songwriter. He has his own band, too. His father (actor, Robert Hays) and I are best friends even though we are divorced. It’s neat to have Jake on stage with me because I can introduce him to the road and still be a protective mom. (laughs) When I was on the road with The Runaways, we had no parental supervision and it was hard. I didn’t want Jake to go through that so he’s learning more about the business and seeing what I’m going through from the past to now.”

When Cherie is not on the road, she can be found at her art studio perfecting the craft of chainsaw carpentry. “I started as a sketch artist and also did some painting. I was doing relief carving which is two-dimensional carving on flat wood. One day, about 12 years ago, I was on my way to the beach when I saw these two guys chainsaw carving on the



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Cherie with her son Jake Hays



side of the road. I thought that was really something and couldn’t stop thinking about it. I went to their gallery and saw these beautiful, finished pieces of art such as mermaids, dolphins and things like that. I think it’s natural that we associate chainsaw carving with crude, “blocky” kind of art,” said Cherie. “I asked the owner if I could train there and learn from them. When they saw some of the other work I had done, they immediately let me learn the craft. One of the pieces I had carved was three sea turtles swimming around a piece of coral, which was entered into the Malibu Art Expo that is very difficult to get into. I knew I was onto something when my work had been accepted. I have been doing this full time.

You have to create your own destiny and not depend upon others.”

Cherie is looking forward to coming to Cleveland on August 7. “I did not want to miss playing in Cleveland. Do you know the first show The Runaways did on our first tour was traveling straight to Cleveland to play at The Agora? I also have to say that guitarist Tony Artino, who played with Sandy and me in my band over twenty years ago, ended up moving to Cleveland! The band members who will be with me at The Foundry are going to be Grant Fitzpatrick (bass), Nick Maybury (guitar), Tony Artino (guitar) and my son, Jake Hays (drums). We have to make this Cleveland gig happen because it’s the Rock and Roll kick ass capital of the world!”

For more information: www.cheriecurrie.com www.therunaways.com
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