

interview by Elizabeth Rhodes
photographer Saryn Christina



Kevin Haskins

Kevin Haskins, drummer for iconic outfits Bauhaus, Love and Rockets, and Tones on Tail, has compiled and arranged decades of original artwork, photos, and ticket stubs into the book *Undead: The Visual History and Legacy of Bauhaus* to share the story of Bauhaus and give a more intimate view into the band members' lives at the time. We spoke with Haskins prior to the book's release in March about the importance of remembering the past, Bauhaus' legacy, and the unexpected toils of self-publishing.

I'd love for you to tell me a little bit about how the idea came about to make this book. I was reading on the Bauhaus Undead website that you've been the archivist for the band, so tell me a little bit more about that and how this turned into a book.

Kevin Haskins : There's a long answer or a short answer. [laughs]

I'm okay with either!

KH : Okay. Well, I think I started collecting when we started gaining notoriety in our local newspaper in Northampton which is called the *Chronicle & Echo*, and I think I was excited because we were being written up about. I think that's where it started and I just kept cutting stuff out and keeping stuff, collecting stuff with no real kind of intention in mind of what to do with it. And three years ago, around this time, my friend Matt Green at Cleopatra Records suggested I make a coffee table book and I said that's a great idea. Then they offered me a publishing deal, and it was very standard, but I just felt that I'd rather go out and go on my own and self-publish. Now, this is where the answer could become long or it could just jump to two years after that. I mean, the short answer is I went off on this crazy journey and I came full circle and ended up at Matt's house three years later. And I said, "I'm back at square one." And [Cleopatra Records] had just put out a book about Hanoi Rocks and [Matt] said yeah, we did a great deal and he told me what the deal was, and I said, "well, can you do the same deal for me?" We did it and it was a really good deal so I accepted it, and so it's kind of funny that I came back exactly to where I started, but I got a better deal.

Do you think that there's significance to Cleopatra Records being involved in publishing this?

KH : In what way?

Well, I know it is a Los Angeles based record label. I remember Cleopatra from the late 90s, early 2000s because they were putting out so many albums by darker alternative artists and that's really in the DNA of this label, but obviously the label was interested in embracing more, really encompassing everything that we think is interesting with the dark alternative genre but staying true to its roots in Los Angeles. So that's where I'm coming from asking if there's a connection to Cleopatra, because you're in Los Angeles and any connection therein, just curious to know if there was anything beyond that.

KH : Well, Brian Perera, the owner [of Cleopatra Records], in the past licensed some Bauhaus songs on compilations, so I've known him for a long time and there's that connection with my best friend working there, but actually when I reached out to publishing companies and I got a lot of interest from the UK, one thing that was very important to me was to find a publisher who could have good distribution and actually to be based in North America. While I was self-publishing I discovered that two thirds, more than two thirds of our fan base live in North America. I also discovered that shipping is phenomenally expensive to the rest of the world or to anywhere. So if I had chosen a publisher in the UK, you know, a lit-

tle under one third of our fan base would be really happy, and two thirds, not happy at all. Because you know it's that shipping thing. I have no control over it and it's a problem. And so I went with a North American publisher and also Cleopatra have a really good distribution network set up around the world, so they get books around the world and into book stores and record stores. Taking everything into consideration this [was] just the best avenue to go through. At least I'll make most people happy, you know. I just can't make everybody happy; I wish I could.

That's a life lesson even as you're trying to publish a book: you can't make everybody happy but you try to do your best. When you were starting did you have an idea of how you wanted to tell this story visually? Of course you had lots of different ephemera to weave together a story of the band getting together and then different periods for the band and beyond, so how did you approach that? That's a pretty big task.

KH : Well, during my self-publishing debacle, I met this guy Jeff Anderson [of Artists in Residence], and I think it was kind of meant to be that we would meet at that time. We kept running into each other at shows and we kind of hit it off. At the third meeting I said, "what do you do?" And he said, "well, I used to be an A&R guy but now I put out books and box sets," and I said, "well that's interesting." So in his house he has all of these amazing beautiful box sets and books that he's done for Sigur Ros, Nine Inch Nails, Fleetwood Mac, Roger Waters, Beck, it goes on and on, and I said, "you've got to work on this book with me." So he did and he brought in Donny Phillips and Kaylee Carrington [of KIH Studio] who are artists and archivers, so they did the layout. What I told them was that I want this book to be fairly austere, like a high-end art book. I don't want it to look like a rock and roll book with paint splashes and that kind of thing, you know. I just thought if we present it like an old flyer that I made that's all crumpled... You know, I used to make these things cutting out of photocopies with glue and it's really crude, but I said I would like these to be presented just on their own on one page, so the viewer will kind of look at them and go, "okay, I'm not just going to pass by this." This might sound pretentious and I don't mean it that way, but I just wanted [the content] to be presented like a piece of art if you will, don't just pass by it.

I think you're referencing the importance of the work to begin with, that you didn't just make a photocopy of a handwritten flyer; that was a work of art in itself, however crude the means may have been. You were creating art in making those flyers, so that makes sense to me of wanting the viewer to look at it and not just pass it by but to see the composition or any details that might catch their eye. It's the story of this band; with the flyer you're trying to advertise what you're in for if you come to this show, right? You're trying to say a little bit about what you're about to see.

KH : Most of us went to art school and in those flyers there's lots of influence from surrealism and the Bauhaus movement and also just a page of ticket stubs. The way Donny [Phillips] laid them out, all these beautiful pastel colors. You know, I just wanted people to see the beauty and the time and effort that went into people who made pins or the ticket stubs or flyers. I mean, around that time, a lot of thought and attention went into that type of thing. So I hope it comes across in the book.

You had to be contemplating the legacy of Bauhaus. What do you think the band's legacy is? Over the course of doing this book, has your opinion changed on that? Have you seen a different angle of the past and the band's impact through the process of creating this book?

KH : When we reformed in 1998, at that time it became aware to us how much influence we had on other bands and also just on people and fans, so I felt really grateful and blessed to have been in this band and to have had that influence, it's just remarkable. You know, when we started the band we had no idea that that would happen. So I feel very proud of it and I feel kind of possessive about our legacy, I feel that I had to do it justice, and in all modesty, I feel I've done that. It's very important to me to do this book and to do the band justice and not ruin the legacy or put an ink stain on it. One thing I set out with the book also was for it to be a celebration of the band, and I didn't want to rake up dirt or air bad laundry,



you know, I didn't see much point in that. At the end of the book I want the viewer to close the book and still have a smile on their face. Also, there was a lot of humor going on and I think people might get the impression we're very serious, doom laden and dark, and that's not the case, so I think with some of the candid photos they put that across as well.

Have you had any feedback from the other band members about the book, have they been able to look at it?

KH: Yes, I sent it to each of them. I got back some emails saying "really impressed", you know like very complimentary and congratulating me, so that was nice.

For them too, it must be the same feeling of really being able to celebrate a period of your lives and of something that you set out to do, having no idea that it would have the impact that it's had and really being able to let it have that gravity. With this book you physically have something that you can look back at and is a record of the past in a very different way. We can look back at the band's past through your music and with things like music videos and your appearance in *The Hunger*. But this is a really different medium to communicate about what this band was and what it was to you. So, that's really special from your perspective. I imagine the other members really dig the book and they're really proud of you too. It says a lot that you thought enough of what you all were doing to save the clippings of everything and to make sure that it was kept somewhere safe. So a lot of credit to you, Kevin, for doing that work over the years because that's not easy and you've probably been carting around totes of things for years that finally are seeing the light of day, and that's really awesome. Why do you think it's important to archive the past in the first place?

KH: Well, up until not long ago I never really thought that much... I don't know what happened or maybe I saw one particular photograph and it really completely turned me around and I realized how important photography is and how you cap-

ture moments of history and the past. I'm not sure if it's a nostalgia thing or how important it really is, but you know at my age, you get nostalgic about things. Maybe it's sentimental, romantic; I'm not sure, so you know it was on those levels. I mean, if we had no history books or films of what went on before the world would be a lot less rich. I'm kind of going off a bit now but some things that happened in history are important, you know, to learn by not repeating bad things. I guess it might be interesting for musicians to know how things evolved and where music came from. It's kind of a big question in a way, isn't it?

It is! You put together a book that is archiving the past but is also telling the story of people getting together and making music and where it took off from there. It is important for us to tell those stories, as you just touched on it a moment ago, for other musicians and creatives who maybe don't know where to start or believe there's only one path to get to wherever they want to go. Looking at this book would be a great example of seeing that actually everything's pretty humble; you do something because you love it, you keep doing it because you love it and there's a mix of serendipity in there.

KH: Yeah I can totally see where you're coming from. Everything just happened really organically and there was no master plan, and we really did set out to please ourselves and hopefully other people would like it. We had no idea and we wanted to be as creative and as unique as possible. It's one thing thinking and saying it now and another thing doing it—you just hope that it will work or happen. You can tell by the book that we came from a very humble place and it was a big struggle getting shows. I hope readers see the story and will get a sense that if you really want to do something, with a little bit of luck it will happen. We wanted to grow and evolve and succeed, you know, it was such a big drive behind us. I think we also got a lot of assistance from the music press. They hated us with a venom and I think that spurred us on as well. We were like, "well we're going to show you."

While going through the process of compiling the materials for this book and

reflecting on that time in terms of what people were wearing on and off stage as well as what music was being made, do you notice cycles to that? Did you see any of that when you were looking back on these photographs from the past?

KH: Well it's interesting because it didn't really occur to me, I mean but now you've brought it up, yeah, I mean that's one band that I may have mentioned, Savages. They're from Europe and I've seen them a few times. They just really remind me of Bauhaus, I mean, a certain degree with the music but more so with the attitude [and] the energy of that band. It was very nostalgic for me [seeing Savages perform] and I just thought of the carrying on the torch effect. I could just see they were invested with the same spirit, energy and drive that we were, you know. It was palpable. That's a good example to me.

Tell me more about the book release event at Lethal Amounts gallery in LA.

KH: So Danny Fuentes who runs the gallery, another part of what he does is he creates silk screens and posters and shirts, so he has kind of a clothing line in a way. So I [had] a poster and a T-shirt, just limited edition, for the event. [It was] kind of a bookstore art gallery so people [would] buy a book and I sign them, or they could bring a book and get it signed, but we limited it to that. Aside from that I just thought the walls [were] going to look bare, so printed and framed some of my photography and fliers I made, things like that, and they'll just be one-off and for sale, and signed as well. I [had] two DJ's for the event: Danny Lohner (Nine Inch Nails, A Perfect Circle) and Casper Von DJ (Casper and the Bad Spiritis) and that's pretty much it.

What's next for you after this? Do you feel like you're interested in doing more publishing?

KH: Well, I really did enjoy, aside from my self-publishing failing which was really not enjoyable, I had a mini meltdown when that happened, but actually putting the book together, creating it was really enjoyable. It was a lot of hard work and it took a lot of time but yeah... People are asking, "are you going to do a Love and Rockets book next," and you know, I'm interested in that, so I'm not

sure right now, really my main focus other than the book is Poptone right now. But maybe in the future, yeah.

Always a favorite last question: what is inspiring you right now?

KH: I'm really enjoying playing in Poptone and I had forgotten how much I like playing live. I thought I was done, very nice and quite happy with it, but when I got back on tour I just really enjoy it and traveling. I'm the type of person that will tend to just focus on one thing and put everything into that at one time. I think Daniel [Ash] is like that, too. I'm also inspired by my daughters' bands. Diva has her own solo projects and Lola has a band called Automatic which is worth checking out. They have only just started but they're really good and they inspire me. I have two wonderful daughters but a great bonus is going and seeing their shows and their friends' shows. I think that keeps me kind of in touch to a degree... I feel blessed to have that, too.

I really appreciate your time and talking to me and I'm very grateful that I've been able to talk to you now twice about music and your creative past and just it inspires me to talk with you, so thank you for that.

KH: Oh, thank you. Well I actually really enjoy your questions because some of them are a bit challenging but they're really cool. I've enjoyed our interviews a lot.

Thank you! I think what you're doing is really important, and you're going to really open up some people's eyes when they look at this. The takeaway is to see there is so much that goes into doing what you love and whether it's being in a band or if you want to be a visual artist or performing artist or whatever it might be, there's so much that goes into it. Perhaps unwittingly, you've really created a sort of looking glass opportunity for people to see more intimate portraits or different sides of each of you in the band, so that's really special. So be very proud of what you're doing right now.

KH: Oh, thank you, thank you very much. **A**

