



# Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal

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**Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal** Greg Renoff  
*A vivid and energetic history of Van Halen's legendary early years*

After years of playing gigs everywhere from suburban backyards to dive bars, Van Halen — led by frontman extraordinaire David Lee Roth and guitar virtuoso Edward Van Halen — had the songs, the swagger, and the talent to turn the rock world on its ear. The quartet's classic 1978 debut, *Van Halen*, sold more than a million copies within months of release and rocketed the band to the stratosphere of rock success. On tour, Van Halen's high-energy show wowed audiences and prompted headlining acts like Black Sabbath to concede that they'd been blown off the stage. By the year's end, Van Halen had established themselves as superstars and reinvigorated heavy metal in the process.

Based on more than 230 original interviews — including with former Van Halen bassist Michael Anthony and power players like Pete Angelus, Marshall Berle, Donn Landee, Ted Templeman, and Neil Zlozower — *Van Halen Rising* reveals the untold story of how these rock legends made the unlikely journey from Pasadena, California, to the worldwide stage.

## Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal Details

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## **From Reader Review Van Halen Rising: How a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal for online ebook**

### **John says**

An early in-depth look at one of the World's greatest rock and roll bands, Van Halen. While you may know the success Van Halen has had, Greg Renoff puts together a comprehensive account of the pre-history of the band by interviewing the people that were there to experience their ferocious rise to stardom. Along the way, we also learn each band members influence, strengths and weakness. It paints a vivid picture of what a rock band must go through and how all pieces of the puzzle must fit together to be successful. It also begs the question, what would this band have been like if they all didn't work together? Clearly, Renoff shows the reader just how much the original line-up of Van Halen needed each other to succeed and stand out from the other bands at the time.

Readers will be excited to learn how this small band from southern California threw their hats in the ring with giants like Journey and Black Sabbath while setting a pace the competition couldn't contend with. They will also love to learn the influence and the door they opened for a decade of 80's metal bands such as Quiet Riot, Ratt, and Motley Crue. In the end, Renoff does a great job of putting you in the moment with the band's rise to fame. Most importantly, he reminds you of the sheer awesomeness that is the Mighty Van Halen. Read Van Halen Rising and learn how a Southern California Backyard Party Band Saved Heavy Metal.

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### **Tracy Fleming-Swehla says**

What a great look into the beginnings of Van Halen. This book explains events in chronological order from the time the band members were little boys until they successfully toured the states after dropping their first album. What a great tribute to one of my favorite rock bands!

Van Halen was my first rock concert at McNichols Arena in Denver, Colorado when they toured Van Halen II. The show was electric and huge. It remains, always, one of my favorite concerts. Intensity levels shot to maximum as the lights powered up full force with screaming guitars and Dave swinging on a rope onto the stage (like Tarzan coming to swoop me away). That intensity never let up until we screamed for an encore.

David Lee Roth was always my favorite charismatic showman, and I loved learning that he was integral to moving the band forward. My 14-year-old self who stared at that particular poster for hours on end is happy to know he was more than just an awesome chest chained to my wall....although, I truly was OK with that.

This is a must read for early Van Halen fans....and for those lucky Pasadena kids who got to experience the backyard parties. I can imagine how much fun it would be to read about some of those parties now, remembering actually being there. I had a blast remembering where I was at the time, and when my path finally crossed with Dave's poster and my fan-hood began. Excellent book.

...now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to crank up the iPod cuz my Ice Cream Man is here....

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## **Michael Hermann says**

If you are a Van Halen fan, this book about their early years is one to read. I learned a few things I never knew about the band. Since I was never really a fan until the 1984 album, this book was very interesting to me, and it just made me appreciate the band that much more. If you want a good biographical read, you won't go wrong with this book.

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## **Gordon says**

I read the whole thing in one night without the assistance of krell. Absolutely compelling for true fans, or anyone interested in a great tale of immigrants making good through relentless work, slogging through local gigs with talent and a dream, fighting off the haters at every turn. You get points of view from friends, fans, musical peers, and industry influencers who witnessed their struggles and steady ascent first-hand. I can't image my life today without this band, who truly saved us from disco and punk as the old metal guard faded into irrelevance, while spawning a generation of imitators.

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## **Bert says**

First stop when i build my time-machine, Pasadena, 1975, a Van Halen backyard keg party about 10.30 pm.

Jeeps, i loved reading about VH's early days, and the whole mid-70s L.A. Dazed & Confused era this book conjured up. I was more hooked than Ozzy Osborne staying up for 5 nights, hoofing up a bunch of coke, checking into the wrong hotel room and forgetting the Sabbath gig that night.

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## **Carlton Duff says**

To find out the most cocksure lead vocalist of all time got into the band because he owned a pa is not how the story is supposed to go...whatever...great book.

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## **Angela DeSilva says**

My favorite band ever. I was swooning. And Fangirling over David Lee Roth omg, saw them live in 1983, they were on fire and Portland Oregon last summer and they still rock. I can't wait to read this book. I screamed for joy when I discovered that my library has it. I put a hold on it immediately. I am a die-hard Van Halen fan. I hope there's pictures in this book.

LOVING this book, learned so much cool stuff. Michael Schenker, lead guitarist from UFO, (prev. Scorpions), who I adore, played with Eddie. Didn't realize how much Dave promoted this band, knowing Eddie was the best. Full REVIEW to come . . . .

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## **Catherine Adde says**

See you soon for the book signing - after VH plays at the Hollywood Bowl!

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## **Suzanne Crane says**

This was a fascinating story for me because Van Halen has been my alltime favorite band fan for as long as I can remember. I have seen them perform live with every iteration of lead singer. When I was 8 years old my older brothers and their friends played their breakout album nonstop. The 1984 tour stop in Denver was my first rock concert; I saw them live with the original lineup. Mom dropped me off at that show with two of my besties because we were only 13 years old at the time! In high school, my new & different bestie cruised around town in my gold VW bug while blasting a 5150 cassette all summer long. We saw the band live at CU Stadium that summer at Sunday Number One with Loverboy, Dio and Dokken. We spent the night to lineup for GA seats & found our way into the front row where we rocked out with some hard core folks. So that's when I saw Sammy Hagar perform lead vocals for VH. I have a 5150 guitar pick someone on stage tossed into the audience during that performance; it landed on my shirt. Fast forward a decade or so and I saw them at the Del Mar Fairgrounds with Gary Cherone up front. That guy was out of place & his run was short lived, but I'm glad I saw it. About 4 years ago I saw them at SDSU with Eddie's son Wolfie on bass and David Lee Roth up front again. So there you have it - I saw it all and loved every minute of it. This book was awesome because it painted a picture for me that I could interpret with context. I learned a lot about the musical genius that is EVH, the demons he faced throughout his career, the combination of factors that put this band on the map and brought rock and roll back from the brink of death during the late 70s and early 80s. If you are a fan of VH, then this is a good read for you. If you could care less, then I say pass. ;D

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## **Jason says**

Some of this book is incredibly interesting, and some of it drags. (I know VH spent two years with a standing gig at Gazzari's, but I didn't need it to feel like it was going to take me two years to read that section of the book.) I would also quibble at times with what Renoff calls "heavy metal." Nonetheless, there are some great anecdotes in here, and you'd be hard pressed to argue that he didn't do his research. Renoff also makes an interesting case for how the rising tide of punk and country rock, among other 70s styles, kept VH without a record deal for years...but also allowed them to practice, practice, practice and write a ton of songs. Which is why their first album is so fantastic (and that's an objective fact!). If you're not a fan of VH, especially the DLR years, you should probably stay away from this. But if you are, I would encourage you to read it.

Really, I would give this work 3.5 stars. But I'm not interested in Goodreads recommending me a bunch of books on the history of hard rock, so I'm rounding down.

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## **Jeremy Hornik says**

Fuck it, five stars. This is a great band bio, about how the strengths and the weaknesses of the members came together to make something really new and different. Eddie Van Halen's massive musical talent and introversion; David Lee Roth's giant ego, pop sensibility, and generosity; Alex Van Halen's musicianship and temper; Michael Anthony's talent and (relative) chill. It's about how hard they worked and all the shows they played in backyards and biker bars, so they were rock stars before they had sold one record. And the long, long wait to get signed, which at this point in time is the craziest thing about this whole story. But the book goes to great lengths to explain how there's nothing inevitable about inevitability.

Well written, too. There's a lot of detail, but it never feels bogged down. Really fun.

Great book. If you like Van Halen at all, you'll probably like Van Halen Babies. And I want to see the HBO series, too.

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## **Thierry Côté says**

In many rock bios, the "pre-history" stage is dealt with in a perfunctory manner—those early chapters that you skip to get to the stardom years and the backstage shenanigans. Not so with Greg Renoff's excellent *Van Halen Rising*, which focuses almost entirely on the time before the release of Van Halen's epochal self-titled debut and captures the spirit of a youthful Pasadena quartet that was at once filled with confidence about its abilities (and deservedly so—even if DLR's vocal struggles and resemblance to Black Oak Arkansas's Jim "Dandy" Mangrum become something of a running theme) and insecurities about its ability to actually get that 1970s brass ring: a major-label record deal.

Superbly researched (one wouldn't expect any less from a trained academic) and compulsively readable, *Van Halen Rising* is probably the next best thing to being at one of the legendary Californian backyard parties it describes in great detail. Not only is it obviously an essential book for Van Halen fans (yes, even those who prefer the Van Hagar years), but its emphasis on the years VH spent honing its sound every Californian stage—the band's overnight success was the better part of a decade in the making—should also make it a mandatory part of the syllabus for any aspiring musician.

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## **Kinksrock says**

Interesting rock bio about Van Halen's development, especially the conflict between Edward Van Halen's extreme talent and David Lee Roth's limited vocal range. Indeed, as I suspected, David Lee Roth's tenure in the band was threatened from the very beginning. I am not the biggest Van Halen fan, but I have to admire their work ethic that led to their incredible success. However, I think the author may be over-selling his premise when he claims that they saved heavy metal. Rather, I think they gave rise to another sub-genre within the genre of heavy metal, whether you want to call it pop metal or glam metal. Ironically, you have to take into account that the band even refuses to call themselves heavy metal.

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## **Jesse Fink says**

I know from personal experience writing *The Youngs: The Brothers Who Built AC/DC* how tough it can be when the subject of your biography refuses to cooperate. Not so much in the actual writing (at the end of the day, a writer is only as good as the story he or she tells and the research they do, not the celebrities they get "access" to through PR agents or personal networks; such obstacles can be overcome through talent and hard work) but when it comes to promotion. How do you get people to pay attention to your book among the small mountain of books released each week without the benefit of a celebrity-driven publicity blitz? Small-minded reviewers will point out that Eddie Van Halen and David Lee Roth wouldn't talk to Renoff. So what? The wonderful and candid Michael Anthony did. So did hundreds of other people who all contributed to the rise of Van Halen, one of the great rock bands of all time. They all have a story to tell that will be closer to the truth of what really "went down" than the self-serving, image-protecting mythologising that passes for so many "official" music biographies. The fact that this is not an "official" Van Halen book and has still been published (and raved about) in an age of "easy sell" celebrity bios should serve as a mighty recommendation of its own. What you have in this book is an author who did the hard yards. It's the product of many years of research and it's a book written by someone who loves the music he's writing about without being a fawning hagiographer. You can't ask for more than that.

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## **Chris Wagnon says**

This is an absolute must read for any diehard Van Halen fan. By looking at the early roots of the band author Greg Renoff captures the essence of one of the greatest hard rock bands of all time. He examines the unlikely partnership between the talented Van Halen brothers and the flamboyant and persistent David Lee Roth. Using countless sources such as former bassist Michael Anthony and producer Ted Templeman, Renoff tells the story of the rise of the band playing backyard parties in Pasadena to playing in dive bars and clubs before flirting with an album deal through Gene Simmons before ultimately signed by Templeman of Warner Brother Records. He captures recording and production of their legendary debut album and highlights their first major tour in 78 when they were blowing bands like Journey and Black Sabbath off the stage. It was an incredible journey that I didn't want to end while I was reading it.

Take it from someone that has read a lot of the Van Halen books out there, *Van Halen Rising* should be at the top of your list. #VanHalenRising

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