

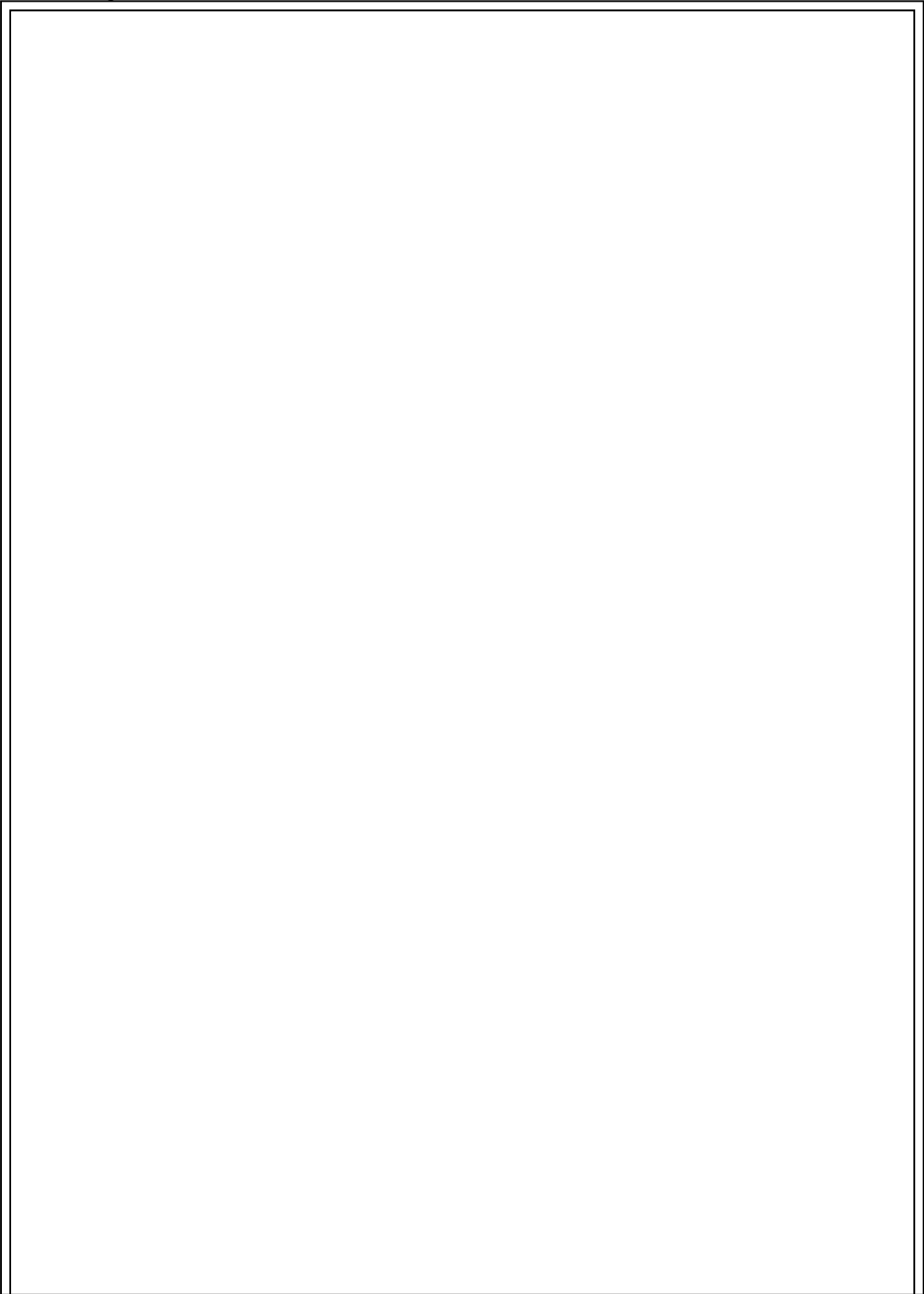
Interview: Rocker Dee Snider on Life After ‘Celebrity Apprentice’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 22, 2012 - 11:13pm

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CHICAGO – When the new 2013 cast of “Celebrity Apprentice” was recently announced, it brought back memories of last season, in which one of the contestants was rocker Dee Snider (“Twisted Sister”). Snider was in Chicago in May on a promotional tour, touting his new book “Shut Up and Give Me the Mic.”

Snider was “fired” by Donald Trump on “Celebrity Apprentice” in week eight, one week after he won as a project manager. He also made headlines in week two, when he broke his finger during an accident with a horse. He often clashed with fellow contestant Lou “The Incredible Hulk” Ferrigno.





Rocker Dee Snider at the Old Orchard Barnes & Noble, May of 2012
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Snider's latest book, "Shut Up and Give Me the Mic," is a memoir about his rocker days, during his time as frontman for the group "Twisted Sister" in the 1980s and his downfall a decade later, when he ended up broke after being part of one of the hottest acts in the early MTV era. Since that time, he has reinvented himself as a radio personality, voice-over artist, reality show participant, filmmaker and author.

He talked to HollywoodChicago.com via phone during his promotional appearance in the Old Orchard Barnes & Noble in Skokie, Illinois. His candor and fun are evident, and he doesn't pull any punches.

HollywoodChicago.com: Who are you specifically talking to in the title of your book, 'Shut Up and Give Me the Mic'?

Dee Snider Everyone that has been jabbering for the past...I don't know...forever. [laughs] There are so many people who talk who I think shouldn't be talking. No specifics, just general, 'shut up and give me the mic.'

HollywoodChicago.com: What will you think will be the most surprising element of Dee Snider that readers will come away with when they partake of your memoir?

Snider The part so far that every one seems to be surprised about is that I never did drugs or drank. I thought that was common knowledge, but apparently it's not. When I mentioned it on 'Celebrity Apprentice,' it was all over the internet. But another part that is shocking is that I lost everything by 1993 and I was riding a bicycle to a desk job answering phones and putting flyers on cars by night, so my wife could do make-up for weddings on weekends, because we were broke.

HollywoodChicago.com: Was there a specific reason you didn't you do that stereotypical rock 'n roll lifestyle of drugs and alcohol?

Snider I think it started because I had a bad experience when I was 14 years old. It was lying there, getting sick, saying to myself ‘dear God, if you let me get up I’ll never drink again.’ I made a pledge to myself. As far as drugs, I observed my friends and likened it to alcohol. It just wasn’t a place I wanted to be. I can flip on a switch and be a lunatic, but I also want to flip that switch back on a dime. I want to be in control.

HollywoodChicago.com: Your latest album is a collection of Broadway tunes, ‘Dee Does Broadway,’ and you put them together both conventionally and in your metal style. What spurred this project and how were you able to put it together?

Snider The initial idea came from a series of phone messages that Alice Cooper and I left for each other. We kept missing each other, and I think it was Alice who started to leave his messages like a Broadway show tune. It started an exchange [singing] ‘hey Alice, please call me, please pick up the phone.’ [laughs] It led to ‘dude, we should do an album called Alice and Dee Do Broadway,’ with the double entendre fully intended. He thought it was a cool idea, and we actually made a single song demo.

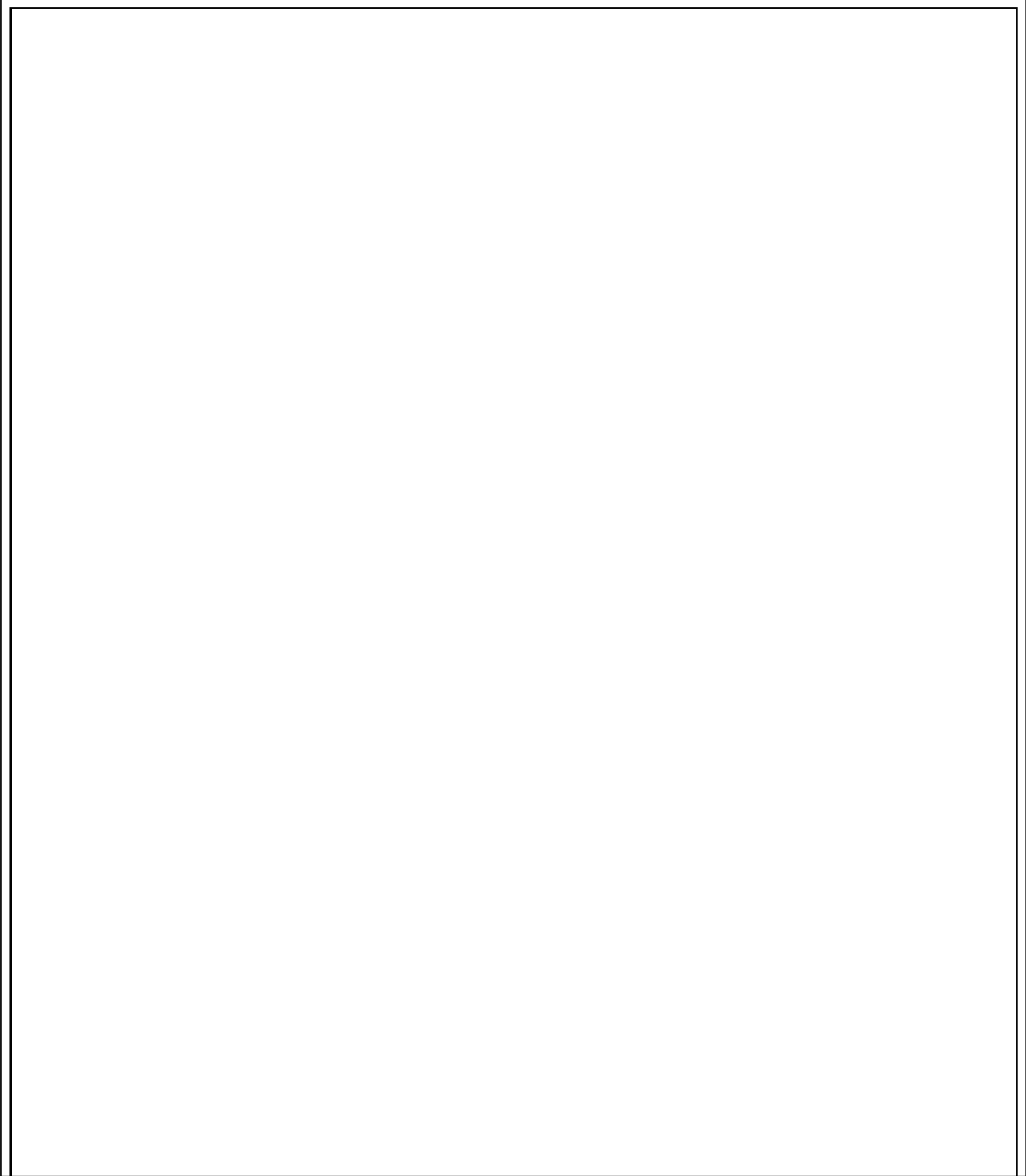
But as it turned out we got too busy, and the timing wasn’t right. A year later I was actually on Broadway starring in ‘Rock of Ages.’ It was a reconnection to Broadway music that I had grown up with, and my parents took me to a lot of shows. Alice wasn’t into it anymore and told me to go forward. And that’s how the album came about.

HollywoodChicago.com: Speaking of song influences, which ones did you like when you were a kid listening to everything in the ‘60s and ‘70s, and how does that influence still inform your songwriting?

Snider Back then, there was a broad variety I was listening to. You’d have a Barbra Streisand song on the charts at the same time as The Beatles, or Bobby Darin was with The Monkees. You don’t see that as much anymore. All that stuff actually drove me to metal. [laughs] But still, I would hear the hardness and rock in songs like ‘Mack the Knife.’ For example, I think the song ‘Tonight’ from ‘West Side Story’ is the original power ballad. That was my take on it on the album.

HollywoodChicago.com: What particular event in your childhood and teen years occurred that led you to sing rock vocals and when did you know that you were going to make a run at it?

Snider As I say in the book, it was the day after The Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan show. I didn’t see it myself, because my father had banned television. It was the next day at school, the domino effect, the aftershock was so huge. I went to the bus stop the day after, and everyone at school could not stop talking about it. And that’s the moment I thought, when I saw everyone screaming, that’s what I’ve got to be. I’ve got to be a Beatle, even though I didn’t know what it was. I was an attention starved kid, and when I found out The Beatles were a rock band, I thought okay I’ll do that.





Another view of Dee Snider Promoting his Book 'Shut Up and Give Me the Mic'
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

HollywoodChicago.com: When you write music, are you a phrase guy – like a particular phrase comes into your head and you run with it, or are you a lyrics or melody first guy. How did you structure, for example, the anthem 'We're Not Gonna Take It'?

Snider I'm a title guy. I've always kept an active list of titles that I would work on. As a matter of fact, the 'Stay Hungry' record that we're talking about, I wrote the basic songs in 45 minutes, while my wife was getting dinner and the baby was sleeping. I work off the titles.

I always hear now that 'We're Not Gonna Take It' was a sellout. The album came out in 1984, but I wrote that particular chorus in 1980, but I couldn't finish it. In that 45 minute session that I talked about, that's when I finished it. In a one room apartment, with a wife and a baby, I couldn't have been hungrier. But then I hear I sold out. F**k you. I think that's the reason it connected, it was genuine and heartfelt. I was spitting f**king verbal bullets.

HollywoodChicago.com: Now that 27 years have gone by since you testified before the Senate regarding the PMRC labeling music albums, which side do you think prevailed as we stand here in 2012, and what do you think was the karma of that situation?

Snider The bad guys were the conservatives and the [Al and Tipper] Gores. They prevailed because they got their stickers. Worse than that, people didn't understand that it was a crack in First Amendment rights, which is why pro-choice people and NRA people fight so hard, the little cracks will widen and weaken your position over time. I knew that would weaken us.

I also thought it would segregate records, that the music stores would intentionally not sell certain records. Which happened, some stores would not rack albums with stickers. And then in the 1990s and early 2000s, the big chains were actually forcing the record companies to produce edited versions of albums. That's how f**king heinous this was. I would say in that case the conservatives won.

In the second karma part of the question, the Gores are divorced, and their son was busted for possession. Meanwhile Dee Snider has been with his wife thirty f**king years, and his kids are clean and sober. Let me take that out and shake it in their faces! [laughs] Bitches.

HollywoodChicago.com: You've done three separate reality shows, with the most high profile coming from Celebrity Apprentice recently. What surprises you about the way the shows are put together and has there ever been an instance where you disagreed on how you were portrayed in any of the shows you've done?

Snider Yes. There is an manipulation, and most of the shows are scripted somewhat. Editing is a powerful, terrifying tool, the way things can appear can be completely altered. I remembered on 'Gone Country' [2008], this is not a big deal but it underlines my point – I was supposed to be at one of the events, a dinner, but I couldn't make it. But when I watched the show, I was there. I'm looking, and I thought, 'motherf**kers, they edited in another dinner.' The announcer was saying, 'Dee Snider, oddly silent.' Oddly silent? I wasn't there! One thing I picked up on quickly, is to be kind to the producers and crew. If they don't like you, you're going to pay for it. I haven't been beaten up badly.



Dee Snider Works on a Challenge on 'Celebrity Apprentice'
Photo credit: Douglas Gorensein for NBC

HollywoodChicago.com: Speaking of which, how is your injured finger from 'Celebrity Apprentice'?

Snider They made that up. Kidding! [laughs] I've been through two surgeries, five months of therapy and I'm looking at another operation. But I can throw the rock 'horns' and give the middle finger. I can't punch things, but at this point in my life I can just get other people to do the punching. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: You've managed to maintain a performance profile after nearly 40 years in the business. What do you credit your longevity to, and what would you like to do before the journey is finished?

Snider I was asked this one time on tour, and my motivation answer remains the same – 'ten percent inspiration, 90 percent desperation.' [laughs] I woke up one day, and nobody was buying what I was selling. That is where I start the book. I was flat broke in the 1990s, when grunge was happening, and being in a hair band was like being part of a disease that they found the cure for. What do you mean it doesn't exist anymore?

In scrambling to figure out what to do next, opportunities arose and came to me. Voice-over work and radio – I started talking to nobody for \$3.75 an hour but worked my way up – I just started looking for ways to express myself creatively and make money.

HollywoodChicago.com: What's next for you?

Snider I've got the sitcom 'Holliston' on FearNet. We did six episodes, and just got renewed for ten more. I am also the voice of the 'Duke of Detroit' on Disney XD's 'Motorcity' cartoon. I'm the crazy-ass bad guy. If you have kids, have them check out Uncle Dee. [laughs]

"Shut Up and Give Me the Mic" by Dee Snider is available at Barnes & Noble or wherever books are sold.



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [14]
Senior Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

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