

## **Gene Simmons (yes, that Gene Simmons) promoting crypto on social media**

**G**ene Simmons is an influencer, perhaps a reluctant one.

He may not consider himself to be an influencer but considering that he has 900,000 followers on Twitter, when Gene Simmons has something to say people are listening.

The co-founder and front man for Kiss – the legendary hard-rock band that emerged during the 1970s – is now a strong proponent of cryptocurrency.

Here's a current example of Simmons stature as an influencer: On Feb. 8, tweets by Simmons, rapper Snoop Dog and Tesla's Elon Musk propelled Dogecoin – an Internet currency created in 2013 as a joke – to a level as the world's 10th-largest cryptocurrency.

Less than a week earlier, Simmons tweeted: "Yes, I'm a Bitcoin Hodler. Seven figure." He first tweeted about cryptocurrency last September in a brief exchange with Cameron Winklevoss, founder of the Gemini cryptocurrency exchange. In that instance, Simmons signaled his agreement with Winklevoss' premise that the crypto industry must

work to enhance its accessibility to the masses by tweeting: "I will. I am."

Simmons discussed his thoughts about crypto as the featured guest on a recent edition of the Bitcoin.com podcast, hosted by Dustin Plantholt. It will be available for download in mid-February. The Bitcoin.com podcast – targeting the digital-assets economy – is one of the regular podcasts under the umbrella of Life's Tough Media.

Simmons said he entered the cryptocurrency arena last fall after considerable research. He read, for instance, works written by Satoshi Nakamoto, the name of the person or persons who created Bitcoin. (Many believe that Nakamoto is a pseudonym because there has never been an actual identification of anyone with this name.)

He also continues to speak or take note of the thinking of a variety of high-profile investors and entrepreneurs, including the Winklevoss twins (Tyler and Cameron) who are Bitcoin billionaires; Mark Cuban; and Elon Musk. More traditional investors like Warren Buffet and institutions such as Goldman Sachs are also looking at crypto, he said.

With regard to his own crypto holdings, Simmons said: "I'm not recommending any of this to anyone. But yes, I bought and/or will own Bitcoin, Ethereum, Litecoin and others."

During the course of conversation on the Bitcoin.com podcast, Simmons suggested that those who are interested in starting out in cryptocurrency take a cautious approach. They should designate 10 percent of the resources they have available for investing toward acquiring crypto. By comparison, he'd favor 25 percent for real estate and another 25 percent for investments in the biotech industry.

### **Starting out**

Simmons was born as Chaim Witz in 1949 in Haifa, Israel. His mother, Flora, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor, had come to Israel following the war. While imprisoned in a concentration camp, she watched the Nazis murder her entire family. She was 14 at the time.

In Israel, she met Yeichel Witz, the man who became Chaim's father. Flora and Yeichel eventually split up when Yeichel went to Tel Aviv to find work. They never lived together again.

A few years later, when Chaim was eight, Flora moved with him to New York to live with their relatives in Queens. Chaim acquired a new name: Gene Klein. Klein was his mother's family name before she married.

The future rock star learned English by reading comic books and watching television. He attended public school in Jackson Heights, and while going to that

school, formed a band with several friends in order to impress girls. The band won a talent contest and launched him on his musical journey with a succession of bands.

After high school, he went to Sullivan County Community College and earned an associate's degree in education. He then went to Richmond College and completed his bachelor's in education. Following college, he met a guitarist and they played together in a band called Wicked Lester. Klein (who had become Gene Simmons) supplemented his income by teaching sixth grade in Spanish Harlem.

Wicked Lester had some success and picked up support from a record company for recording an album. The company, however, decided to part ways with the band after the album was made.

### **Kiss begins**

Simmons and Paul Stanley then formed a new band and picked up two new members, a drummer and a lead guitarist. They called their band Kiss. Because they were on their own, they established Kiss the way they wanted. They'd wear make-up, strut around in 7-inch platform dragon boots, and incorporate plenty of pyrotechnics into their performances.

As Simmons recalled, he and Stanley asked themselves in the beginning: "Why don't we combine being a band and a Fourth of July fireworks show?"

It was all part of their desire to create a signature style of high-voltage, performance art each time they played. They blended elements of kabuki theater with comic-book superheroes. On stage, Simmons – known as “The Demon” – additionally breathed plumes of fire, spewed blood, waggled his ample tongue – one of the extraordinary tongues in rock and roll history – and “flew” up to the rafters, all while singing and playing his axe-shaped bass guitar.

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**Story by Gerald H. Levin**

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