

Great Garages

ALICE COOPER — MOTOWN TO COOPER'STOWN

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Photos by Matthew D. Graff

Shocks and a well-staged paint job are almost as important to Alice Cooper as shock rock and stage mascara.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Famer and Paradise Valley resident has loved cars since growing up in Detroit, where he was born Vincent Damon Furnier in 1948 to Ether and Ella — his middle name honoring writer Damon Runyon.

"Horsepower and muscle cars are in my DNA," says Cooper, who has been living in the Valley of the Sun for much of his professional life with Sheryl, with whom he will celebrate 36 years of marriage this March.

A ballet instructor/choreographer who performed in his show from 1975 to 1982, she has given them three children: their eldest, Calico, an actress, singer and improv comedian,

who has been performing with his show since 2000; son Dash, who performs in the band Runaway Phoenix and has a '71 Cuda with a 440 6-Pack (Alice: "It gets three miles to the gallon, and when it starts up all the alarms go off.") and their youngest daughter, Sonora Rose.

Alice's dad sold cars — Plymouths. "He was the only honest used-car salesman in Detroit in the 1950s," says a chuckling Cooper, just completing 18 holes at Orange Tree Golf Course in Phoenix.

Today, he and friend, Chip Saggau, who acquires and maintain Alice's cars, both fared well on the links. The rock legend carded a 77 off a two handicap, so Chip knows not to wager with him. Golf is an everyday passion: Alice plays six

days a week (Sunday is for worship) from December to May, then tours in June worldwide for the next six months.

"Well, we almost starved," he continues, with a quiet chuckle that, for those who don't know him, belies a four-decade stage act incorporating boas to baby dolls, horror movies and vaudeville and rock genres from heavy metal to pop ballads. "Cars were everything to us."

They were his dad's passion, but he became a Church of Jesus Christ preacher, moving the family to Arizona more than a half century ago, where he worked with the San Carlos Apaches near Globe. "Now that I think about it, there are all kinds of cars up there just sitting around," he says, noting that religion, with family, is a central focus of his life.

The family moved to the Valley, where Alice attended Cortez High School, then Glendale Community College. His bands, with roots stretching to Cortez, attained stardom with the 1971 hit, "I'm Eighteen" followed a year later with the Cooper song everyone knows, "Schools Out," in 1972.

Since then, his 26 albums — six platinum in the United States, two gold — have established Alice Cooper as an international musical figure, as popular in London and Tokyo as he is in New York and Los Angeles. Lasting four decades at the highest level in popular music underlines his continuing ability

to reinvent his stage persona to attract not only the young but the young who have become equally devoted middle-agers.

His first car was a yellow 1966 Ford Fairlane GT with the 390-cubic-inch engine. Today, he keeps a variety but flips them to go on to other projects, which are part of his automotive joy. For instance, he's looking forward to having another Studebaker Avanti — his favorite car — as he has had five including a '63 with a Paxton Supercharger.

But keeping his cars pristine vintage isn't important to him; he'll throw a crate engine into one, redo the interior of another, custom paint another. "It's already vintage because of its age," he says. "What I want is for a car to be high tech and I want it to be driveable every day. I don't build them to put them in the living room."

Among his daily drivers is a 1966 Mustang Fastback with a high-horse crate motor, which he and Chip took a year and a half building. "When I bought my Fairlane, a '66 just like this one, in British Racing Green, was right next to it," Alice recalls. "I've always wanted one."

He also enjoys a 1998 Aston Martin DB7, which he's had for four years. "It's incredible, never been in the shop; it runs and runs, like a muscle car that never breaks down. I tell everyone who wants an Aston Martin to buy a DB7."



The rock-and-roller is an automobile groupie: "My wife says I can have any midlife crisis as long as it involves cars, golf or watches," says Alice, whose devotion to her, his family and the community is long-standing.

Since 1997, he has hosted the annual Alice Cooper Celebrity AM Golf Tournament, with all proceeds for his Solid Rock Foundation, which has helped thousands of troubled teens through music, dance, arts, sports and other recreation. And, for the last 11 years in December during the holidays, he, Sheryl and the Cooper family host the Christmas Pudding concert, again benefitting the foundation, which later this year will open The Rock at 32d Street, a 10,000-square-foot safe haven and activities center.

"We want to give those kids another opportunity that they might not have had," Alice says. "We just want to help them find better paths than the ones they have been given."

In the midst of all of his activities (he also owns Alice Cooperstown, a restaurant in downtown Phoenix), Alice recently discussed some of his cars that are being offered at the Barrett-Jackson Scottsdale Auction in January:

•**32 Ford Custom Coupe** — Autographed by Alice and meticulously documented, his red-on-white street rod has had a complete ground-up restoration. It's powered by a chromed-out Chevrolet 350-cid, 400-horsepower engine with a 600 Holley carburetor as well as automatic transmission for easy city driving. Features include power-coated frame, suicide doors, air-conditioning, billet wheels, Rodmaster wheels with knock-offs, custom sound system and a custom trunk large enough for Alice's golf clubs. All proceeds from the sale benefit the Solid Rock Foundation.

•**1936 Auburn Boat tail Speedster Custom Re-creation** —

A one-off hand-built Auburn — one of the stand-out sports cars of the '30s — this "Welcome to My Nightmare" required hundreds of hours and was built from the ground up. Alice spent \$36,000 on just the paint job: Look at it and its spectacular. This is no maintenance nightmare: The car is powered by a 5.3-liter Vortec V-8 and has automatic transmission, air-conditioning, custom interior and custom tires and wheels.

•**1965 Ford Mustang Fastback** — Red on black, this 'Stang has just 35,915 original miles on the 289-cid V-8 with automatic transmission, power steering and power brakes. Nicely restored, this fun everyday driver has taken Alice to golf courses, the mall and dinner. The rock legend will include a set of Calloway golf clubs for the new owner.

•**1966 Chevrolet Chevelle SS 396** — An original California and Arizona coupe, this classic SS retains the original black plate on the front and includes power steering, power brakes and air-conditioning. The 325-horse engine has been rebuilt and a 4-speed manual has replaced the original automatic transmission.

The 12-bolt rear end remains as does the original sheet metal on the floors, trunk, quarter panels, roof, fenders and hood after bead blasting. Resprayed, the factory Lemonwood Yellow has been covered with clear coat, color sanded and buffed. The original spoke hubcaps have been retained, and the car has original-style redline tires as well.

Classic American muscle, it includes a new interior, weather-stripping, chrome bumpers, trim, exhaust and mufflers. "The car looks and runs great," Alice says. "Driving it, it's '66 again in 2012 — and school's out for summer."

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