

ENCORE



KISS WAS A FULL YEAR AWAY FROM SUPERSTARDOM when photographer Norman Seeff shot this L.A. session for the cover of 1974's *Hotter Than Hell*. When Gene Simmons, Peter Criss, Paul Stanley and Ace Frehley (above, from left) entered his studio in full costume, says Seeff, "I was incredulous. My first thought was, 'Are they covering up for mediocrity?' Of course I was completely wrong about that." Seeff quickly realized the foursome had a natural gift for improvisation. "They were almost like an ensemble of dancers," he says. "Gene Simmons got things off and running. He sticks out his tongue—bam, I've got the shot. One of the guys laughs at him—bam, I've got that. They were moving from one thing to another very quickly." Seeff, who had just returned from Japan at the time, saw parallels with that country's tradition of Kabuki theater. "There were definitely similarities with the makeup and in their gestures," he says. "They were a combination of musicians and performance artists." The session yielded hundreds of images and set a new benchmark for Seeff when it came to photographing bands. "I give those guys great props for the creativity they put out," he says. "They had a vision and were pros."

