

## BILLY IDOL

### Looking back—and forward—with a new book and fresh music

BILLY IDOL RELIVED THE FIRST 58 YEARS OF HIS LIFE WHILE writing his new autobiography *Dancing With Myself*. He remembers wandering around his house in the middle of the night, thinking about the music he made with punk rockers Generation X in the 1970s, the hits he scored as a solo artist in the '80s, and his encounters and collaborations with everyone from Debbie Harry to Sid Vicious, as well as his wild party life.

Idol sees the book—and his latest album, *Kings & Queens of the Underground*—as a diary of the first part of his life and a map of where he may travel next. It has taken time for Idol to arrive at this place.



Michael Muller

His hits—including “Dancing With Myself,” “Rebel Yell” and “White Wedding”—not only ruled the radio waves, but their videos became MTV staples. Then a near-fatal 1990 motorcycle accident preceded a career skid. His 1990 album *Charmed Life* did well commercially, but subsequent releases, starting with the 1993’s *Cyberpunk*, did not.

Today, Idol is entirely focused on the present, which includes his new book, new record—produced by Trevor Horn and Greg Kurstin—and his current tour. While past recording sessions could be raucous, this time the creative process was more of a study in musical experimentation that began when he wrote the book.

“When I was trying to think back to a certain time, like the early days of punk rock, I sort of immersed myself in thought about it, sometimes for months,” Idol says. “It started a whole chain of creativity.”

“I think the album sounds very today, but it does have a different feel to it—though it’s not so different that it doesn’t

sound like my music,” he continues. “I didn’t feel the pressure of time as I had in the past, but I had the same camaraderie. Still, recording wasn’t quite the party it once was. We wanted to get on with the music—and we did.”

One of the musicians getting on with the music on *Kings & Queens of the Underground* was Idol’s longtime guitarist Steve Stevens. Idol makes no secret of his respect for Stevens’ powerful guitar work. “He’s the greatest compadre ever, and a great foil for me,” says Idol. “He is a great person to play with. What he does is incredible—he can do anything with a guitar.”

Idol is proud of what they cooked up in the studio, and he credits the brotherhood that he, Stevens and other players developed through their years of playing together. Says Idol, “I’m a musician, an instinctive musician—and I’m having a blast.”

—Nancy Dunham

