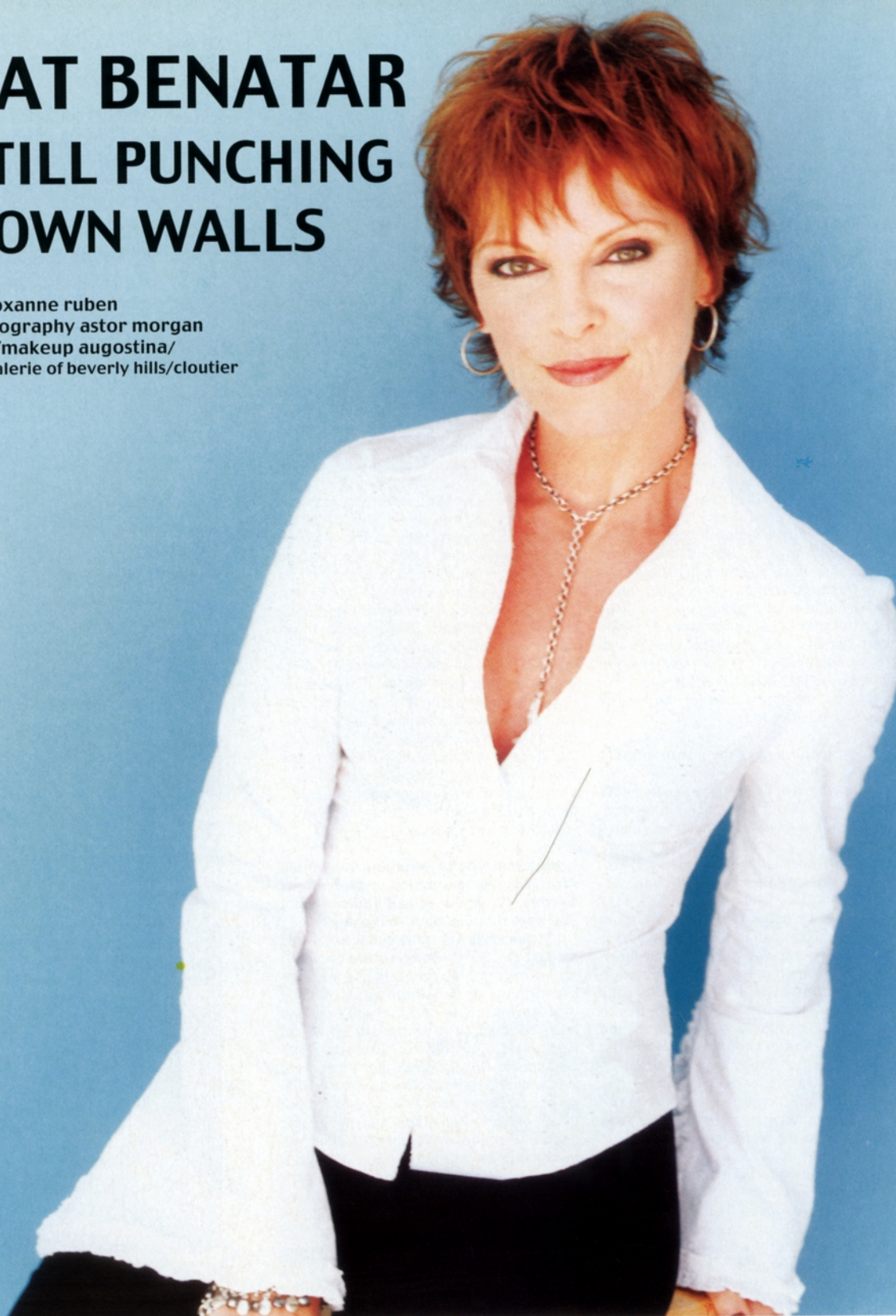


# PAT BENATAR STILL PUNCHING DOWN WALLS

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**P**atricia Andrzejewski is a tiny slip of a woman, originally from Long Island who now resides in the Los Angeles area. She loves music, her daughters, and her husband of 20 years. But she is not your average homemaker. Over the years, she has fully explored her passion, which has allowed her to wear tight pants, a lot of dramatic make up, and to be a bit of an exhibitionist. She has also fully exercised her freedom of expression by giving bad boy heartbreakers a verbal flip of the bird. For pursuing her dreams, she's been recognized and rewarded, receiving more than a few awards over the years. This 5'2" pioneering woman, who could break glass with her powerful voice, is not the least bit intimidated by those in power. In fact, she's changed the rules on more than one occasion, chasing the bouncers away from their post at the velvet rope so that girls could gain access to "the club" and have some fun too. Suffice to say that Pat Andrzejewski, a.k.a. Pat Benatar, is one seriously successful and talented troublemaker.

In 1979, the release of *In the Heat of the Night* propelled Benatar into the spotlight where she introduced the world to a previously unheard vocal sound—and much more. Benatar's four-and-a-half-octave, operatically trained voice came equipped with an operator who had the ability to write great rock songs and who could deliver them with unbridled passion and intensity, especially in live settings. Benatar's career began when disco was gasping for breath, and punk, on some levels, was beginning to make its movement into languid and commercial "new wave" territory. But the music scene was about to experience a revolution, a movement led by girls. Femme revolutionaries such as Ann and Nancy Wilson, Chrissie Hynde, Martha Davis, and, of course, Benatar, tuned their guitars, warmed up their voices, and screamed, "Sound check!"

Since then, music has never been the same, especially when it comes to the role of women in music. Benatar has been a leader among the female "rock pack," delivering nine albums, six of which went platinum and earned her a Grammy Award four years in a row (out of the nine times she was nominated) as well as three American Music Awards. Her trademark vocals along with husband Neil Giraldo's electrifying guitar playing are ubiquitous. "Hit Me With Your Best Shot" and "Heartbreaker" are classic "rite of passage" songs that are sources of empowerment and sassiness, still inducing maximum adrenaline flow some 20 years later. Benatar has also dealt with serious issues over the years with songs such as the sobering "Hell Is For Children," about child abuse. And, she's shown her love-song writing prowess with "We Belong."

Benatar has not stopped her rock journey, even when she was pregnant with each of her daughters, Haley, now age 19 and Hana, 8. Last December, after being deeply impacted by the events of September 11, the former New Yorker and her husband wrote and released the single, "Christmas in America," a song dedicated to victims and survivors. This past March she and Giraldo released *Live Summer Vacation Soundtrack* on CD and DVD. She continues to tour during the summer with the whole family in tow and is just about to put the finishing touches on a new album, *Girl*, slated to hit stores this summer. Over lunch in Malibu recently, the rocker shared her experiences about being a role model, making an appearance on "Dharma and Greg," getting more attention than the nominees at the Golden Globe Awards, and the need to keep on breaking the sound barrier.

#### **Venice: You look so great!**

Pat Benatar: It's running after the kids, and I work out like a fiend. A couple of years ago, I decided to change everything about my life and I started on this really rigorous exercise routine that I've just been doing ever since. It gives you a lot of energy. It just makes you feel good...your endorphins are up. I mean, I never drank alcohol—maybe just a little—I'm a cheap date!



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Pat and guitar whiz  
Neil Giraldo, her husband,  
collaborator, and fellow  
band member



[laughing] My only real vice is coffee and it's not even caffeinated. I think that when you have children, your life is so insane. If you think work makes your life insane, try having kids. They have lives and social schedules and personalities. You try to balance everything and exercise is the only way to stay sane!

#### How's the recording of *Girl* going?

We're so close but it's such hard work—not hard because of lack of creativity or anything like that. Time is a real problem for me. Neil's in there every single day just cramming. I'm so wrapped up with the kids and everything that it's taking a while. But maybe that's a good thing because the songs really have a chance to evolve. This way they really have time to grow. It's frustrating though because you just want to get it over with and do it. But we'll get it done eventually.

**Based upon just hearing the song "Girl," it seems like this record could be a bit on the dark side.**

A lot of the songs on the record are dark. Music is reflective of where you're at in your life, or it's reflective of where you see things are at in your life. Sometimes

it's really observational. I've made records that are purely observational, I've made records that are autobiographical, and this one is not. I'd say this is an observational record. This is where I look at things that really upset and bother me. I'm always trying to change things that need to be changed. I think the record is really reflective lyrically of that, the exploration of that, the frustration of that. It's cathartic.

**You and Neil are such an amazing team, especially since you're not only professional partners but have also been married for 20 years. How do you do it?**

It just works. Before I met Neil, I was married for eight years and it was a disaster. Everything I could have done wrong, I did. But I worked it out so by the time I met Neil I was more together. With Neil, it was one of those things, sometimes you meet your life partner, your soul mate, and you have to recognize that it happens and it just takes care of itself. Not that we don't have problems. I mean everyone has marital problems but we don't have any big issues. We are really aligned on the important issues like family, what we want from our girls, what we want as a couple and as

musicians. The small stuff like picking up someone's smelly socks is pretty unimportant. [laughing]

**I've read many times that Chrissie Hynde does NOT want to be a role model for girls or women. How do you feel about being a role model?**

I don't want to be a role model either, but the truth is, you are one. I'm just like everyone else. I make mistakes. I don't feel obligated to be a role model but I feel obligated as a human being to share any good thing I've learned. I think other women love to know that everyone screws up and it's hard for everyone regardless of what you do for a living. Working and becoming a mother is difficult. It's not easy for anyone and that's the truth! Chrissie is a great girl and she's always kept to herself. She's been in the trenches as long as I've been in the trenches—we were there together doing it. I mean I don't know her that well, I know her a little bit, but I've always admired her—she's my favorite singer. But for some people it's not their thing. And that's okay, too.

**What are some of your favorite career moments?**

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**When I was starting out, the record business wasn't the huge business it is now. There was no MTV. We still had eight tracks, vinyl records. I was with a group of women who were looked at like we were aliens because of what we were doing.**



I have several. The first Grammy I won was very exceptional. I was this little brat from Long Island and to be up there winning a Grammy was something else. Also, probably the first time that we played Madison Square Garden. There was also the time some adults who were abused as children came up to me as a group to tell me how much "Hell Is For Children" meant to them. And how it had just fortified them in that it expressed what it felt like to be an abused child. That was a pretty amazing moment. Last December when we released "Christmas in America" I did a bunch of radio interviews in New York and to hear how much New Yorkers appreciated it and to know that it was something that was not about me or making money, was great. It raised so much money. The song came out of a very pure moment.

**You continue to tour every summer. Does touring ever get old for you?**

I love touring. I'm a dog! I love playing live and I love traveling. When you tour, the great thing is that it's like being in rock 'n' roll summer camp. You lead your life for 12 weeks and focus on this one aspect of your life that you love so much and that you really don't get to do for the other nine months of the year. At home, I have so much responsibility and on the road I have an entourage and I can ask, 'Is there any coffee?' and everyone jumps. It's like a vacation for me. And the bonus is that I get to play every night.

**How'd you and Neil end up making an appearance on "Dharma and Greg?"**

I don't know—your agent calls you up and says, 'They want you to be on the show,' and that was it. No, but it was really fun. They are insane. Jenna (Elfman) is a maniac. She's like a big Praying Mantis, she's arms and legs and the sweetest thing. It was a great experience and it was Neil's first time doing something like this. But their hours stink. I go on stage for two hours to hear people scream, get paid obscene money, and then it's 'bye bye' and I go home. They're at the studio at 5 a.m., in make-up for two hours, and then they're there until 11 at night. They need to be doing my job!

**You were practically the center of attention at this year's Golden Globes. That must have felt really good.**

It was crazy. We went because Haley was a Golden Globe girl. Everybody kept coming up to the table and saying, 'Oh my God, I used to stand with a hairbrush in front of my mirror and sing your songs.' Kiefer Sutherland told Neil he was the reason he bought his first guitar. You know that you've had so much impact on people's lives, music always does. But it's just really fun to be with another whole group of professionals who like what you do.

**Compare the state of the music business in 1978 to the present.**

I feel like my grandmother! She used to tell me stories about iceboxes versus refrigerators.

It's so different. When I was starting out, the record business wasn't the huge business it is now. There was no MTV. We still had eight tracks, vinyl records. I was with a group of women who were looked at like we were aliens because of what we were doing. People asking us, "Are you nuts? You want to be a 'what?'" A back-up singer, maybe. Country music, okay. But a rock star? Everyone thought we were crazy and would tell us, "You can't do that, you can't go on the road. That's what killed Janis Joplin." Blah, blah, blah.

**Do you think that some of the music today sends negative messages about women?**

Haley listens to a lot of rap music and we were in the car one day listening to some really misogynistic, disgusting song. I shut it off. I went nuts. 'Why do you listen to this crap? Why do you feed this thing? You're going to buy this guy's record, give him more money to keep making more misogynistic stuff. Why do you perpetuate this trash?' I had veins popping on my neck and I told her, 'We didn't work for 20 years so you could sit here and think this is okay.' She's looking at me as though I had two heads and she has this deadpan face and says, "Mom, this is not 1978. You do not have to be so militant." That's the difference between the generations. I still think you have to get out there and keep punching down walls. That's a huge change in attitude. ▼