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# KISS Goodbye: A Memorable Nikon Photo Gets a Modern Makeover

Featuring **LYNN GOLDSMITH**



© Lynn Goldsmith

Gene Simmons of KISS holding a Nikon FM in a photo Lynn Goldsmith took in 1980 with the FM she had with her as a backup camera.



© Lynn Goldsmith

Lynn's D5 photo of Simmons with a Nikon Z 6 in a 2019 photo taken during the band's most recent farewell tour.

**S**ome things didn't change.

In two photographs, taken nearly 40 years apart, we see Gene Simmons, co-founder, bassist, vocalist and most visible of the members of KISS over the group's 46-year history, still in full makeup and still holding a Nikon camera. The photographer for both pictures is Lynn Goldsmith, whose outstanding portraits of rock-and-roll musicians is at or near the top of a list of many imaging accomplishments. And KISS is still performing, though the end may be in sight, as they are currently into a goodbye tour.

It was that tour that brought them to Nashville, where Lynn now lives, and since she's kept in touch over the years with Simmons and his fellow original band member, Paul Stanley, she ended up photographing the band at the Bridgestone

Arena—and making the 2019 version of the 1980 photograph.

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“ I thought it would be a good idea to show how time changed Gene and also how cameras have changed. ”

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The earlier version was made during a formal photo shoot—or as formal as anything ever got when Gene Simmons was around. "I did a lot of work with KISS in my studio," Lynn says, "and Gene was incredibly adept at coming up with ideas that he thought fan magazines would respond well to. Also, he liked turning the camera around on me, so that's him picking up my Nikon FM and me shooting him holding it. I'm sure I used an FM for that shot—I always had at least two with me—one for color, one for black and white." Because that's the way it was in the film days.



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Gene Simmons of KISS holding a Nikon FM in a photo Lynn Goldsmith took in 1980 with the FM she had with her as a backup camera.

In the 2019 photo Simmons holds a Z 6, Nikon's full-frame mirrorless digital. "I found a place backstage at the arena," Lynn says, "and I set up a backdrop and did the picture very quickly before they went on. He knew what I was doing—I'd told him and sent him the 1980 picture ahead of time. He said yes—he was excited about doing it—and the next day posted the 1980 photo on his Instagram page."



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Lynn's D5 photo of Simmons with a Nikon Z 6 in a 2019 photo taken during the band's most recent farewell tour.

So add to the list of things that didn't change Gene Simmons's embrace of what fans will respond to.

Differences in the photos? The camera of course; the slight signs of the inevitable aging of the subject 39 years on; the replacement of the skull ring with a wedding band; and minor variations in Simmons's demon-character makeup. (For non-KISS fans, the others band members represent a starchild, a spaceman and a cat.)

Lynn also photographed three of the band's shows. "The farewell tour is huge—all arena shows, and they're all sold out," she says. "The audiences range in age from four-year-olds to 74 years old—I'm not kidding. People bring their children, their grandchildren—the little kids dress up, they love them."

What must also remain unchanged is the savvy calculation that rock is indeed theater. "The stage show isn't nostalgia," Lynn says, "it's a rock-and-roll circus, where all this stuff is happening—things coming down from the sky, and lots of fire, and Paul flies into the audience and across the arena, and Gene lifts up, like he's a spaceship, up to the top of the rafters."

And so, forty-six years from its founding, KISS, tapped into what fans of all ages respond to, rocks on.

Galleries of Lynn Goldsmith's portrait, documentary and fine art photography are featured at [lynngoldsmith.com](http://lynngoldsmith.com). Check out the Musicians section if you want to experience your own "is there anyone she didn't photograph?" moment.

*Featuring*

**LYNN GOLDSMITH**

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