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## The Geddy Lee In-Store Experience

Jimmy Metal, KNAC.COM Pure Rock Patroller

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### Compact Disc World, November 14th, Menlo Park, NJ

Ah, in-store signings is what it is all about for rock fans. This is the chance to meet your favorite musicians and get your "stuff" signed. I have a pretty nice autograph collection going and getting them in person is really the only way to get them. Just check out the fake autograph plague on EBAY (increasing at rapid pace). Also, getting them in person is part of the fun, as you want to meet and possibly get pictures with your favorites. I used to be into sports autograph collecting, but it really makes me sick to have to pay those already multi-millionaire athletes money for their signatures. I NEVER pay for autographs and why should I??? In my opinion, buying CD's and tickets is sufficient enough to get an autograph. Anyway, I don't want to steer to far off path so let's get to the Geddy Lee signing!!!! This would be one of the biggest events in rock this year.

Living in NJ has provided a great opportunity to meet some of my favorite artists and being so close to NYC is a major reason why. About 2-3 weeks ago I was in a Compact Disc World and what do I see on the door but a sign advertising "Meet Geddy Lee on 11/14 at 4:30 signing his new CD MFH."

WOW!!!! My jaw dropped and this was a MUST hit!!!!

A quick note about CD World; they are one of the largest chain of CD stores (I believe seven) in NJ and do great business and the "big" stores (i.e. top business) get the signings. This one was going to take place in the CD World in Menlo Park, NJ, which is right on the "outskirts" of the Menlo Park mall (one of the biggest in the country). Other signings CD World's have had recently include big names like Korn, Megadeth, Deftones, and smaller names like Kittie, Ratt and Great White (GW and Ratt were together). I hit the Megadeth signing (in Totowa, NJ) back when Risk came out in 9/99 and there were a good 200-300 people there, but this one was going to be a monster!!!

I called the store about 5-6 times leading up to the event just to make sure the details were consistent. I got a few different minor details, but the main ones were consistent: 300 laminates were to be given out and only laminate holders were to be

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guaranteed autographs (two autographs per person). The number of laminates that were given out was increased to 500 as the demand was increasing ever so rapidly. I have a flyer that clearly states the number 300. One of the times I called the manager (or other employee) asked me and I will never forget this, "Where are you coming from???" I thought it was odd to ask and I replied, "from Northern, NJ about 30-40 minutes away. Why???" The manager's response, "Just wondering, as we have gotten calls that people are coming in from Texas, California, Arizona." I was like, "NO!!!!!!" This monster signing was getting bigger by the minute!!!

Keep in mind Geddy Lee or Rush have NEVER done a formal in-store signing before. As legend has it, the only other signing was done in London in 1980 AFTER a concert outside of Rush's tour bus for approximately 2,000 fans. Now Rush is one of those bands who don't have much fanfare, but always go gold and are able to play arenas at the drop of a hat. Now how many bands can do that??? And access to huge bands is really non-existent, so you knew those would be big. This wasn't a signing that had to be promoted much, but all of sudden it was known seemingly everywhere. Major NY radio stations, the newspaper, the internet (including KNAC.COM) reported this signing and I was like why not promote this in Siberia, as everywhere else was being informed.

Now the plan was to take the day off from work and arrive at the store for the 10am opening, get the laminate, and go on my way (you didn't have to hang around the store all day). But after hearing about the out of state people and the "buzz" this had created I was getting cold feet and ordered my friend Mike to be at my house an hour earlier than planned (to wait an hour before the store opened). Well 11/14 was a cold and rainy day and combined with heavy traffic in NJ, it would slow things down.



Arriving outside the store at 9:45am, we were to find 200 people there before us and I was scared that we were too late. The first people in line had camped out around 3am and were from California. The store was NOT happy about this and told people they would be arrested if they slept outside the store, as people had arrived the night before to camp out!!!! By 10:30am, I had secured my laminate pass and it was numbered on the back (#77). The passes were numbered because Geddy Lee was to pull a number and that was where the line would start from. If he pulled #200 it would go up to 500 and back to 200, so if you had #199 you were fucked!!! Also, with the number "system" being first on line didn't guarantee you first to meet Geddy Lee. Anyway, after getting my pass it was time to kill the day, so we hit the mall and the local record stores.

Now we got back to the store between 3:30-4:00pm and there was a HUGE crowd outside the store. I decided to "shop" around the store (i.e. to cold outside for me) and hang there. I asked the manger, "After the number is pulled, how do you plan on organizing the line???" His response, "We have the police here to help out and the fans better listen to make this work." Geddy Lee was coming from an interview at 105.5 WDHA, NJ and arrived at the store a tad after 4:30pm. The number to be pulled and the line started from was to be #15. Now I had #77, so I only had to wait behind 62 people (sounds good to me). The #15 also won an autographed bass and it was really cool and autographed on the back of the headstock. After the winner met Geddy and was leaving (with bass in tow), I got him to open the case and show some of us on line!!! He was hesitant due to the damp weather, but I told him that fellow fans wanted to see this and take pics. He obliged and it was very cool, but oddly the autograph was very small. It should be noted, that the line did "organize itself" and went smoothly.

Waiting on line was very interesting, as you meet interesting people with interesting "stories." The couple ahead of us was from Maryland and another guy was from Iowa. I was like, why would people come all the way to NJ with other signings happening in the Midwest. But supposedly the NJ signing was announced well before the others. And of course you ALWAYS meet a know it all. I was talking to one guy who traveled to Toronto to see Alex Lifeson gig recently. I simply asked him if he was hitting another Geddy signing and he told me that he would never travel for a signing. He was "only" into the music and was there because off his friend. I wanted to ask him if that were the

case, why don't just step out of line and wait until your friend is finished. And of course he claimed to have the MFH album way before everybody else and...Now the time had arrived!!!

The store was letting in 10 people at a time and they advised two items allowed to be signed (one the CD) and NO pictures with Geddy because of the crowd size (pics were allowed of him signing). I was like, "uhhh....NO." After snapping some pics of the line size and Geddy singing, the plan was to have my friend snap a picture of me after I ask Geddy to turn to the camera (I would do the same for him). The time came to step up and meet Geddy at table with MFH backdrop displayed behind him. I had the classic *Moving Pictures* album (on vinyl) signed by Geddy along with the new CD. I asked him to use my own silver marker and to "pose" for the camera and he said, "No problem." He asked me if this was to anybody and I said to "Jim," and he wrote "Hi Jim, Geddy Lee." I do think that Geddy Lee is a little out of touch with signing because the size of his autograph was the same size on both the CD and vinyl album cover. I really didn't get to ask him anything because the store kind of "rushed" people (no pun intended) through line. After me and my buddy got our pics with Geddy the store security was like, "Come on guys there are other people on line," but the security weren't a problem (thankfully). My friend got his *Fly by Night* vinyl album cover signed along with the CD cover. It should be noted the CD cover is similar to a digi-pack and does NOT come in a jewel case. This does look sharper and provides a tad more room for an autograph. Then it was over and time to had back home.

Some other notes include the crowd size: Geddy was cool enough to supposedly sign for EVERYBODY, as a huge line (with out laminates) was waiting for him after the line of pass-holders. Geddy was very nice, but kind of mellow. He wasn't a "rah-rah" type of guy that gave off a pep rally feel. I guess he was just being himself. Keep in mind that the number of people who attended this signing (and for ONE member) was more than some bands get for their concerts!!!! I hit a Ted Nugent signing in NYC back on 9/20 (for his book) and there were only 15 people there!!! To be fair to Nugent, that signing was hardly promoted and nobody really knew about it.

Also, the security and employees of CD World were really cool and didn't hassle the fans (they COULD have intervened our pics with Geddy). I hit the AC/DC signing in NYC earlier this year and the security at the Virgin Megastore were the biggest assholes I have encountered and treated the fans like shit (the band was cool though). One thing that was enforced was that no instruments could be signed and some people brought some unusual things to get signed. One guy wanted his signature on his body for a tattoo and another girl wanted her Christmas ornament signed!!! And a lot of CD booklets were signed (not including MFH), but I prefer vinyl album covers. The covers are a nice size to display (not overly big) and the artwork is more "spread out."

While waiting on line in the store, Geddy's official website came up to us for sound bites and asked me, "How long have I been a fan??" I said, "Since '81 or '82 when I saw the 'Limelight' video on MTV." And he seemed impressed and then asked what I thought of MFH, and I was honest and said I hadn't heard it yet (it was released that day). Pretty cool, and I hope it makes the website. I would LOVE to get Neil and Alex to sign my *Moving Pictures* album, but that seems like a long shot. But so did meeting Geddy Lee a month ago, so.....

Well that's a rap from NJ and I must add that after getting a bite to eat, two kids came up to us (we had our passes on) and said, "What number are they up to???" I responded, "in the early 100's, why???" The kids response, "Well, we have number's six and seven and we got here first around 1:30am and fell asleep in the car, so we wound up third on line (at 3:30am) and now we have to wait until the lines goes from 15 to 500 and back to six!!!!!"

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