



# Bang Your Head: The Rise and Fall of Heavy Metal

*By David Konow*

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**Bang Your Head: The Rise and Fall of Heavy Metal** By David Konow

“Bang your head! Metal Health’ll drive you mad!”

— Quiet Riot

Like an episode of VH1’s *Behind the Music* on steroids, *Bang Your Head* is an epic history of every band and every performer that has proudly worn the Heavy Metal badge. Whether headbanging is your guilty pleasure or you firmly believe that this much-maligned genre has never received the respect it deserves, *Bang Your Head* is a must-read that pays homage to a music that’s impossible to ignore, especially when being blasted through a sixteen-inch woofer.

Charting the genesis of early metal with bands like Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden; the rise of metal to the top of the Billboard charts and heavy MTV rotation featuring the likes of Def Leppard and Metallica; hitting its critical peak with bands like Guns N’ Roses; disgrace during the “hair metal” ’80s; and a demise fueled by the explosion of the Seattle grunge scene and the “alternative” revolution, *Bang Your Head* is as funny as it is informative and proves once and for all that there is more to metal than sin, sex, and spandex.

To write this exhaustive history, David Konow spent three years interviewing the bands, wives, girlfriends, ex-wives, groupies, managers, record company execs, and anyone who was or is a part of the metal scene, including many of the band guys often better known for their escapades and bad behavior than for their musicianship. Nothing is left unsaid in this jaw-dropping, funny, and entertaining chronicle of power ballads, outrageous outfits, big hair, bigger egos, and testosterone-drenched debauchery.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a book that never quite gets rolling, Konow, a writer for *Guitar World*, sets out to give a timeline of heavy metal while answering "three key questions: what went right, what went wrong, and what the hell happened?" He begins in Birmingham, England, which he argues is the birthplace of heavy metal, with its most popular statesman today, Ozzy Osbourne. As a revolt against the hippie movement and in part to save himself from a life of crime, Osbourne formed Black Sabbath. At the same time, Led Zeppelin formed from the "ashes of the Yardbirds," and after finally gathering enough members (Keith Moon of the Who turned them down, quipping that they'd sink "like a lead zeppelin," which is how Jimmy Page decided on the name), held a jam session. Konow continues in a chronological fashion, briefly sketching band bios, triumphs and downfalls. Without exploiting each band's debauchery or disintegration, Konow covers such other metal acts such as Alice Cooper, Kiss, Van Halen, Mötley Crüe, Dokken, Def Leppard, Metallica, Bon Jovi, Guns 'n' Roses and many others. The portraits of Alice Cooper and Axl Rose are the most engaging parts of the book. However, the chapters read more like magazine articles than a coherent book. Hardcore metal fans will likely find the book a bit soft and too pop, and they're unlikely to learn any new stories. In the final pages, Konow attempts an analysis of the fall of heavy metal, but by that point, so many bands have risen and fallen that his curt summation is hardly satisfying. This is an inspired personal effort that won't chart.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—This book tells the story of heavy-metal music from its beginning in the late '60s through its precipitous decline in the early '90s. Black Sabbath, the first featured band, got its start in 1969 when its members were just out of high school, a scenario that repeats itself with many of the other groups. With Ozzy Osbourne arguably more popular than ever before, thanks to his family's MTV reality show, teens will enjoy reading how he got into music to escape jail or factory work. Most of the stories follow the same pattern—band struggles; band hits it big; band's success is derailed by money, drugs, and personality conflicts. Some of the groups, like Poison, Ratt, and W.A.S.P., will probably seem laughable to today's teens, while Metallica and the members of Motley Crue are still in the limelight. The author has a chatty, anecdotal style and spares no expense as he shares tales of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Often, those who abused drugs died prematurely, cautionary tales that won't go unnoticed. Several pages of notes show that Konow had firsthand access to many of the musicians. Black-and-white photographs, mainly by the prolific Neil Zlozower, open each chapter. There is no discography. This book will be popular with those who enjoy the heavy-metal genre, as well as with those who want to see how to succeed (or not) in the music business.

*Jamie Watson, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore*

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From Library Journal

For the new school of metalheads just discovering Guns 'n' Roses and Ozzy Osbourne, freelance journalist Konow has written the perfect primer on the world of black T-shirts, tinnitus, and sore necks. This virtual encyclopedia, based on interviews with bands, managers, record executives, girlfriends, and groupies, traces heavy metal from the formation of Black Sabbath in the 1960s to the early 1990s, when the genre suddenly went out of vogue. Special attention is given to the 1980s Los Angeles hair metal scene, and although Metallica is well represented, the 1980s thrash metal scene from whence that band sprung is barely mentioned. Konow relates history well, but he falters at commentary. He dedicates only about ten pages to metal's waning, which seems like a lazy ending in a book that attempts to prove its continuing relevance.

Still, this book will nicely flesh out popular music collections and complements Chuck Klosterman's recent memoir-cum-musicological study, *Fargo Rock City*, and Deena Weinstein's cultural study, *Heavy Metal*. Recommended.

*Robert Morast, "Argus Leader," Sioux Falls, SD*

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