



Bebe as a model.



Todd Rundgren and Bebe with newly born Liv.

Bebe Buell's Rock- 'N'- Roll Journey

She was a hot young model who mingled with the hippest rock stars of her day—Todd Rundgren, Steven Tyler, Rod Stewart. Then she became the mother of Liv Tyler, and a savvy manager for the aspiring actress. Now, as the newly published author of *Rebel Heart: An American Rock and Roll Journey*, Bebe Buell shares her experiences and the life lessons she took from them...

by Lora Wintz

Bebe Buell is a rock-'n'-roll girl. From the first time she heard Hayley Mills singing "Let's Get Together" (yeah, yeah, yeah) in *The Parent Trap*, she was hooked. "I fell madly in love with her," writes Bebe in *Rebel Heart* (St. Martin's Press). "It was the first time I saw a girl who looked like me play the guitar, and it killed me. I wanted to be like her." Her fascination with guitar riffs and melodies took her all the way to the life she was destined to lead, and modeling was the vehicle that drove her there. In 1972, at the age of nineteen, she moved to New York City to work as a Ford model.

"I just wanted to get to New York. I just wanted to be around all those people that I saw in my mother's *Vogue* magazine," says Bebe in an exclusive interview with *Complete Woman*. "I

wanted to be an artist. I knew I wanted to be something to do with music. I think, more than a model, I wanted to be a singer. But I just didn't know how to do that." Modeling became the door that Bebe walked through to get to her rock-'n'-roll world.

It started with Todd Rundgren, a singer-songwriter on the fast track to success. Bebe was introduced to him through a mutual friend and the two clicked like magnets and metal. Todd brought his young model girlfriend to the infamous Max's Kansas City in downtown New York City. There, in the exclusive back room, Bebe met and mingled with a mix of artists, from Andy Warhol to Lou Reed, Rod Stewart to Mick Jagger. "I'll be honest with you—I totally thought that's where I belonged," she laughs. "My logic was, 'What took so long?' You know, I had a whole vision of how

I wanted my life to be—and then it just sort of happened."

What she may not have included in her vision were the emotional connections she would make. Her relationship with Todd was one of the biggest. "Todd and I had a very deep connection—the kind you have when you meet somebody that you are meant to be with," she explains. "He was the person I turned to for advice when I was confused. I owe him a lot for all that he did for me, even though there was a lot of stuff that went on—a lot of head trips. But I'm at a place in my life where I can look at Todd and think of him fondly."

The "head trips" Bebe refers to are the affairs and flings the two engaged in during their five-year relationship. "He started it," she says, laughing. "But I'm very competitive. I thought the only way I could survive the pain and the complete confusion I felt [when he

sion to leave Steven and return to Todd, who agreed to raise the child as his own. "I loved Steven deeply, but my survival instincts were taking over," she writes in *Rebel Heart*. Bebe gave birth to daughter Liv in July 1977, when she was 24 years old. Eleven years later, Liv would put together the pieces and figure out that Steven was her real father. "Now, as adults, I respect him," says Bebe of her relationship with Steven. "I think it's absolutely astounding that he went through such an incredible recovery and that he has put himself back at the



Liv, Steven and Bebe.

"I just wanted to get to New York. I just wanted to be around all those people that I saw in *Vogue*."

would cheat on me], would be to do it, too." Bebe had flings with the likes of Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, Iggy Pop, Mick Jagger and others. But it was her affair with Steven Tyler of Aerosmith that would change her world.

After a whirlwind fall filled with romance and intimate moments, Bebe was in love—and pregnant with Steven's child. But his addiction to drugs made Bebe extremely wary and she made the deci-

top of the heap through sheer discipline and will. And I'm proud that he's the father of my child."

As a single mother, Bebe's rock-'n'-roll journey continued. Liv spent her time between Bebe, her mother and her cousin. Meanwhile, Bebe had new experiences to fulfill—including beginning a musical career of her own. "I wanted to be Mick Jagger," she says. "I didn't want to date him." As she performed with her own

bands, she also performed with new love interests, including a heart-breaking affair with Elvis Costello. "At this point in my life, I don't consider him to be the great love of my life, but at the time, I felt that way," she shares. "I consider him to be one of the most mind-altering and important relationships of my life."

Who she does consider to be the love of her life is Jim, her cur-

rent fiancé. "I consider ours to be the most fulfilling, sane relationship of my life," she says. Although he's not a rock star by any means, Bebe is perfectly fine with that. "For the first time in my life, I'm in a relationship where I feel safe. Safety is a beautiful thing. Like when you're driving in a sports car with no seatbelt? I've graduated to the SUV with a seatbelt," she laughs. "I'm just not living a dangerous life anymore."

Bebe Buell today can look back on her rock-'n'-roll journey (really, she says, a journey of a woman more than just a rock journey) with insight and firm opinions. "I believe that we all have a life lesson, and that whatever we have to go through is part of our journey as a soul," she asserts. "I think everything you do happens for a reason."

It was this belief that led Bebe to write her memoirs in *Rebel Heart*. "I think I have something to offer women. I've learned a lot of experiences and lessons in my life and I want to share them," she explains. "One of my main motivations for writing this book was young girls. I'm hoping that I can give them the same strength I gave my daughter—to never put a man first, to always put yourself first and prosper."

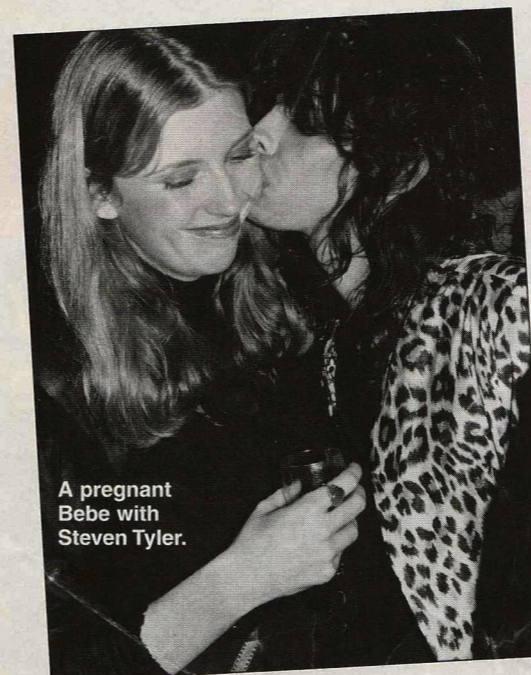
She's also taking a stand on another experience: being called a groupie. "I get very offended by the word 'groupie.' I think it's sexist. I think it's passé. And I think

that women who covet that [lifestyle] and look upon it as a profession or a way to get famous have absolutely zero self-esteem. And if anybody dares call me that to my face, they're going to have to suffer the consequences."

Her association with rock stars, she says, was a natural link for her as a model. "Models and rock stars get thrown into the same situation. They're almost like the female-male counterparts of each other's professions. When you become an 'it' girl, you get invited to everything—and not because you want to be invited, but because the guys want to meet you. They tell their publicists, 'Make sure that Bebe Buell is there.' After my *Playboy* centerfold—forget it. I got invited to *everything*."

She also explains the association with her belief in destiny and fate. "I think that everybody has a reason for meeting. People ask me why I met all of these rock stars and I have to say, 'Wait a minute. Why is it just I met this person? This person met me, too.' I was part of *their* life, part of *their* fate. It's a two-way street. I didn't run around with a butterfly net."

After reviewing her life experiences, Bebe says, without a shadow of a doubt in her voice, that if given the opportunity to do it all again, she would follow the same path. "I think absolutely I would. See, I had to learn something from all this. This is why I'm here. This is my life lesson and I wouldn't have changed a thing."



A pregnant Bebe with Steven Tyler.

Photos: Bebe: John Viciol; Todd and Bebe: Chuck Puljin; Liv and Steven and Bebe: Jeff Kravitz/Courtesy St. Martin's Press; Bebe and Steven: Bob Gruen/Star File.