



**GUITAR HERO:** Slash (real name: Saul Hudson), performing in 2004.

JANET MACOSKA

## Photographer Janet Macoska focuses on Jewish rock 'n' rollers

**JOHN PETKOVIC**  
Plain Dealer reporter

**F**or four-plus decades, Janet Macoska has "gone behind fame to capture the persona behind the persona." That's what drove the Cleveland photographer, 54, to shoot Sonny and Cher — in 1966, when she was 12. But even Macoska never imagined that going behind the music would put her on the road to Jerusalem. Macoska has just released "Jews Rock," a coffee-table book full of photos of Jewish musicians — from Lou Reed to David Lee Roth, Gene Simmons, Barry Manilow and Kenny G.

**Q:** So, how did you come up with the idea?

**A:** Last year, a local businessman ordered a couple of prints. When I went to deliver them he asked if I ever thought of doing a book of Jewish rock 'n' rollers. I thought, "How many can there be?" I started researching it and couldn't believe how many there were.

**Q:** Did you find some commonality to the musicians?

**A:** It's a running thread throughout rock 'n' roll. Both Leo Mintz

### PREVIEW

#### "Jews Rock" book signing

**What:** Photographer Janet Macoska will read from and sign copies of her book celebrating Jewish rock musicians. Rabbi Brian Leiken will also speak.

**When:** 2-3:30 p.m. today.

**Where:** The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage.

**Tickets:** Free, but space is limited. Call 216-593-0575.

and Alan Freed were Jewish. Leo owned Record Rendezvous and was basically looking to sell these "race records" and ended up buying radio time and having Alan Freed play the songs. So Jews have been there from the beginning.

**Q:** Are there any musicians you excluded or missed out on?

**A:** I excluded Lenny Kravitz because even though he has a Jewish parent, he doesn't identify himself as Jewish. I don't have photos of the Beastie Boys and Barenaked Ladies, both of which have Jewish members.

**Q:** Who was the hardest person to shoot?

**A:** Lou Reed. I shot him while he was in Cleveland on a promo tour, in 1975. He was acting like Lou Reed. He went on WMMS with Kid Leo and almost drove him to tears. He was so mean and confrontational. We were sitting there in a waiting room, and he just flipped me off.

**Q:** Do you see any difference between Jewish and, say, Catholic musicians?

**A:** I don't know if I could answer that; I'm a lapsed Catholic. But it's interesting how so many of the musicians in the book adopted a persona — like Gene Simmons of Kiss. He was born in Israel, and his real name is Chaim Witz. ... He invented a name that suited his persona.

**Q:** Where do you see this newfound interest taking you?

**A:** I can't see myself doing a "Catholics Rock." But I've always been interested in going behind the persona. I'd love to be able to sit down and interview Gene Simmons so I could get to the real person.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: jpetkovic@plaind.com, 216-999-4556