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Sound Of The Beast: The Complete Headbanging History Of Heavy Metal



Synopsis

The definitive history of the first 30 years of heavy metal, containing over 100 interviews with members of Black Sabbath, Metallica, Judas Priest, Twisted Sister, Slipknot, Kiss, Megadeth, Public Enemy, Napalm Death, and more. More than 30 years after Black Sabbath released the first complete heavy metal album, its founder, Ozzy Osbourne, is the star of The Osbournes, TV's favourite new reality show. Contrary to popular belief, headbangers and the music they love are more alive than ever. Yet there has never been a comprehensive book on the history of heavy metal - until now. Featuring interviews with members of the biggest bands in the genre, Sound of the Beast gives an overview of the past 30-plus years of heavy metal, delving into the personalities of those who created it. Everything is here, from the bootlegging beginnings of fans like Lars Ulrich (future founder of Metallica) to the sold-out stadiums and personal excesses of the biggest groups. From heavy metal's roots in the work of breakthrough groups such as Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin to MTV hair metal, courtroom controversies, black metal murderers and Ozzfest, Sound of the Beast offers the final word on this elusive, extreme, and far-reaching form of music.

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Customer Reviews

Few books on heavy metal music can compare to Christie's thoughtful and passionate history of the music of the beast. There is little argument that heavy metal began in earnest with Black Sabbath (though the Beatles' "Helter Skelter" is considered by some to be the first heavy metal song), and Christie holds to convention and begins his metal timeline in early 1970. Following in the jamming,

bluesy tradition of the Yard Birds and Cream, Sabbath (then called Earth) wrote "Black Sabbath"-a song that changed not only the band's name, but the face of rock and roll. Black Sabbath set the pace, but bands like Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple "fleshed out the edges and gave it sex appeal." The next wave, the new wave of British heavy metal, saw the emergence of Motorhead, Saxon and Iron Maiden among many others. The movement then spread through America and found most bands cropping up out of L.A. (although many migrated from the Midwest). Van Halen, Ratt and Motley Crue grew out of the then underground club scene. Christie doesn't get bogged down in anecdotes about bands and their groupies, but instead documents the music and its different genres. Each chapter contains helpful "genre boxes" giving a brief description of the style (e.g., Power Metal, Death Metal and Nu Metal). If Christie is to be faulted, it is on the grounds of hero worship: he's a metal fan, scribe (a music writer living in Brooklyn) and practitioner (in a digital metal band called Black Noerd), and readers might wish for more critical analysis about the culture of fans. But this is a minor point in a book otherwise worthy of having its dog-eared and beer-stained pages passed among friends and placed in motel-room bedside drawers. 94 b&w photos, and 16-page color insert not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Adult/High School-MTV's Headbanger's Ball, which debuted in 1987, was canceled in 1995-metal was officially "over." But it has returned to the schedule, and metal is making a comeback. In Christie's exhaustive history, readers watch metal rise, fall, change, and splinter into a massive number of genres (death metal, black metal, thrash metal, and more). As in David Konow's Bang Your Head (Three Rivers, 2002), the story begins with Black Sabbath (as if there would be any other choice); but while Konow kept to the well known, Christie gives just as much attention to the fringes. Also unlike Konow, he eschews gossip for almost scholarly explanations of the musicians' creative process and their works. Through it all, he shows the impact of competing forces (like punk, grunge, and rap). Chapters are arranged chronologically but also by genre, and each one is packed with black-and-white photographs and "genre boxes" that list the definitive recordings, ending with the author's choice for the 25 best metal albums of all time. The book is well indexed. New metal fans will run to the music store not only because of the knowledge gained from this volume, but also because of the enthusiastic (though sometimes a little overwrought) way the author shares it. Jamie Watson, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you're looking for an accessible history of heavy metal, this is a pretty good place to start. There are definitely some problems (see below), but he covers all the important ground, and writes clearly and makes his points clear in each chapter (chapters are at times more chronologically oriented, at times a bit more thematic). If someone who didn't know much about metal wanted to learn more about its history, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend this. Now for the problems (again, I mostly like the book, but these are things that might bother some readers): As other reviewers have noted, Christie focuses heavily on Metallica. While they are certainly one of the most influential metal bands of all time, they receive more attention here than any other band. On a related note, there is a strong Anglo-American bias. While Christie has the requisite chapter on black metal in Norway, he mostly talks about British and American bands, giving a very skewed picture of the development of metal. He also clearly lets his own musical tastes get in the way of objectivity, with the most obvious case being the way he treats hair metal. Every time he mentions it, he denigrates it, and tries to reduce its historical importance. The treatment of hair metal is in some ways indicative of a larger trend in the book, of whitewashing metal. If you are looking for stories of debauchery (the sex and drugs side of things), you won't find them here. Christie paints a picture of metal as socially conscious and intellectually engaged. While this is true of a lot of metal, I don't think it's true of all, or even most, metal. Similarly, Christie downplays things like Satanism, going so far as to say that metal bands only ever use it as a metaphor. Again, that's probably largely true, but it's not so simple. Over and over I got the feeling that Christie was trying to present a respectable picture of metal to outsiders. Not a bad goal, of course, but a bit disingenuous in a history. Finally, if you're looking for any kind of musicological discussion of metal, you won't find it here. In the grand scheme of things, there's very little discussion of the music itself here. Overall, this is a solid book and really the best thing out at the moment, but there are some glaring problems that leave me hoping that someone else will eventually write a better history of metal.

Sound of the Beast only very loosely follows a sequential timeline-based format. Much of the content revolves around the 1980s, which should come as no surprise due to the important work put out in that decade. As other reviewers have mentioned, the author does spend too much time on Metallica. I would also argue that Rob Halford is referenced too frequently for quotations on metal in general. It would have been better to have a larger variety of interviewees. The most visible weakness of this book is the lack of discussion about the stylistic differences amongst the different sub genres. The author leaves the reader with an overall impression that metal just became faster and faster as it progressed into newer sub genres. An interested fan would be able to learn more

about what makes death metal what it is by reading Wikipedia articles. There are also some questionable categorizations such as Overkill being a power metal band that skipped the Thrash movement. This book will entertain readers mostly interested in what was happening in the metal culture throughout its history. That being said, the author could have condensed this down into a shorter read. Many readers will appreciate the lists of key bands and albums presented in each chapter.

Ian Christie is truly the mouth piece of Heavy Metal. In his own words and those of the metal gods he has outlined one of the greatest histories ever put in writing. Speaking with reverence and adoration, he has become one of Metal's finest curators. This is a must read for any metalhead.

For husband.. he loves it!!

Fair minded and complete, this history of metal takes a look at the author's beloved genre and its pioneers-from adored godfathers Black Sabbath to glam "darlings" Poison- from the perspective of one with an inside track as a musician-who never mentions his own involvement in the advancement of the style.

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