



UNO, DOS, TRES, SUZI QUATRO

Born in Detroit and of Italian and Hungarian descent, Suzi Quatro is best known for being the first female bass player to become a major rock star, putting women on the map in the heady, male-dominated rock scene. The leather-clad, base wielding, blonde bombshell is nothing short of rock royalty - but forget what you think you know about Suzi Quatro, because she is so much more.

BY SOPHIE CLIFTON-TUCKER

Well known for her hits *Can the Can*, *48 Crash*, *Devil Gate*

Drive and Your Mama Won't Like Me, Suzi's (never Suzie, Susie, or Suze, as I found out the hard way when my keyboard betrayed me. In the words of Suzi herself: "autocorrect can drive you mad") accomplishments stretch far beyond the musical circle. Quatro was also a familiar face on the small screen when she was cast as Leather Tuscadero, Fonzie's rocker girlfriend in the American sitcom *Happy Days*, and just last year was made an honor-

ary doctor of music at Cambridge University. This month we managed to pin down Dr Quatro for a chat amidst her travels between Mallorca, Hungary, and Essex.

"I do it because it was what I was put on this earth for."

What's your favourite record of all time?

When I Fall In Love - Nat King Cole. It's the song I want played at my funeral, it means that much.

What would you watch to lift your spirits?

I'm a real film buff. I could have been a film critic! I tend to watch

films by my mood. For a happy mood I'd choose *Mamma Mia*.

Have you ever cried at one of your gigs?

Yes. Just after the gig. It was in Yekaterinburg in Russia where the royal family were murdered. The gig was just down the road from The Church on Blood [built on the site where the last Tsar of Russia and his family were executed], I kept looking out of the window... I went on a stage with a funny attitude.

It was one of those gigs that was so full of love; every few minutes someone from the audience came

to hand me flowers. The mood... I can't explain it. So emotional. So beautiful. I felt touched that I could entertain them. Afterwards I just laid on my bed and cried.

Who is your most inspirational person?

Jesus. I was born and raised Catholic. Forget religion for a second... all that aside, he must have been a really interesting person to be around! I would have loved to have met him.

Why the bass guitar?

Because when we started the band [The Pleasure Seekers] my sisters and I were all on the phone at same time, shouting out what instruments we wanted to play, and I didn't speak up in time so I got the bass.

My dad gave me my first bass guitar. The second I put it on, I said: "This is me!", I felt complete. It was like coming home. I was born to be an entertainer; a bass player.

Is being on the road exhausting?

This is my 54th year in the business. I could easily retire, but I still do it because it was what I was put on this earth for.

How do you prepare for a gig?

No sex or drugs... just rock 'n' roll. When I'm on tour I have my routine. I take care of myself so I can fire on all four cylinders to make sure I give people the best of me. I usually go to the gig at least one and a half hours before the show. I set up my dressing room in certain way, do my vocal exercises,

get my hands warmed up, feel the vibe of the venue, look over the set list, sound check, watch the audience as they come in, and then start the preparation of becoming Suzi Quatro.

What has been your greatest achievement?

Staying normal. I can

"I think it's an attitude. If I'm being very honest, I actually don't give a sh*t."

pull a diva if I want to, but 99% of the time I'm approachable. Never easy! But normal.

Do you have any protégés that you're working with?

I'm helping a female guitar player in Australia. She's in her 30s, and very good. I like championing people. My son [Richard] is currently writing songs with me and my daughter [Laura] sings. Maybe we'll release something.

How do you keep so young?

I think it's an attitude. If I'm being very honest, I actually don't give a sh*t. I don't pretend I'm 25. I do my exercises. You should look as good as you can for your age. Don't be unrealistic.

As an attractive woman in a predominantly male industry, did you ever have to fight your corner?

Oh yeah. I do it all the time. Nobody messes with me; nobody ever has done! It's not even about being female - I stick up for me. It has nothing to do with gender. I would go up to 6'2" person and look them in the face - or peer up into their face - if I needed to. I wouldn't fight; my

mouth is my self-defence.

"You've got to become the part rather than act it. You have to live the part."

What was it like starring on *Happy Days*?

My path was in show business. It came naturally to me. That show came up and I took the job. You know, I talked to Ron Howard [who played Richie Cunningham] about it and I said "why is it that it never felt like I was a new actress on set?" and he replied: "You walked in and it was just completely natural."

I never took any acting lessons. I was told I act 'organic' and not to let anybody tamper with it. You've got to become the part rather than act it. You have to live the part.

Are you looking forward to coming to Gibraltar?

I'm really looking forward to it! I'm sure it's beautiful.

It is, Suzi! We can't wait to see you in concert.

As our conversation drew to an end, we chatted about life, love, astrology, and of course music. It seems at 68, Suzi has no plans to slow down. In her own words: "I will retire when I go on stage, shake my ass, and there is silence."

which case, we can hope to see Suzi on stage for many years to come.

Suzi will be playing at the MTV Gibraltar Calling festival on the 21st-22nd September. For tickets visit gibraltarcalling.com/get-tickets.