

"CHERRY BOMB"

by lance perkins

CHERIE CURRIE OF THE RUNAWAYS

Growing up in the San Fernando Valley in the 1970s, Cherie Currie at an early age had a taste for the rock classics. "I was into what most people were into... David Bowie, Suzie Quattro, Alice Cooper, Elton John you know, they were the main influence. And discos weren't discos back then, it was clubs like Rodney Bingenheimer's, English Disco and The Sugar Shack. It really wasn't disco. It was the glam rock." At that time, Currie was attending Mulholland Junior High School and had already heard of The Runaways. "Yeah I heard of them, there was a buzz... this all girl band and Joan Jett, that they were something to look out for." Cherie said. One night when Cherie was at the Sugar Shack, Kim Fowley and Joan Jett just happened to be there. "They approached my twin sister Marie first. Marie thought Kim was a creep and he made his way over to me. When he introduced me to Joan, I had heard of her, so it was exciting and they asked if I wanted to audition for the band! I had just seen David Bowie's *Diamond Dog* concert at the Universal Amphitheater and it was in that audience that I just felt that was what I had wanted to do. I had found my calling. So it seemed like the planets were lining up in my favor that I would get the opportunity to audition for The Runaways. So I said, "Sure! Why Not?"

Just a few days later Currie did the audition. "They asked me to learn a Suzie Quattro song and I picked "Fever." It was ridiculous, but I did it. I didn't really know

any other songs, so on the spot they wrote "Cherry Bomb" for me to audition. The song's name was taken from her name Cherie and how Kim coined her, "a blond bombshell." Currie continues, "Yes, it all happened very fast. I sat and waited about a half an hour while they debated, and it was quite a relief when they decided to give me a shot." The band started playing local gigs and rehearsing and quickly got signed on by Denny Rosecrans from Mercury. "Before we knew it we were in the studio. It all moved at the speed of sound and then we were on the road! It felt like I was in a dreamland... I still feel like I'm in a dreamland!" (laughs)

Cherie's first book, *Neon Angel: The Cherie Currie Story* was published in 1989 and was intentionally edited for a younger audience. Currie explains, "I told the stories I couldn't tell in the young adult book and it comes from an adult. I mean I was in my twenties when I wrote my first book with Neal Shusterman, who had a really magical way of writing to young people. In the new version of my book, we just took it up a few levels and I think it will be an interesting ride for anyone who reads it. Joan endorses it and wrote the forward for the book, which was great."

What kept her going through all the trials and tribulation of the band? Currie said, "It was my friendship with Joan that kept me there. Joan knew that this was what she had to do. I was unsure. I know that it was great, but there was so much conflict within the band. We were so young and just trying to find ourselves and





then were pitted against each other. It's tough enough as an adult to be compared, you know? It can make you really insecure, it can really tear you down and that's what ended up happening. It just tore us all down." Currie and other members of the band got heavily involved with drugs. "Everyone was doing them in those days. It was the norm. In 1984, it almost took me out and that's when I turned my life around." Currie did a complete turn around. She went on to serving as a youth drug counselor. She even found an interest in art which led to her doing chainsaw carving art pieces professionally for over eight years now.

The Runaways movie based on her book stars Dakota Fanning as Cherie Currie. Cherie elaborates, "I found out that Dakota was playing me through Sam Rubin on the *Channel 5 News*! It was no doubt, besides the birth of my son, the most exciting moment of my life! She's really one of my favorite actors. I couldn't believe it. That's when the dream started. It was like, is this real? I'm just a huge fan of her work." Currie continues to describe reading the script and the making of the film, "It was tough, it was tough for me and Joan. Because we are so close to it and of course they did take creative liberty that altered the true story a bit and that was hard. But what we went through was so incredible it would be unfair for me to expect them to recreate that, them not having lived it and not having been there. We were doing something that no one had ever done before and we were in a

man's world and it was an uphill battle for all of us. How do you really, justly recreate that? So, it was a rollercoaster ride for me emotionally and Joan as well. You know, it's hard to know what to feel about it but every time I see the movie, I like it more and more. The performances are just off the map! So great! I'm really happy. Kristen [Stewart] was amazing as Joan. I think she had the toughest job because Joan is such an icon. The public knows how Joan acts, they know how she sings and they know her mannerisms. Kristen really pulled it off. I couldn't be more proud of her."

Currie and Joan recorded many of *The Runaways* songs for the movie. "Joan and I went into the studio for the first time in 35 years. Everything was just like time has stood still. We recorded everything and our vocals together were just...we were so thrilled! We cut "Queens of Noise" and "California Paradise," "Don't Abuse Me" and "Cherry Bomb." It was the most fun three days in the studio I've had in 35 years. That's for sure." Dakota also rehearsed the songs with Cherie. "We sang the songs back and forth so she could get my mannerisms. I sat in the vocal booth with her, she came to my home and I was on the set for support, but I also wanted to give her space. I'm so proud of her."

The Runaways film, based on Cherie Currie's autobiography, *Neon Angel* opens nationwide on March 19. A new version of her book, *Neon Angel* comes out in print on March 17.