

MUSIC

Mr. America

Little Vince (nobody knows his real last name) grew up in Phoenix, Ariz., where his daddy was a minister. He spent his childhood watching TV, and his image of himself and America came right off the tube. Today, Little Vince thinks he's 100 per cent in the American tradition, a blend of Marjoe, Ozzie Nelson, Hell's Angels and P.T. Barnum—with bits from Dali and Bela Lugosi. He voted for Nixon and thinks "Madison Avenue men are the smartest in the world." Little Vince has become Alice Cooper, the fabulous Queen of Rock 'n' Rouge.

Now nearing the end of a marathon three-month, 58-city tour—which he estimates will cost over \$1 million to produce and gross \$4 million to \$6 million—25-year-old Alice Cooper (he chose the *nom de freak* Alice because "it's a fine old American name") prides himself on being rock music's ultimate spectacle of "creative decadence." His fantastic, grotesque act, an astonishing blend of rock concert and Grand Guignol, features whips, pet boa constrictor, life-size mannequins who spurt blood and a finale with Alice's head under a razor-sharp guillotine.

His entourage of 40, in a converted Electra with a red dollar sign emblazoned on its tail, is the most mind-bending troupe in show business. Some hand out thousands of Alice Cooper posters and napkins ("Fly Me I'm Alice"); others help set up the quarter-million-dollar stage set; his bodyguard supplies his daily case of Budweiser, and his 27-year-old millionaire manager, Shep Gordon, stages press extravaganzas at each stop.

Alice has come a long way—from star of his high-school cross-country team to

star of that garish division of the rock world known variously as glitter-rock, deca-(for decadent) rock or punk rock. Its hallmarks are chaos and confusion—chaotic sounds, confusion of logic and sexual identity. "I love confusion," says Alice. "I really think it's a form of art. I've always been involved in chaos, and my show at least for now is the ultimate."

Mostly, "the ultimate" depends on how much people and the media will swallow from Alice. "I love to manipulate people," he says. "I've got the art of lying down pat. I've already lied to you a number of times tonight," he told *Newsweek's* Peter Greenberg. "Isn't that great?" When he's not lying to the media, he's often laughing at it. "The press really invented transvestite rock," asserts Alice, who's about to come out with a line of unisex cosmetics called "Whiplash." "I've never had a sexual experience with a male. But that doesn't mean I won't. It's just that America expects me to be chasing fourteen boys around a room with a whip. America is sex, death and money. We laugh at all three."

Tastes: Though Alice's self-promoted image is a diabolical reversal of the All-American Boy, his behind-the-scenes tastes are not all that bizarre. Behind the mascara and sequined jumpsuit is a fellow who has had the same girl friend since 1968, is a fanatic fan of daytime TV quiz shows, eats mostly junk food and owns every Burt Bacharach album ever made. He even hates most rock music: "Since I'm writing it and singing it I'd rather not listen to it."

Despite the success of his albums (the latest, "Billion Dollar Babies," is No. 10 and climbing), Alice has to be seen to be disbelieved. In the Denver Coliseum last week he enthralled 10,000 teeny-



Alice in action: Sex, death, cash

boppers as he appeared in a cloud of smoke, worshiped an Egyptian mummy, decapitated some baby dolls, beat up a giant tooth with a giant toothbrush and performed an indecent act with a life-size mannequin. The saturnalia ended with Alice's four gasping sidepersons receiving oxygen from the kindly police.

As weird and repellent as Alice may seem to some, in a sense he is carrying to its ultimate stage the violence and sexual ambiguity of earlier rock stars like the Rolling Stones. He is the ultimate punk kid, the defiant bad boy, proclaiming to the grownups as he sings in "Alma Mater":

*We got no class
And we got no principles
And we got no innocence.*

—MAUREEN ORTH

WATERGATE: GETTING IT ON THE RECORD

At his regular morning press briefing Ron Ziegler refuses to give the correct spelling of Watergate, declaring: "I'm not authorized at this time to go into any areas of specific spelling." President Nixon, disguised in a red wig, meets John Mitchell in a phone booth. "Now, as you know," says Mr. Nixon, "I knew nothing about the entire incident and you told me you knew nothing about the entire incident... Well, John, one of us is full of [it]." Finally the President turns to prayer: "My fellow God."

"The President's Prayer" and a dozen more zany sketches appear on a new Hidden Records LP, "The Watergate Comedy Hour," the latest entry in what looks like a stampede of satire on Watergate. A new single, "At the Watergate," features Ron Marshall and the Waves, and other singers such as Malvina Reynolds and Harry Nilsson are

busily adding Watergate material to their new recordings. More than 1,200 people a day have been dialing a special Washington number (797-5972) to hear a recording of Missouri Congressman William Hungate singing his own original, "Down at the Old Watergate."

"The Watergate Comedy Hour," featuring the "Watergate 7" with Detective Columbo as the special prosecutor and the music of "H.R. Haldeman and the Buckpassers," is the brainchild of Los Angeles comics Ann Elder and the team of Jack Burns and Avery Schreiber—who wrote all the material and perform it with four of their friends. "This thing has gotten everybody so sick," says Schreiber, "they want to laugh already." The routines on the album feature "The Dick Cravett Show," in which Martha Mitchell blows the whistle on everyone including her husband and Frank Sinatra,

and a wild take-off on the Johnny Carson show, in which show host "Dickie" Nixon is "truly shocked and saddened" to reveal that his wife Pat is behind the whole Watergate caper.

Burns and Schreiber are former members of Chicago's Second City satiric troupe; they will appear on their own comedy hour on ABC this summer. The album was written in three days. "We were going crazy," they told *Newsweek's* Maureen Orth, "trying to keep up with the newspaper stories." With a battery of lawyers standing by, the recording was made in one take two weeks ago, before a live audience summoned to the recording studio by invitations that read "Top Secret, all other invitations inoperative." Even before the album's release this week, Burns and Schreiber have been besieged by TV and radio people eager for comic relief. "Satire," says Schreiber, "has to be outrageous, offensive and irresponsible. It's up to the government to be responsible."