

The Mighty VAN HALEN



Buzz Morison

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Eddie Malluk/Star File

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Chuck Palen/Star File

For Dave
Who would have approved.

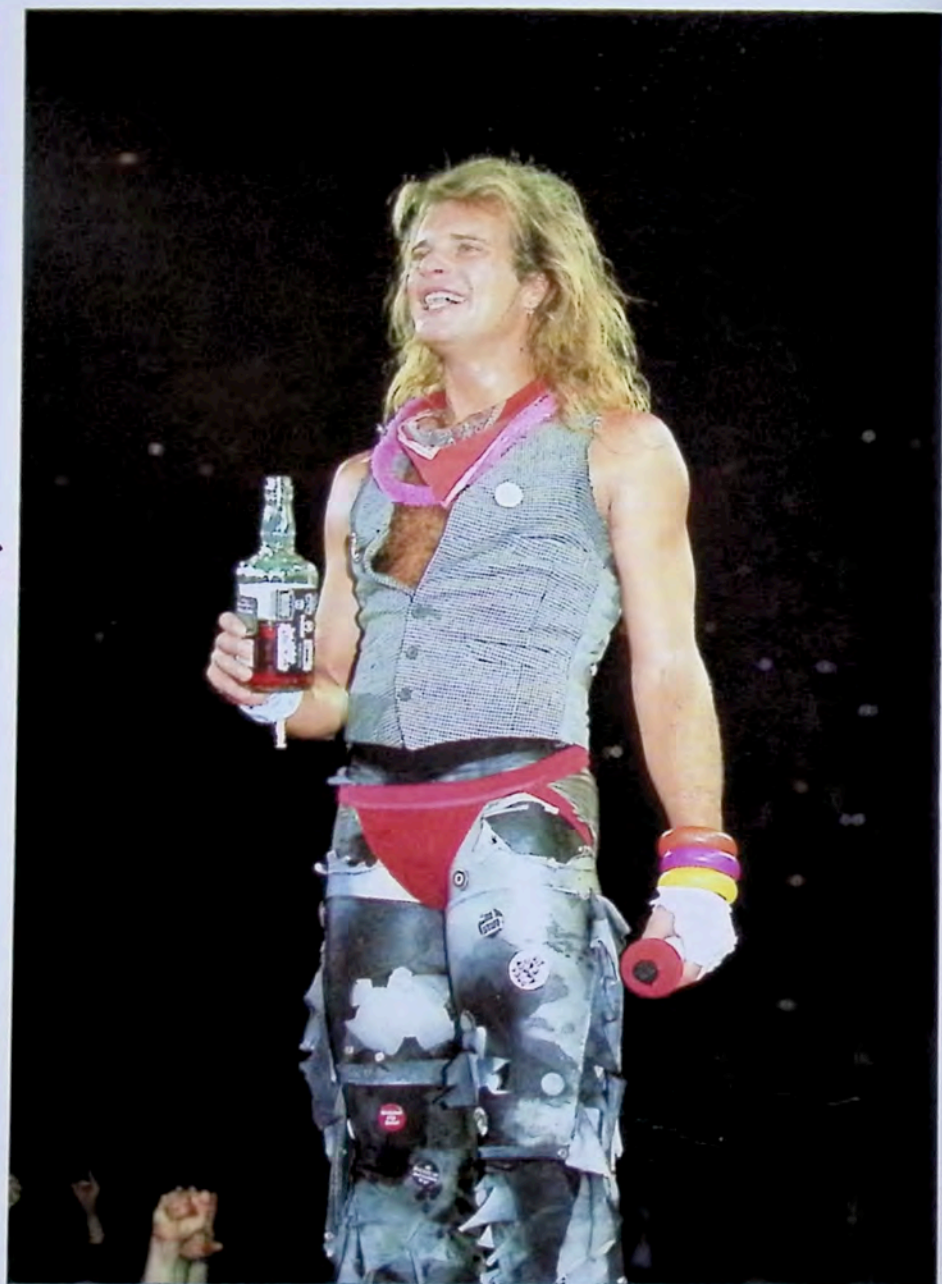


Chapter 1

The Sound of Number One

The noise is deafening. David Lee Roth stands on a platform of steel grating that juts from the front of Van Halen's enormous stage. He is smiling, laughing, reveling in the noise. He raises his hand and the volume rises with him. He opens his arms, beckoning, and the waves of sound crash down upon him. Cordless microphone in one hand, bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey in the other, the band's singer soaks up the adulation of 14,000 people gathered before him, for the sounds he bathes in are not those of guitar, bass and drums but of a screaming, sweaty mob. This is the **1984** tour, and Van Halen is Number One.

"This is the party capitol of this part of the country," Roth bellows, and a new wave of noise descends on him. "Whaddaya say we just forget about the rest of the concert and go across the street and get drunk?" As the crowd sends out its loudest barrage of howling yet, Eddie Van Halen rips into his red



and white guitar, slamming chords back at the hordes, and suddenly the arena is *Runnin' with the Devil*.

Following the release of their album **1984** and on the heels of the meteoric rise of *Jump!*, the band's first song to reach Number One on BILLBOARD magazine's singles chart, Van Halen is crossing the continent with their largest and most ambitious stage show yet.

No longer do Eddie Van Halen and bassist Michael Anthony content themselves with criss-crossing huge stadium stages. No longer is the quartet backed by a simple wall of amplifiers. No longer is David Lee Roth bathed in light from your basic battery of overhead spots. This is the **1984** tour and, just as technology has entered the band's music in the form of Eddie Van Halen's synthesizers, so too has the mod-



Mark Weiss

ern age turned Van Halen's show into an event of spectacular proportions.

There are speakers everywhere. They form three tiers that rise 40 feet at the back of the stage. They hang overhead from the lighting stanchions circling the stage. They form the base of the stage and rise on each side, the foundations for platforms that bring the band, literally, into the crowd's hands. They even fill Alex Van Halen's bass drums. Just the sight of all those woofers and tweeters would be enough to send crowds a-howling, but it's the supersonic, diamond-hard rock that jets from them that brings the walls down.

Dwarfed by the set is the band, but it's the band that makes that rock. Just your basic drums, bass, guitar and swaggering sex symbol in ripped, skin-tight pants, but from

small things big noises come, and the arena is crumbling and the continent is shaking from the music of, at least for now, America's Number One rock band.

From their newest album, *Hot for Teacher* is unleashed at a torrid pace as Eddie Van Halen, in leopard coat and patched jeans, spits snarling, bluesy riffs from his cordless guitar. David Lee Roth, never still, always shaking, barks out the lyrics garbed in silver stretch pants overlaid with a bright red jockstrap. Michael Anthony, "the quiet one," pounds his bass while doing a little dance step in place, riding the music's surge, truly lifted by the crowd's affection. And then Alex Van Halen is turned loose behind the drum kit that encircles him in a motherlode of chrome and skin. With every roll and tattoo, amplified well beyond safety levels, the crowd

rolls and tattoos back. There's a love affair here between a band and a million teenagers, and for tonight there are no restraints on stage or in the pits.

Each member of the band gets his turn. Michael Anthony climbs the stairs that rise through the tiers of speakers and hurls his bass through the air to the floorboards below and then, in turn, hurls himself onto his instrument, releasing an electronic moan never dreamed of by Les Paul or Leo Fender.

In the midst of the band's most heathen and sexy song, *Everybody Wants Some!!*, Roth, now in his eighth or 20th different set of leotards, engages in some martial arts swordplay, then brings the band down and unfolds a whorly, boozy party rap. A new-age Bob Hope gone off the deepest end,

Roth tells hotel tales of "this fair city" and beckons to "all these smiling faces," communicating with the seething mass more easily and effectively than any Miss Manners or Mister Rogers ever did. Then, amidst the late-night goofing and tales of elevator rides with mystery women, *the bra* appears in the hail of hats, lighters, banners and bandannas that constantly pelt the stage. Learing and fondling, Roth raises the delicate item to eye level and turns to Eddie Van Halen to his left. "Looks like it's big enough to be Valerie's," he needles as the bone-crushing crunch of *Everybody Wants Some!!* returns in perfectly choreographed time.

As each Van Halen character gets his turn in the spotlights, magically, like some close encounter of the electrical kind, huge banks of lights are lowered and tilted, the set engaging in a space-age duet with each musician. It's a flawless, enveloping technical show with an awesome human connection.

Finally, we get Eddie Van Halen's spot, the solo frenzy for which everybody who has ever played air guitar has been waiting. Running from side platform to side platform, the guitarist fills the stage and spills out his high-speed spectacles, including the intricate twists and melodies from his recorded experiments *Cathedral*, *Spanish Fly* and *Intruder*. He races to the outer reaches of the stage, pointing and giving the thumbs-up with one hand while the other continues to play, as if communicating his excitement at and appreciation of the crowd's adoration to each person individually. Then he occupies Roth's centerstage, grating, shirtless now and grinning as far as his cute cheeks

will allow as his playing meets the bic-flicking assembled halfway at the hysterical level.

On it goes, the temperature and decibels rising and falling through new songs *Girl Gone Bad* and *Panama* and old faves like *(Oh) Pretty Woman* and *Little Guitars*. But when Eddie Van Halen and Michael Anthony mount the stairs to take positions at keyboard outposts that crown their speaker construction, and the **1984** theme is sounded, the chaos is complete. Here comes Roth, balanced on the

ramp in front of Alex Van Halen's elevated drums, with the kicker—into space he leaps, legs outstretched in a midair split. It's *the jump*, and with it Number One—*JUMP!* Tonight, and every night on the road, the band that claims "everyone has a little bit of Van Halen in them" has given everything they can to everyone around them. They are Number One, they love being Number One, and they have become Number One like nobody else. VAN HALEN—the band, the music, the eternal party.



Joe Bangay/Pix Int'l.



Ross Marino

Chapter 2

What is Van Halen?

Sometimes it seems like a bad comedy routine, this rock and roll life, as if a little cloud of canned laughter is following you around. "Hey Mom, me and Marty got tickets for the Van Halen concert next week." Pause, then she looks up from pounding the family steak, "Oh . . . I didn't know he was in town." Sheeeesh, moms.

Whether *they* think it's a guy, a moving company, a neutron bomber prototype or "that comet that

comes once every couple of decades or something," we know that Van Halen is Number One and why—cuz they play the best, loudest and most partying rock music in the world. Moon man David Lee Roth, guitar maniac Eddie Van Halen, bass basher Michael Anthony and grinning pilager of tubs and cymbals Alex Van Halen—they, in simple terms, are the coolest. Four guys who have grown from playing California wet t-shirt contests to creating a sound wave of rock music that makes 15,000 t-shirts wet with sweat on any given night, in any city, on any continent in the world.

Van Halen. It's the guitarist and drummer's last name but now it means so much more. Just say "Diver Down." Means Van Halen. Brown M&M's—Van Halen. Jack Daniels—Van Halen. Prom queen—

Van Halen. Valerie Bertinelli—Van Halen. Party—VAN HALEN!

But whoa . . . hang on a minute. We know they're Number One because we made them that. And we know the songs—*Runnin' with the Devil*, *Everybody Wants Some!!*, *Mean Street*, *Dance the Night Away*—and the solos. We'd recognize that chest anywhere. There's that flying VH logo, and the little guy with the beard sometimes. That's all on the surface. We can see that stuff in the pictures, even hear it in our minds when we listen to the records. But really, what is Van Halen? How come they're Number One and why are so many bands trying so hard and using so many gimmicks to get past Van Halen, to outdo Van Halen, to be the next Van Halen? Hell, that's a good question because Van Halen hasn't even

begun to become what Van Halen can be. They only just recently became Number One and they've been around since 1978. What gives with these guys? How'd they get there? How come they're so good? And, perhaps most important, how come they're having so much fun???

10 things that have led to Van Halen becoming Number One:

1) They're from California.

This is obvious but often overlooked. There is no other place in the world that could have spawned a band so full of obnoxious talent and uproarious bravado. If they were from any other state in the union, they'd be just another "outrageous" band, but because they are from the Gold Coast, everything they do is accepted as okay. California is crazy. Van Halen is from California. Van Halen is crazy. Okay.

Seriously, Alex, Eddie, Michael, David—they're all products of California high schools. That alone is frightening. But really, it's not so far-fetched to think of this band as the California state symbol—everything in excess, totally unpredictable, sexy, tan, loud, obnoxious, fast, charismatic, always having fun, photogenic, supremely confident, and best/worst of all, they know they're great and aren't the least bit hesitant to tell you so.

It's become something of a motto of the band that there's a little bit of Van Halen in all of us and they're just helping us get it out. By the same token, there's a little bit of California in all of us, and Van Halen helps us exorcise it so that we can get on with the rest of our lives without having to go there.



Bob Gruen/Star File

2) They are not heavy metal, they are Van Halen.

It often is argued or assumed that Van Halen plays heavy metal, that heavy metal is stupid and pointless, and therefore, Van Halen isn't worth a second thought or listen. Stop, look *and* listen, those California school teachers might have told us.

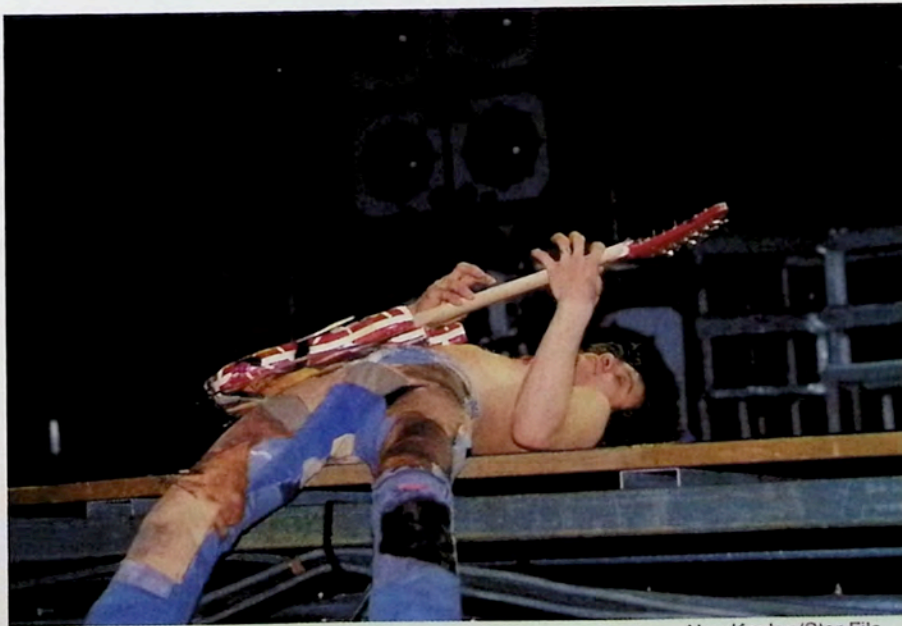
In the band's own words, they play "big rock," and as they term it, so

they define it. Van Halen's music is big, it's loud, it's fast, it's exciting, and always, it's a party. Name one heavy metal band that sounds like a party.

There is no Satanism or black magic in this rock and roll, no spectre of doom, no barking at the moon. What we have here is good times, girls, whiskey, dancing, fun, maybe a ride in a fast car, and the party,



Mark Weiss



Alan Kaplan/Star File

because that's what rock music is all about—having fun. Van Halen lives fun and nowhere is that more evident than in the music. Besides, name one heavy metal band whose lead singer could get away with wearing torn Spandex and scarves and sport hair and an upper torso so leeringly as Mr. David Lee Roth.

3) Van Halen is cute and sexy. Look, AC/DC is neither cute nor sexy. Ronnie James Dio is definitely not cute. Def Leppard might be cute but, face it, they're not old enough to be sexy (really, check their IDs). Quiet Riot might be sexy, at least they think they are, but they're too old to be cute. With Motley Crue it's make-up and mirrors. Ted Nugent could be sexy but tries to be ugly. Queen tries to be both but is blessed with neither quality. Judas Priest—enough said.

There's no denying the visual image of Van Halen—there's David Lee Roth with the aforementioned chest and skin-tight leggings, and to his left, master of all sounds possible from the electric guitar, the cuddly cute, oh so seemingly young and innocent Eddie Van Halen. No other band so nimbly balances the bawdy and the pure in their music and their image. (You're right, there are two other guys in the band but be honest, when you think of Van Halen, is Michael Anthony's wardrobe the first thing that comes to mind?)

David Lee Roth exudes sex, taking his body and lewd monologues to the very edge of ribald parody. He jumps, he thrusts, he screams, he moans and he talks, talks, talks about girls, girls, girls. His sexual escapades and conquests (implied) are as legendary as they are

unsubstantiated, photos of ransacked motel rooms and stories of elevator rides notwithstanding. He is a walking sexual fantasy.

Eddie Van Halen is the cutest thing going with a mischievous mile-wide smile that sums up Van Halen as well as anything. He's married to TV's Valerie Bertinelli, a storybook romance that's true-to-life. He's a sweet, shy, self-proclaimed loner, a knockout who could probably make most any hard-rock outfit on looks and charisma alone. But the truth is that he has become, at the tender age of 28, the greatest rock guitarist of our time. Which leads us to reason for success number four, he's not just cute . . .

4) Eddie Van Halen is the best guitarist in rock. Perhaps the greatest evidence of an artist's accomplishments comes when others start copying his or her work. That's the way it's been with Eddie Van Halen for awhile now—everybody tries to sound like him and to know "How'd he do that?" There are a million guitarists, some on records and some just heard in basements, trying to get a grip on Eddie's solos just as Van Halen used to teach himself Eric Clapton's solos note for note.

There is evidence that he's the **best guitarist in rock.** Perhaps Eddie Van Halen for a while now—voted by the readers of GUITAR PLAYER magazine; accolades from the likes of Frank Zappa who thanked Eddie for "reinventing" the guitar; and so on. But the only real evidence anyone needs is contained on six platinum-selling Van Halen albums (meaning there are over one million copies of each frightening slab stashed in record

collections around the world). The technique, the style, the WOW. Just as his cuteness balances Roth's heavy breathing, so his spectacular playing is the foil for the primitive prancings of Van Halen's voice. And get the shy and diminutive Eddie Van Halen on stage where he can do what he loves to do most—play guitar—and it's obvious again why they're Number One.

What makes a Van Halen concert so celebratory, though, is not just the spectacle, but the obvious truth in stating that the four guys on stage are having just as good a time as all the folks out in the arena. Eddie Van Halen has stated more than once that he's just like his fans and that if he weren't up in the lights playing, he'd probably be rushing the stage reaching out for a touch, just as lost in the roar



5) The concerts are amazing. It's a fact that Van Halen's 1981, 1982 and 1984 concert productions were the largest ever taken on cross-continent tours in the history of rock. It's also fact, at least for anyone who has seen one, that the Van Halen stage show is just plain amazing, whether it was on the World Vacation tour or an Invasion jaunt.

as everyone else. He's said it's not work, it's play—they *play* music—and in concert we get to play with them. A Van Halen concert ticket is an invitation to party, and the band does everything in its power as "host" to make that party one-of-a-kind unforgettable. (Seems the fellas love to be out on the road, too. Something about girls.) And the tours keep getting bigger and better.



Janet Macoska/Star File

6) Van Halen has been blessed with luck and good timing. The story of Van Halen's discovery by Warner Bros. executives is an often told tale (and retold again in the next chapter). It was an off night, hardly anyone was in the bar, but the band found out about their visitors (\$\$\$) that night and played the set of their lives. Sign on the dotted line, please. A lucky night.

Their first album came out in 1978 because that was when they signed and recorded, but it just so happened that the music world was ready for a blistering rock blast. Disco was rearing its ugly head as John Travolta came down with his **Saturday Night Fever** (that soundtrack was Number One when **Van Halen** hit the charts), and *You Really Got Me* turned out to be the rocking tonic many a youngblood needed. Some ballyhooed the re-emergence of metal. But hey, it was just Van Halen, announcing their arrival at precisely the right time.

Today, the often-talked-about heavy metal revival actually seems to be in full swing, with creatures like Scorpions and Twisted Sister filling the charts. Van Halen had them all beat. They've quite simply become the hardest, cleanest and most savvy rock band around, confidently stepping over the heap of clone bands and leather pretenders while leaving more than one Foreigner and Foghat in their wake on the way to Number One. Right now, the stereos of America can't get enough loud, fast, crashing music—there's a new Ratt and Helix (and old Kiss) at every turn. Van Halen just took their time, became the best and have stepped

in to steer the ship. And, as their luck would have it, they struck a soft spot between the Michael Jackson blitz and the Prince rain. Number One in 1984 because the time was right.

7) They write great songs.

It's hard to imagine the four lads of Van Halen sitting down to write *Push Comes to Shove* or *Hot for Teacher*, but that's what it says there on the record sleeves—"songs written by Edward Van Halen, Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony and David Lee Roth." Whatever, from out of that collective consciousness and giant pen come some super rock, and even pop, songs.

There's no denying the melody and chorus of *Dance the Night Away*. It's one of those songs you can't help but sing along with. How about *Runnin' with the Devil*? You can't get much more sinister than that, no matter how much leather you wear or fire and blood you sprinkle on your music. *Jump!* is a pure pop tune (actually composed two years before its time) that even 35-year-old college graduates learned to love. *Everybody Wants Some!!* is a song written for fun about fun and played for fun that has become a concert showpiece with a chorus that couldn't be more true (or more raunchy). Everybody's got a favorite, right?

That four-man collective writes great songs (though, in reality it's Eddie who does most of the melodies and David Lee who creates the words), which isn't surprising but might be thought of as a bonus seeing as how Van Halen started as a cover band and their first radio hit was a Kinks' song. Only





Dave Plastik

goes to show that success also often depends on the fact that . . .

8) They do great cover tunes.

Somebody knew what he was doing when *You Really Got Me* was released six weeks before the first Van Halen album. California's favorite singles band went national with a classic from the '60s, starting the flame under **Van Halen** before it took off.

Before signing with Warner Bros., Van Halen paid their dues on the bar circuit building a reputation with a repertoire of covers that ranged from Deep Purple to the Ohio Players and back again. Demand only allowed an occasional original to creep in at a pace of about one song per set. They worked long and hard to become L.A.'s favorite backyard barbeque band, so why give up on the sounds that got you to the big time? *You're No Good*, *Dancin' in the Streets*, *(Oh) Pretty Woman*—coarse, fiery bullets that shoot off the albums and light up concerts still. And, great original songs plus great covers make for . . .

9) Great albums.

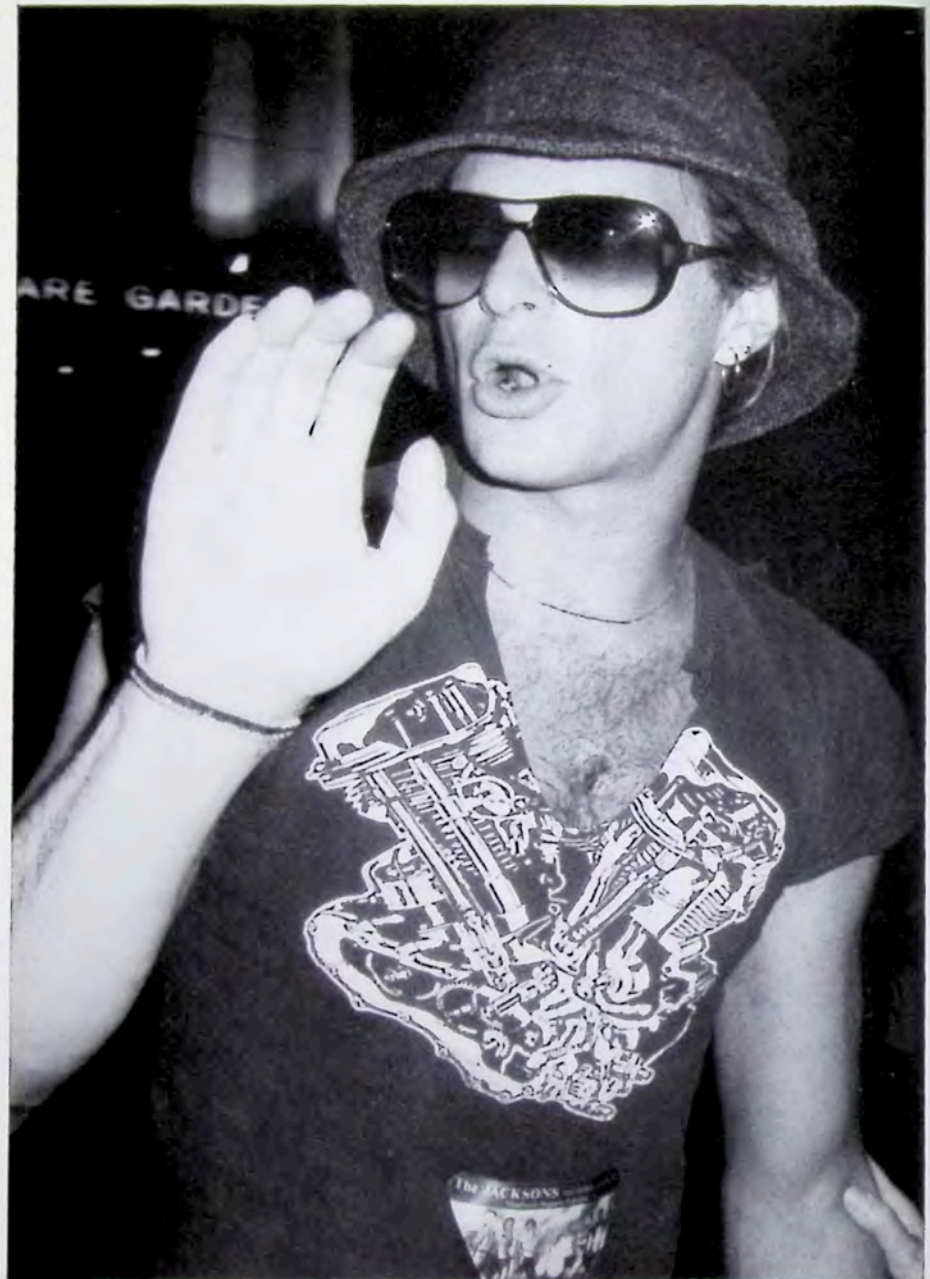
The best thing producer/Warner Bros. magnate Ted Templeman ever did for Van Halen's studio sound was nothing. That's right, nothing. Choosing to present one of the hottest live acts around just as they sound, Templeman always has opted for recording Van Halen "live" in the studio, or nearly so. A lot is left to chance and many of the mistakes go down uncorrected, but that's part of what makes a Van Halen album so real and alive. The first album, **Van Halen**, was completed in about three weeks. They marched into the studio, plugged in and played fullbore. With a min-

imum of overdubs and all those careening Eddie Van Halen solos cut loose live, the sound was captured, the name was made, and that's the way it's been ever since. As Roth and Alex Van Halen have stated, the only thing missing is the audience.

David Lee Roth is the first to admit, as well, that there's a formula at work: short songs, melodic songs, no bombastic solos, no boredom, concentrated doses of lethal rock. Each album is a model of short, quick, jugular-seeking efficiency and frantic pacing. Toss in a chance to hear Eddie's latest discoveries, again short and sweet, and you've got platinum LPs.

10) The men of Van Halen don't take themselves too seriously. No pretensions, no attempts at great truth. Van Halen knows what they're about and they have an abundance of one of the key ingredients to rock and roll success—a sense of humor. Rock and roll isn't meant to be taken too seriously, otherwise it just wouldn't be rock and roll. And, tell the truth now, can you really take David Lee Roth seriously? How many people do you know who dress like that?

The members of Van Halen are entertainers as well as musicians, and they know it. They love to play high velocity music, to entertain on and off the stage, and to party with the people, and they're honest about it all. They laugh at themselves. (Heck, Roth laughs throughout the band's albums.) As Eddie has said, he likes loud rock guitar, likes to play loud guitar and is really just a kid in love with rock like the kids in the crowd.



Vinnie Zuffante/Star File

The band collects bad reviews of their records and shows and revels in any reaction they can arouse. The people who hate Van Halen are those who don't take the time to stop and find out what they are really about. Van Halen is about rock and having fun, the big party, the long-revered ideal of non-stop

good times. As Roth believes, audience participation should extend onstage, backstage and under the stage. Which really sort of sums them up—party. So there are *eleven* things that have led to Van Halen becoming Number One.

11) Van Halen really does love to party. Honest.

Chapter 3

The Van Halen History



Ross Marino

It's a long way to the top in rock and roll. Once a band gets there it's never easy to stay and rarely does a group's visit last very long. There are thousands of bands in the U.S. alone whose greatest goal and fantasy is to reach that top slot, become head honcho, rule over all those struggling aggregates in positions two through 12,000. In 1984, Van Halen, just four guys from California, made it to the peak—can't get no higher. But it wasn't easy and it took time, dedication and lots of partying. They spent 10 years together as a band, working (playing) their way up from one of those slots in the bottom few thousand.

It started, more or less, back in 1967 when a couple of junior-high-school-aged brothers moved to California from the land of their birth, Holland, and the immigration officials never gave it a second thought. Thus, the seeds of wild-

ness and crazy musicality that were to spawn Van Halen were allowed through customs untaxed.

Elder brother Alex (by two years) played drums, while younger Eddie recently had picked up guitar and was discovering a natural ability as he poured over Cream records and figured out Eric Clapton measure by measure. While attending Pasadena High, the Van Halen brothers began playing in bands, always together, the beat and the melody. During the early '70s, the pair teamed with a now unknown bass player to form Mammoth, a trio that turned out to be the last stop before the formation of Van Halen. Young Eddie sang and played lead in that early incarnation of Mammoth, but he hated the singing responsibilities and, it seemed, was always looking for a chance to unload that task.

Meanwhile, at nearby Muir High, also in Pasadena, a transplanted

Hoosier from Indiana was occasionally attending classes. A self-professed cut-up, David Lee Roth also had his eyes on a rock career, skipping classes to play his guitar and honing the instrument that is his body. He soon found himself in a local rock outfit called the Redball Jets and would often rent his PA system to the brothers Van Halen and Mammoth. It wasn't long, then, before the Mammoth guitarist who hated to sing asked the Jet singer with the PA system to join up.

Things weren't all hunky-dory for Mammoth, now a quartet. The band played any and every gig it could, the members forsaking the collegiate life after high school for the backyard weiner roast and long car rides through the sprawl of Los Angeles. Troubles soon began brewing with the group's bass player, but as fate would have it the band shared a bill with a rock



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conglom called Snake whose bass player, a transplanted Chicagoan named Michael Anthony, impressed everyone. Eddie asked Anthony to jam, and after a grueling musical test of odd rhythms and cover tunes administered by the Van Halen brothers, a new bassist had been found. So the lineup was complete. It was 1974.

For the next three years the band perfected their skills, rehearsing in the proverbial basement and learning an awesome songbook of 300 covers, everything from the hard rock of such bands as Led Zepelin, Cream and the Kinks, to the super-bad funk of James Brown

and the Ohio Players (from whom Roth claims to have gotten his characteristic shrieks). Along the line, conflicts arose with another band monikered Mammoth, and the supersonic, sleek surname of the siblings Van Halen was chosen as replacement over such forgettable handles as Rat Salade and Daddy Longlegs.

Working constantly, Van Halen soon developed a reputation as *the* party band around Pasadena, playing every type of California frolic imaginable—beach parties, street dances, wet t-shirt affairs, beer bashes. Though underage, they managed to play many a bar date

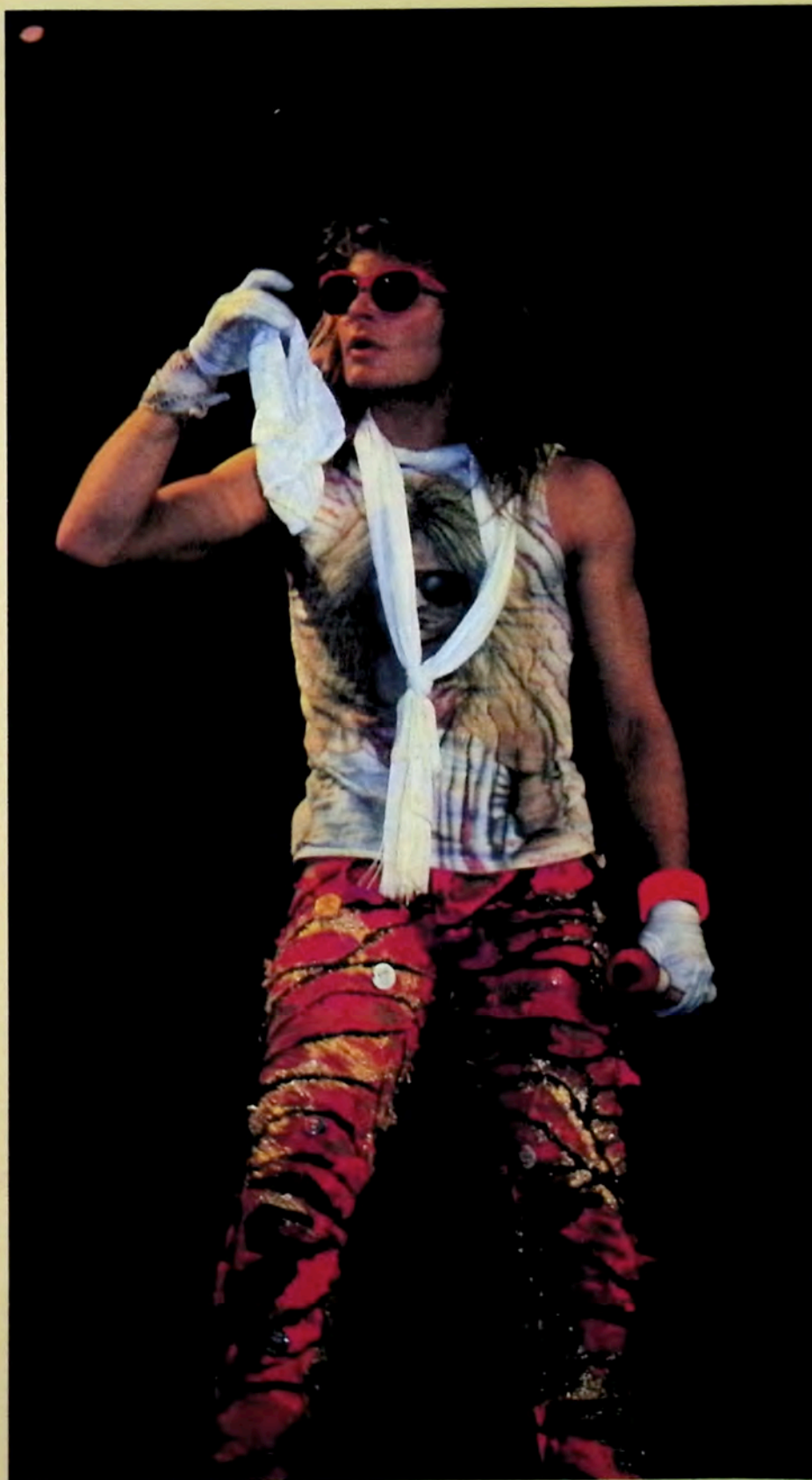
by staying on stage between sets, okay according to California statutes. Soon they progressed to clubs like Gazzarri's Crazy Horse West in Hollywood, the Rock Corporation in the San Fernando Valley, and the Starwood Club in Hollywood. They promoted themselves endlessly, printing up flyers and stuffing them into high school lockers, renting halls, and putting on shows for a minimal charge. They got shots as the opening act for such artists as Santana, UFO, Nils Lofgren and Sparks. By 1976, they were able to attract over 3,000 rabble-rousers to the Pasadena Civic Auditorium for one of their self-promoted concerts.

This constant hard work and an unrelenting drive to succeed eventually resulted in the band signing on for a four-month stay at the Starwood. Increasingly the band had worked originals into their show, balancing their wild-ass covers and expanding their songbook to encyclopedic proportions. It was 1977 now, and disco was in full swing, but Van Halen still held forth with their long hair and loud, blistering rock. At the Starwood Club, the kids were going loony over the band, and that reaction was enough for Kiss bassist Gene Simmons, in attendance one starlit evening.

With Simmons financial and production backing, Van Halen was studio-bound, putting together a demo tape of 13 songs. And while the recording project didn't result in any interest from major record labels, word was out that Van Halen was working with Gene Simmons. Their reputation was growing. The demo sessions also provided the band with their first exposure to the ways of the studio, a valuable lesson for the future.

Continuing their stint at the Starwood, Van Halen drew the attention of Marshall Berle, who would eventually become the band's first manager. More important at the time, though, Berle informed the band that some important executives from Warner Bros. Records were coming to hear their Starwood show. And so the legend of the Van Halen signing was born.

It was a dark and stormy night (it really was) in May of 1977 and, as the tale goes, hardly anybody had braved the weather to come to the club. But friend Marshall Berle arrived bringing Warners President Mo Ostin and producer/VP Ted



Dave Plastik



Templeman, and Van Halen unleashed one of their more scorching sets for the bartenders, empty seats and execs in attendance. That was all Mo and Ted needed to hear, and one week later the dotted line contained the scrawls of Messrs. Van Halen, Roth, Anthony and Van Halen. And if that wasn't enough, Templeman was so impressed that he assumed production chores for all future Van Halen albums, a task he reserved for only the top Warner Bros. artists. It was true-to-life Hollywood discovery, captured on vinyl this time rather than celluloid.

So, after four years of endless struggling just to get on the dotted line, the real work began. The foursome immediately went into the studio with Templeman at the control knobs and, according to var-

ious reports, laid down 40 tunes in one day. After three weeks of essentially live recording, jumping around and drinking beer (only three of Eddie's solos were overdubbed) the 11-song **Van Halen** emerged. Released in February of 1978, the album sold over one and a half million copies in that year alone. Listener's ears were teased with the release of the band's cover of Ray Davies' *You Really Got Me*, a thundering rock speedball that rose to #36 on the Billboard singles chart. The album quickly followed and camped on the album chart for 91 weeks straight, getting as high as #19, quite an accomplishment for an unknown hard rock band in a decidedly un-hard rock time. Most amazingly, **Van Halen** remains on BILLBOARD's Top 200 album chart today, one of the most enduring albums in rock's last decade.

1978 was a weird year in rock, deceptively mellow when the band first hit the Top 100. The Top 10 included the soundtrack from **Saturday Night Fever** at Number One, Billy Joel, George Benson, Barry Manilow, Earth Wind & Fire, Jackson Browne and Styx. The only other heavy bands around were Aerosmith (a youthful favorite of Van Halen's), Kiss, Ted Nugent and Journey, older, established groups ripe for a challenge from the brash youngsters from the West. Looking back now, hindsight shows the band's fortuitous timing and the simple reality of the fresh power in their music.

Following **Van Halen's** release, the band took on its first major tour, opening for Montrose and Journey on the "Van Halen World Vacation." (Having worked so hard to reach the touring level, the band considered the road to be vacation.) They played before 62,000 rabid hometown fans in Anaheim, then headed off again fronting Black Sabbath and crossing the Atlantic to convert fans (but not critics) in jolly old England. As they repeatedly blew Sabbath off the stage with their combustible warm-up, it became clear that Van Halen's days as an opening act were numbered.

Off the road and back into the studio, at the now standard frantic pace, the band cranked out **Van Halen II** in just six days, possibly a land-speed record and a practice that had many critics scoffing. The public didn't mind though, as the March, 1979 release of the album was followed by its rapid climb to number six on the album charts. The lyrical *Dance the Night Away* went to #15 as a single, the most popular Van Halen song until 1982.



The album's wild exuberance and electric live feel preceded the launching of the band's second world tour and first nationwide trek as a headliner, a ten-month foray that began in early April. Accompanying the four frolicsome fellas were a 22-ton, 10,000 watt sound system and 10 tons and 444,000 watts of lights.

The following year proved to be the one in which Van Halen really established themselves as a band of note and as a notorious band. It began with the recording of the third album, **Women and Children First**, the band's first all-original album. This time recording

took two-and-a-half weeks. Included with the album was a poster of David Lee Roth in chains created by noted flesh and fashion photographer Helmut Newton. Though the poster didn't attract quite the attention Roth had hoped, it did make for constant comment from the verbose vocalist.

As the band set off on their nine-month "1980 INVASION" tour with more lights and power, Roth embarked on a series of mishaps. In March the singer broke his hand in a fight with a disco fan in the parking lot of the Starwood Club. In April he was arrested for encouraging a Cincinnati concert

crowd to "light up." (The charges were dropped.) In May Roth tried to go that extra inch to impress the people of Italy and broke his nose on a lighting rig while executing one of his Spandex-testing leaps. (He ignored a doctor's "two weeks of rest" prescription to return to Europe and the road.) And during a swing into the University of Colorado at Pueblo, David Lee got a little miffed that there were brown M&M's in the band's backstage spread (a no-no as specified by the band's contract) and, along with his entourage, engaged in the temper tantrum heard round the rock world, doing over \$10,000 damage. If nothing else, the brown

Ross Marino

M&M debacle established Van Halen's reputation as uncontrollable party boys.

But 1980 wasn't all broken bones and M&M's. Eddie Van Halen continued to gain increased respect and admiration as a premier guitarist in rock. Following 1978's acknowledgement as "Best New Talent," the readers of GUITAR PLAYER magazine awarded Eddie the "Best Rock Guitar" award for the second year in a row, an honor he has claimed every year since. Meantime, **Women and Children First** roosted at number six on Billboard's album chart for five weeks.

Seemingly without a pause even to do laundry, Van Halen came off the road from their invasion and hit the studio, putting together **Fair Warning** in a lengthy five weeks. Acclaimed by many as the band's most adventurous album and featuring some of Eddie's best work yet, **Warning** jumped on and off Billboard's chart in just 23 three weeks. Despite reaching number five, its relatively poor sales seemed to slow Van Halen's steamrolling charge toward the top.

Despite the band not having had a Top 50 single on their last two albums, the sold-out worldwide tours continued. In 1981 the quartet set off on another ten-month cruise with a live production thought to be the largest ever taken on a transcontinental tour. But the big news of '81 wasn't the tour but the marriage. Guitar hero Eddie Van Halen met **One Day at a Time** TV star Valerie Bertinelli backstage after a concert, and following a six-month romance, they were married in Los Angeles. Soon after, a million kids of both sexes

came down with cases of broken hearts.

In 1982, the band tried a new tactic. Coming off the road, they went into the studio for a day and cut a version of Roy Orbison's (*Oh*) *Pretty Woman*, releasing it as a single without an album. They then planned to take some time off but were pressured back into the studio after that single started to make it big. Warner Bros. wanted an album to back *Pretty Woman* up,

so in just 12 days and for less money than any of their previous albums, **Diver Down** was created. It contained five covers (a practice deemed sinful by many a reviewer) and climbed to number three on the album chart. That, combined with *Pretty Woman*'s rise to #10 as a single, made **Diver Down** the most successful Van Halen LP, and it actually sold over a million copies before the band headed off on their 1982/83 tour.



David Elkouby/Star File



Vinnie Zuffante/Star File

The band's **Diver Down** tour was its shortest (five months) but most grandiose. Firmly established as one of the top attractions in rock, Van Halen sold out all 80 of its U.S. concerts during an industry-wide slump in concert ticket sales. Once again they put together the largest concert production tour ever with 1.4 million watts of light, 70,000 watts of sound, 170 tons of equipment and a road crew of 70 people. LIFE magazine did a spread on the band's appearances in Detroit, and parents across America finally were exposed to the band their children had been partying with for years. In a curious retaliatory gesture, several folks cancelled their LIFE subscriptions.

The Van Halen juggernaut continued gaining momentum again as Eddie collected more guitar awards and October 22nd was declared "Van Halen Day" in Worcester, Massachusetts. Eddie also got into the swing of things by breaking his

wrist in his hotel room. Then, in January of 1983, the band embarked on its first South American tour, running wild through Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. And to top off the **Diver Down** era, the quartet put together its first rock video to *(Oh) Pretty Woman*. Starring a pair of leg-fondling midgets (David's bodyguards), a transvestite and our four favorite rockers dressed as a cowboy (Eddie), samurai (Michael), Tarzan (Alex) and Napoleon (David), the video was banned from Australian and Japanese TV and from MTV stateside.

Early 1983 found the band taking some much deserved rest and relaxation. Eddie engaged in several outside projects, performing the guitar solo on Michael Jackson's *Beat It* (Eddie's first Number One hit), jamming with Queen guitarist Brian May on the latter's **Star Fleet Project EP**, and scoring a

made-for-TV movie starring his wife, called **The Seduction of Gina**.

Meanwhile, apparently taken with the band's tour of South America, David Lee Roth headed for a six-week trek in the Amazon jungles with a group of friends dubbed the "Jungle Studs." It was while he was swatting mosquitoes in the tropics that the band was coaxed into performing at the 1983 US Festival in California on Memorial Day. After tracking Mr. Roth down in Brazil, the band played before 400,000 for a sum of money that got them listed in the 1984 edition of the **Guinness Book of World Records** as the "Highest Paid Group." The one-day "World Record" tour was complete.

So, as 1984 approached, the only thing left for Van Halen to conquer seemed to be those album and singles charts. And as 1983 progressed, followers of the band realized something was up their col-

lective sleeve. This was the first year since the band's signing that they had not released an album. And the group was off the road for almost a year as New Year's day neared. Rumors floated about private rehearsals in a California airplane hangar attended by crowds in the thousands. Word came of a new album being held for release in January of 1984, a strange marketing ploy during the notoriously slow post-Christmas period. But, then, the band was never big on following the trends.

And then it finally came. First *Jump!* was released, followed two weeks later by the album **1984**. Far and away the band's most sophisticated and commercial album, **1984** shot onto the charts at #18 *Jump!* quickly took America by storm and rode the Number One single position for five straight weeks in February and March. From mid-February to early May the album kept the second or third position, never quite able to overcome the monster that is Michael Jackson. But it was clear from the start that in 1984, Van Halen's time had come. It had been ten years, almost to the day, since Roth had joined with the Van Halen brothers in Mammoth.

Once again, the latest Van Halen tour production topped those that had gone before it, setting new wattage and tonnage records. And as the band roared around the world, the album went double, triple, quadruple platinum. The band's characteristically low-rent, un-trendy **Jump!** video was an instant favorite on MTV. Follow-up singles *I'll Wait*, *Panama* and *Hot For Teacher* maintained the band's high standing.



Linda Matlow/Pix Int'l.

Whew! It was a long, exhausting trip up and it was a lot of sweaty, gruelling work (and partying and playing), but Van Halen finally made it to the top. Who knows what is next for these denizens of "BIG

ROCK." Rest assured, though, that no matter how much effort or time it has taken, the Van Halen boys are enjoying every minute of their visit to the rock and roll mountain-top.



Janet Macoska/Star File

Chapter 4

Who is Van Halen?

When Van Halen is on stage terrorizing a venue in your neighborhood with their belligerent, menacing sound and swaggering, exuberant personality, it's sometimes hard to realize that the band is not made up of one guy with four heads but of four distinct per-

sonalities who have sublimated their individualism for the good of the cause. Or something like that. On stage they join together to create powerful and distinct music, and even off stage they continue to act (in public) as a band, as Van Halen, to carry the party line.

But in real life—which apparently doesn't exist all that much for the guys considering most of the time they are in the superficial fantasy-world of backstage dressing rooms, limos, hotels and jet planes—the four members of Van Halen go their separate ways, lead distinct and individual lives. It's not easy to imagine Alex Van Halen running

out to get milk and eggs or David Lee Roth shifting clothes from the washer to the dryer at Burt and Ernie's Laundromat (Roth claims he still does his own wash). But it happens. They work together and then they go home and do regular stuff, sort of. The only thing is that they're millionaires and their work day can last anywhere up to ten months and often as late as the sun rises.

But you have to wonder what they are really like. Life can't be all silk stockings, Jack Daniels, 70,000 watts of ear-numbing power and the daily adoration of millions. Really, who are these guys and how come they're not driving trucks or working in shipping down at the mall?

Michael Anthony

He's the mystery man and very possibly the only member of Van Halen who wouldn't be recognized instantly if he did get a job at the mall. Not a lot is known about Van Halen's diminutive thumper of the bass because, let's face it, if you had a choice of one member of the band to interview. . . .

Anthony was born on June 20, 1955, in Chicago. His father was a musician, a trumpet player in big bands, so the melodic genes were passed on. He spent much of his youth in Illinois before moving to California in 1969 and attending Arcadia High, not far from his future band mates in Pasadena. Ever the worthy son, Michael played trumpet in the high school marching band and orchestra while secretly nurturing his talents on the four-string. And as we know, after graduation, while holding up the bottom for a local band called Snake, An-

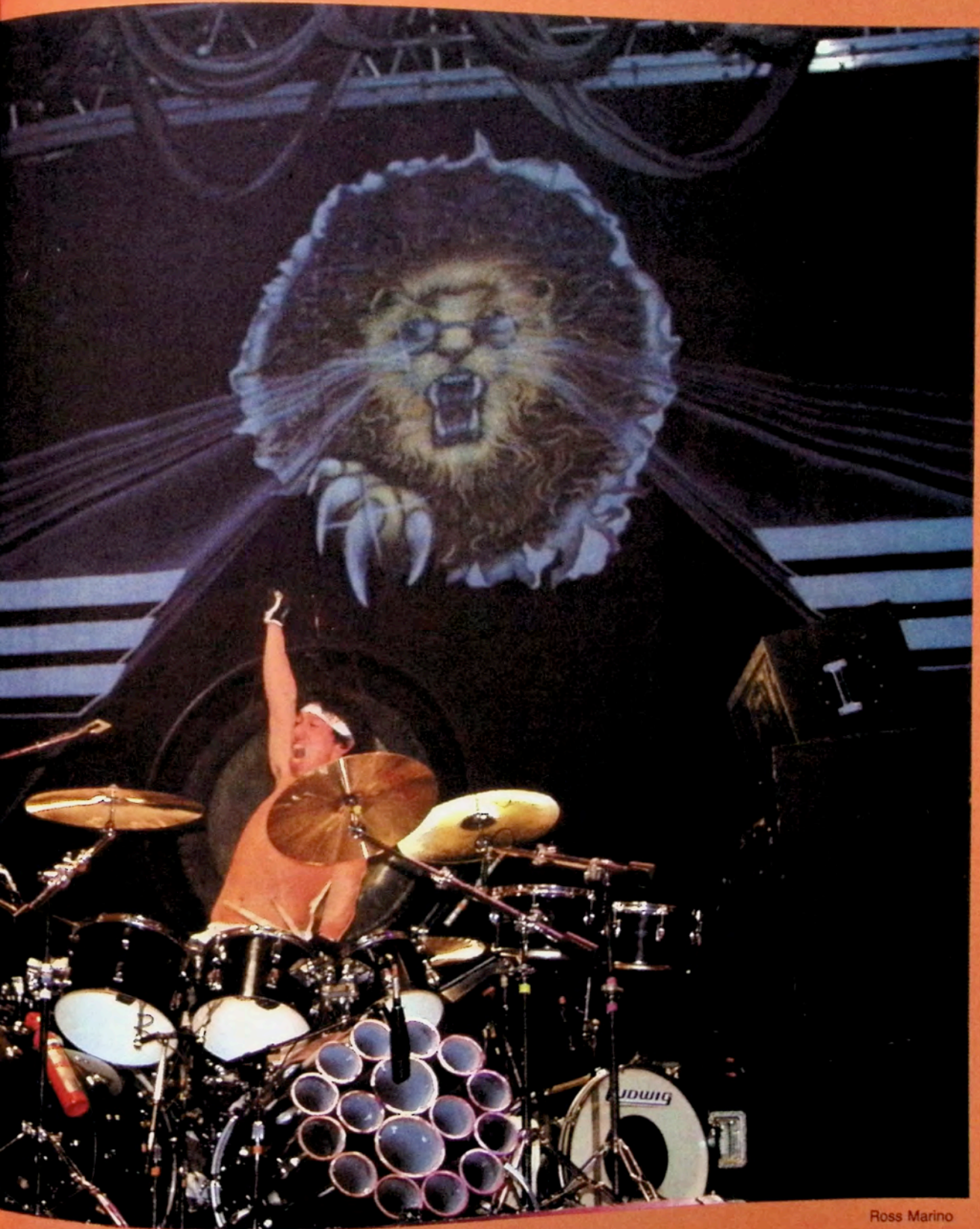
thony was invited to that fateful tryout with the Van Halens and his future was sealed.

Little has been learned of the private Michael Anthony, most probably because he has chosen to maintain a low off-the-road profile. It certainly can't be all bad to be in one of the world's most popular bands and still be unknown. He has tied the nuptial knot, following Eddie into the married ranks. And his affection for Jack Daniels is a fact—he's had a bass built to resemble a bottle of that Tennessee poison. Word also is out that Mr. Anthony thrives on food fights—is it possible that the quiet one could have something to do with the fabled brown M&M incident? And for rest and relaxation, this unlikely rock star seems to favor hopping down to the West Indies to engage in some powerboat racing. In the meantime, we're left to wonder, "Will he or won't he have a beard on the next world tour?"

Alex Van Halen

The eldest member of the group (by 43 days), Alex was born in Nijmegen, the Netherlands (as was Eddie) on May 8, 1955, to a jazz clarinet and sax playing father and an Indonesian mother. Father Jan Van Halen had played music on radio, in circuses and as a captive of the Nazis in Germany during World War II. As the story goes, Alex first was smitten by the guitar while younger brother Eddie purchased a drum set, and the two little Dutch boys whacked and wailed away in their Holland home. Unfortunately for them, Dad had other ideas, and the pair was set to studying counterpoint theory on piano and learning the music of





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Mozart, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. Taught by an elderly Russian instructor, the brothers Van Halen were targeted by their parents for careers as concert pianists.

After moving to California at the age of 12, Alex began taking flamenco guitar lessons. Meanwhile, little Eddie was out doing a paper route (note: a real job!) to pay for his drum set, and Alex, having trouble figuring out the fingering for certain chords, started working out on Eddie's tubs on the sly. Low and behold, it wasn't long before big Alex could smoke Eddie on the *Wipe Out!* drum solo, and so the brothers agreed to switch instruments.

Alex has cited Ginger Baker, Mitch Mitchell (drummer with Jimi Hendrix) and Clive Bunker as his early influences on the drums, but as the band's show and sound have

grown, it seems that Alex has fallen under the J. R. Ewing/Mr. T "the more (oil, gold chains, drums) the better" influence. On one tour he actually played two full drum kits, while on the 1984 trek he opted for a gentle four-bass-drum sound (though it has been verified that he still only has two feet). But his playing abilities have grown along with his hardware and his skills are now, considering the volume, just plain scary.

A certified top-class partyer, Alex has a reputation for beating things with his sticks, for engaging in the kind of banter and braggadocio that's become known as "Van Halen-ese" and for making off with his share of backstage visitors. And why does he always seem to be wearing those sunglasses? It can't be too early all the time, can it?

Eddie Van'Halen

He's the guitar hero who repeatedly claims that he's just a kid who loves to play and play his guitar, then go off and play some more. He's said that making music, writing music and inventing music are his life, and listening to all he's done bears him out.

The youngest member of the Van Halen troupe, Eddie was born on January 26, 1957. After moving to the U.S. at age 10, the soon-to-be guitarist quickly realized that his parent-planned life as a concert pianist was not for him. All he needed was to hear Cream and Jimi Hendrix to know that getting crazy on a stage was the perfect escape from his otherwise introverted personality.

After recognizing his brother's superior talents on drums, Eddie

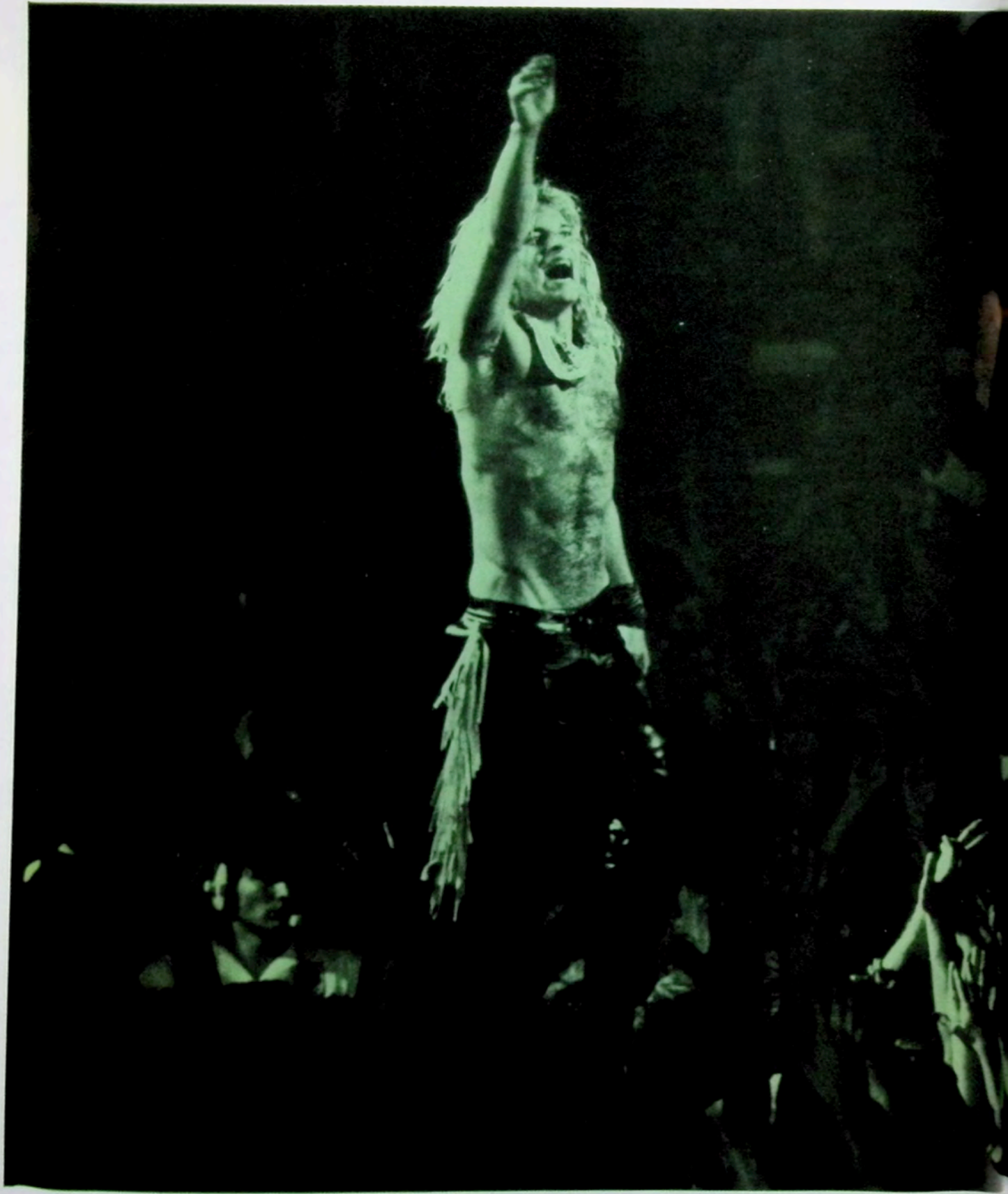
(continuing to deliver papers, one assumes) splurged and dropped 70 dollars on a Teisco Del Ray electric guitar. It was then that he immersed himself in the aural world of Eric Clapton solos on Cream songs like *Spoonful* and *I'm So Glad*. He still claims to know every solo Clapton's ever played, note-for-note. Aside from those recorded lessons from Clapton and techniques taught by Hendrix's recordings, Eddie is entirely self-taught, having never taken a guitar lesson in his life. Just sitting around for hours on end, playing every day, as he still does, has made him the most inventive and original rock guitarist around. As his father soon realized, abandoning his visions of Eddie on stage in a tuxedo at the grand piano, the kid was a guitar natural.

For a while after high school, Eddie tried a little junior college in Pasadena City and Long Beach, taking scoring, arranging and piano classes. But life in Mammoth was consuming enough, and his real post-high school education came in bars and basements. Even in those early years he was recognized as an innovator, and often turned his back to the audience at gigs during his solos so that other musicians couldn't steal his licks.

Now he has developed into a complete musician. His early classical training has come back to help him in working out his original melodies for the band. He's kept up his keyboard chops, as evidenced by his work on **1984**. He builds all his guitars, preferring to piece them together from custom designs rather than going for the store-bought norm. He's installed a complete recording studio in his California home (where much of **1984**



Janet Macoska/Star File





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reportedly was recorded) into which he disappears whenever lapses in touring allow. He's even developed a new "Eddie Van Halen model" for Kramer Guitars. And, of course, he continues to collect "Best Guitarist" awards and plaudits.

On stage Eddie Van Halen is a whirling dervish, racing around with an endearing yet sinister smile accompanying him while he plays. But he's a shy and reclusive guy who really only lights up when he's on stage, or, the word is, when he's drunk. On the road he can usually be found hiding out in his room or a backstage closet doing the one thing that consumes him totally—playing guitar.

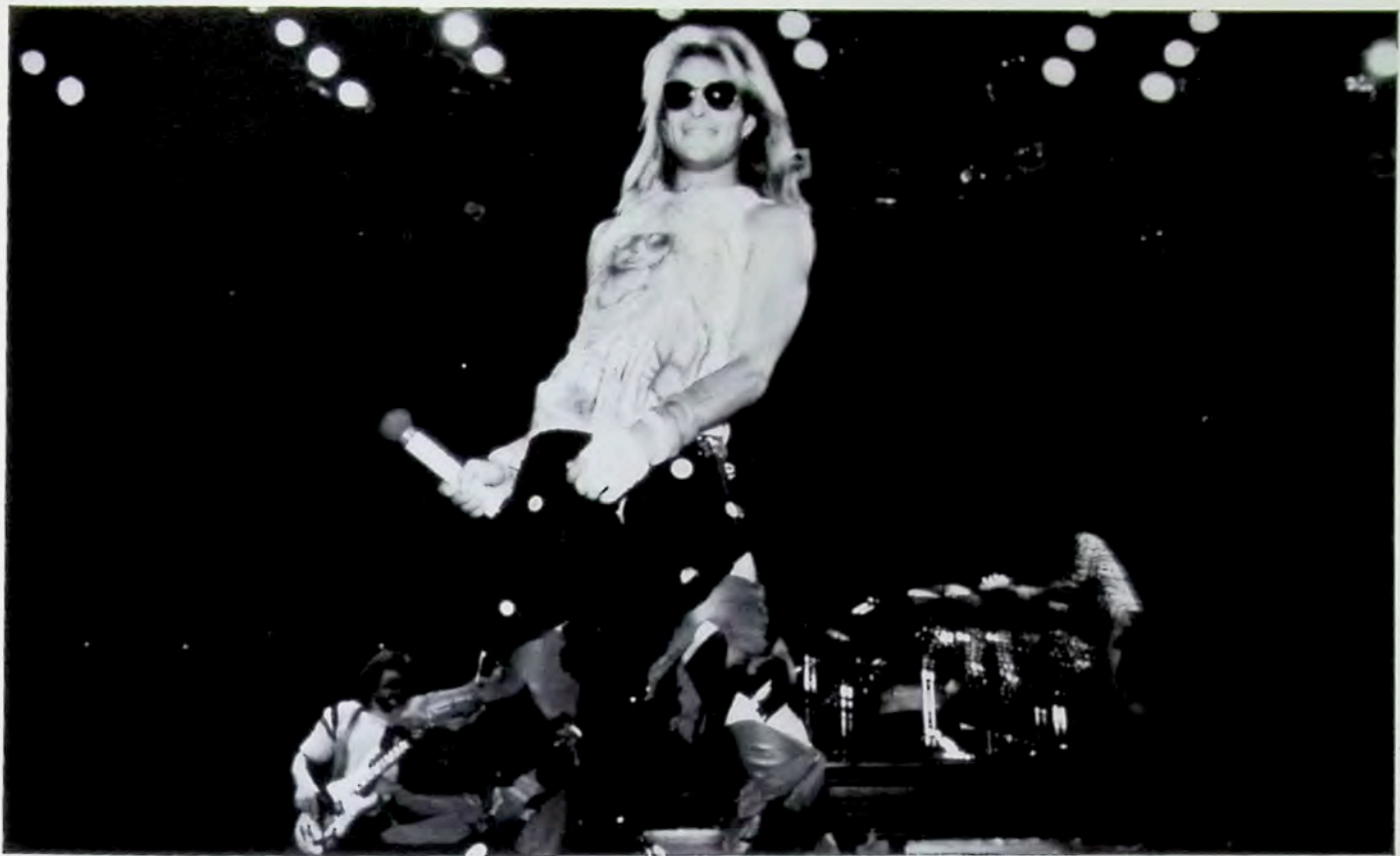
His storybook meeting, romance and marriage to Valerie Bertinelli really is nothing more than a love between two shy people whose careers have put them in the spotlight. Glimpses of the hermit couple can be had as they cheer on Magic Johnson and the L.A. Lakers basketball team. Valerie has been known to get a bit perturbed because Eddie is either on the road or hidden away in his new studio creating. Mom and Pop Bertinelli are said to have a wall of clippings about their son-in-law just as they do for daughter Valerie. But mostly their life is a private one (despite CREEM magazine voting them 1983's "Couple of the Year"). Eddie Van Halen is a guitar-slinging maniac making great rock music in a high-energy band. Other than that, his life is private. Can't fault him for that.



Robin Murray



Diane Medina



Ross Marino

David Lee Roth

Many words have been used in attempting to describe David Lee Roth—obnoxious, perverse, vulgar, bawdy, confident, sexy, sybaritic, acrobatic, shameless, beautiful, peacockish, unpretentious, hammy. He's the perfect counterweight for Eddie Van Halen, the ultimate extrovert. While Eddie, the musician, gets interviewed by GUITAR FOR THE PRACTICING MUSICIAN, David, the entertainer/sex symbol, gets a spread in OUI. Love him or hate him, respect him or hold him as far away from you as you can, Roth makes you react. You can't walk away from an encounter with him feeling nothing, and that's the way he wants it, and apparently the way he always has been.

Roth came into this world (from who knows where) on October 10, 1955, in Bloomington, Indiana. He has said that his early days were spent on a farm, but his family was on the move early, settling for periods in Massachusetts and Chicago before coming to rest in Los Angeles. In his grade school years, Roth was diagnosed as being hyperactive, and his penchant for running wild through the house drumming silverware and singing along to TV commercials inspired his parents to call this post-meal active period "Monkey Hour." Roth likes to say he's turned Monkey Hour into a career, and no one's denying it.

At age nine, it seems his future career was ordained when he was given a radio by his Uncle Dave and heard Ray Charles call forth. He also discovered a love for the

stage while taking on the role of Mr. Bookworm in a school play. But the turning point, apparently, on Roth's way toward a pact with devil rock and roll, was getting his driver's license. Borrowing the car from dad, a respected Pasadena surgeon, Dave would cruise around the neighborhood for hours singing along with the radio, shriveling the plush interior with his scream practice.

At Muir High, David Lee became known as a skilled classcutter, holding forth with guitar and voice in some shady spot, serenading anyone who dropped by. It soon became apparent to both his parents and teachers that David had only one thing on his mind—becoming a rock and roll singer. And, he's said, once that became obvious, his family always supported his desire for a life on the stage.

So it is no wonder, then, that the pre-Van Halen singer of the Redball Jets owned the P.A. system. There was no way he wasn't going to get his chance to perform.

Nowadays the not-so-larger-than-life Roth, who comes in at about five-foot-eleven and 155 pounds, remains every bit the big-talking, fun-loving wildcat. Everyone's heard about his supposed exploits on the road (probably because he's told the stories), whether women, booze, women, practical jokes or women are involved. And he truly lives his motto—"It doesn't matter if you win or lose, it's how good you look"—to the hilt.

In his off-the-road life, Roth likes to keep his hand on the pulse of L.A.'s new music scene, haunting the local clubs to search for new and vital sounds. In the early days he retained his small Hollywood apartment, staying close to the heart of the city and thriving on the urban grit and noise. Lately he's opted for a bit more luxury, taking a high-rise pad off the Sunset Strip, but he has by no means taken the usual star route to a Malibu mansion with guard dogs and an electric fence.

Rumor has it that Roth can be seen doing his six-plus miles of running through the streets of L.A. or cruising the nearby canyons in his Mercury convertible. He spends much of his free time off in the Pacific, travelling to Tahiti over a dozen times, or taking little strolls through the Amazonian jungles or around the Himalayas. But the truth is that Roth chooses to keep his real life under wraps, too. Who knows, maybe we'd be disappointed if we found out what he's really like. Probably not. He's definitely a Cal-



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ifornia boy, bronzed and ready for action.

Producer Ted Templeman may have the inside track on the real guys who have become the Number One rock band in America. He says that they are every bit as crazy as they claim to be, driving four-wheeled vehicles, jumping over

barrels on rollerskates, living life to the fullest. And that's why their music is so live, so real, so fresh—they play the life they live and live the life they play. They get up on stage and misbehave. Alex Van Halen once said that he thinks of the road as his home. Don't you believe him?

Chapter 5

The Van Halen Records

What a great band comes down to is great records. Without great albums, nobody would hear the band, nobody would go see the band, and nobody would care whether or not they were born in Holland or if the band's name really was a German armored personnel carrier. If a record contains good music, it doesn't matter if it took six days to record or six years. If a record is appealing, strikes a winning chord in millions of people's heads, then it will go platinum. What we have here is a loud, rowdy band that has made six clean, powerful records that have generated record-breaking tours and created larger-than-life personalities. Just what's so great about those records is something different to everyone who owns them. But it's worth taking time to listen to them again and hear the momentum build.

Van Halen

—Warner Bros. BSK 3075

Coming out of the bars and into our homes, Van Halen announced themselves with the overwhelming opening chord blasts on *Runnin' with the Devil*. With David Lee Roth telling us he's "living at a pace that kills" and then screaming that scream around Eddie Van Halen's short furious solos, **Van Halen** opens with a fusillade that



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tells the listener straight-up what this band is all about. Then, without hesitation, Eddie goes into his trick-bag *Eruption* solo leading to the remake of *You Really Got Me*, its edges tinged with menacing feedback. As if that barrage isn't enough, *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love* comes up next, the song from **Van Halen** that Eddie thinks most typified the band in 1978, with its high cymbal ticking from Alex, "Hey, Hey, Hey" chorus and delayed, almost sitar-like guitar solo.

That rousing opening, topped off with the high-speed boogie of *I'm the One*, complete with a cappella

refrain, contains 15 minutes of blistering "big rock" that was clearly music of a different ilk than that made by the Aerosmiths of the day. Its refreshing energy and loose-limbed exuberance, enhanced by having been recorded "live," set it apart from and above the hard rock norm. That was certainly apparent to listeners as the album began almost a two-year stay on **BILLBOARD's** Top 200 album chart.

But critical response to **Van Halen** was mixed. Several scribes at England's **MELODY MAKER** were smitten, acknowledging Eddie's "impressive work" and citing the

album as an "outstanding" debut and as "unquestionably one of the greatest heavy-rock releases of our time." CREEM, in a typically non-committal review, thought the album "accomplished musically" and "plain old kinetic," while CRAWDADDY had little good to say about Roth's "spattered-bacon-grease lead vocals" and Eddie's "look-ma-no-hands leads."

But who was reading? The album's second side leads off with one of the band's best originals *Jamie's Cryin'*, about a girl who says no. Other highlights include Eddie's manic and slightly tipsy solo on the futuristic foray *Atomic Punk* and the then "daring" acoustic guitar blues of *Ice Cream Man*, the first of many recording risks by a band too cocky to think twice.

Finally, check out the album cover for a glimpse of how our boys really were in '78. The sweaty inside sleeve photos reveal just how young the band was when they made it. But more hilarious is the back cover shot of David Lee Roth: those platform shoes, the long hair, the leather pants, the bare chest (which has proved to be Roth's most prominent feature). Looks kind of like Ted Nugent, doesn't he?

Van Halen II

—HS 3312

Speaking of album covers, this is the one for which Roth broke his foot. The front features the flying VH logo, while the back finds each band member doing his thing with Roth executing one of his patented flying splits. Well, it seems that David Lee came down wrong when performing the pictured leap and snapped one of his royal bones.



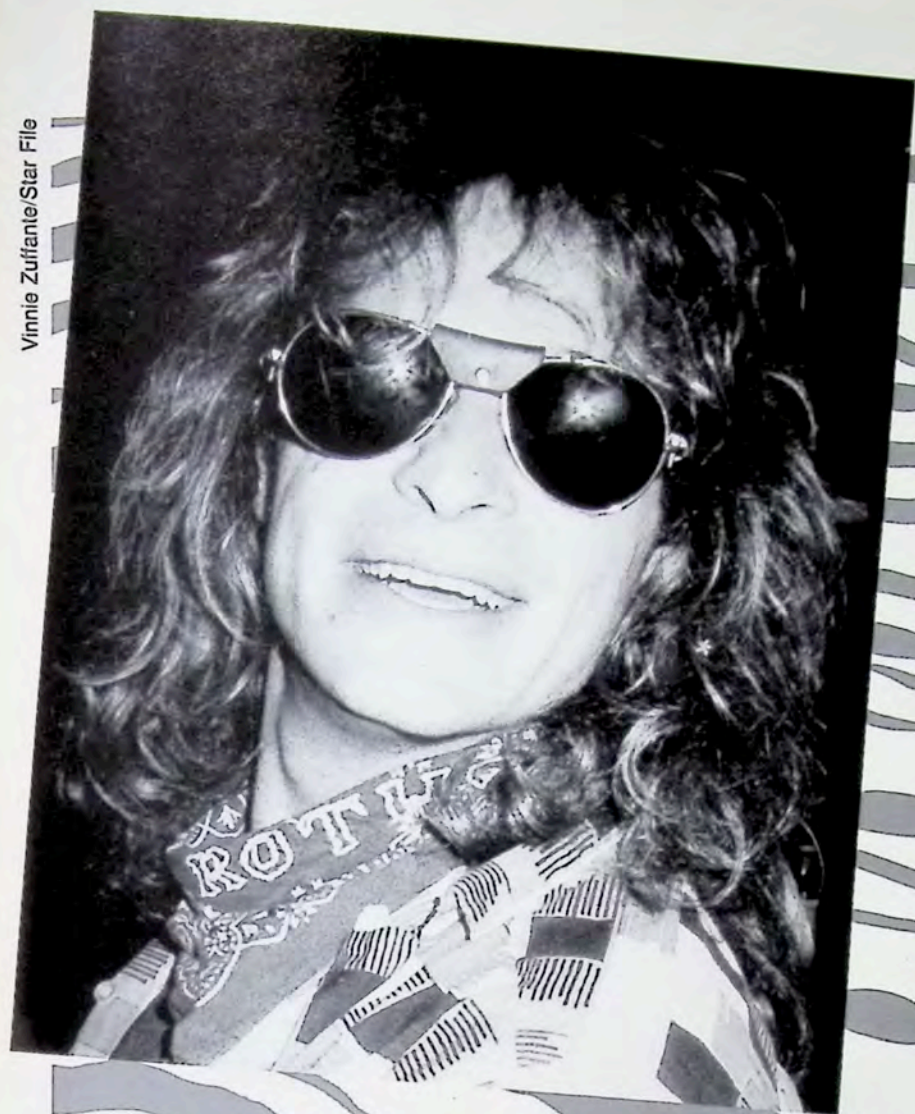
Vinnie Zuffante/Star File

Thus, on the record's inner sleeve Roth rests on a stool attended by a string of buxom nurses, with bandaged appendage prominently displayed. This was just the first in a series of bone-splitting mishaps for the furry vocalist (see Chapter 3).

Album number two opens with a cover of *You're No Good* taken at a droogish pace, with that followed by what was to become the album's hit, the appealing melody of *Dance the Night Away*. Now it's the norm to start an album with a cut released as a single and rarely a cover of an old song, and that was the order preferred by the

band's producer Ted Templeman. The guys, though, chose the ominous thud of *You're No Good* over the commercial appeal of *Dance*. See, they feared their fans would be scared away by the relative tameness of *Dance*, and so Templeman, realizing the self-assured naturalness of Van Halen's success, was overruled. Didn't seem to hurt the single's appeal as it filled the country's airwaves. No Van Halen single neared its success until *(Oh) Pretty Woman* from the fifth album.

Many fans and critics eagerly had awaited **Van Halen II**, curious to see whether or not the band was



a one-shot wonder and if they could top their stunning debut. But the band apparently entertained no worry, scurrying in and out of the studio in even less time than it took for their first vinyl creation. The pencil pushers at MELODY MAKER once again were impressed, calling **II** "stronger and more accessible" than the debut, and Robert Christgau, dean of rock critics and music editor at the VILLAGE VOICE, uncovered some spare good words calling the band's music "heavy metal that's pure, fast and clean." The best ROLLING STONE could come up with, though, was a portrait of the quartet as "flawless thud rockers."

It seems, upon re-evaluation, that **Van Halen II** isn't quite as raw and startling as the band's reckless debut. The songs aren't as distinct from each other as those on **Van Halen**, but that doesn't mean they don't kick ass or pump up the blood just as well. The flippant good times of *Beautiful Girls* (a single that bombed) and the non-stop boogie on *Bottoms Up!* both display the party in the band's music as well as their single greatest outside obsession—females. The entire album is notable for Eddie Van Halen's increased use of harmonics in solo and ensemble play. *Light Up the Sky* features some phased chorus vocals signaling an in-

creased studio sophistication, while Eddie's solo spot, the acoustic speed sketch *Spanish Fly*, acknowledged that the band knew from whence their musical development was coming, as well as Eddie's expanding abilities and techniques on guitar. The guitarist always has had a flair for the experimental, spending hours alone "inventing" new guitar noises, and he has told of his enjoyment in getting the band's albums to "flow" by including splashy instrumental breaks and intros. On this and each ensuing album, his solos are included not so that he can show off but just so he can have fun.

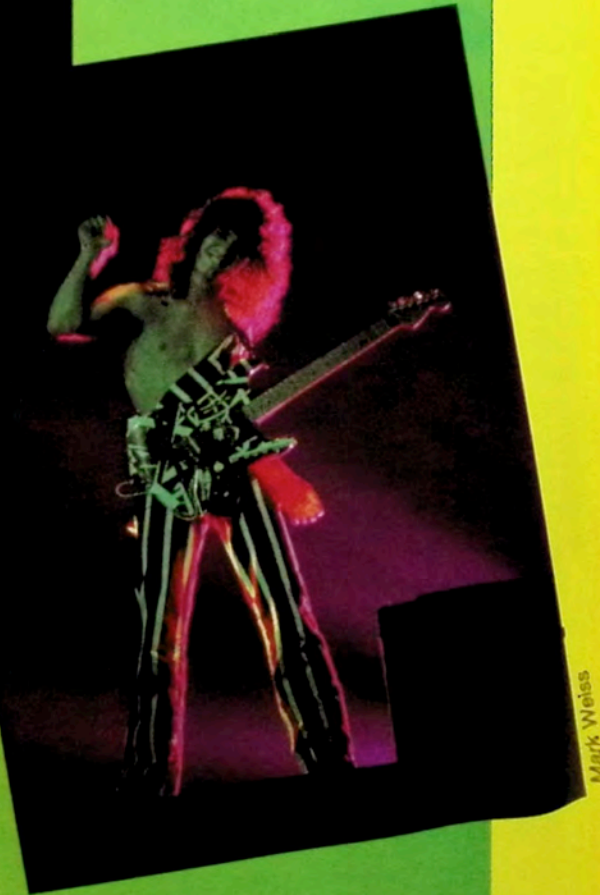
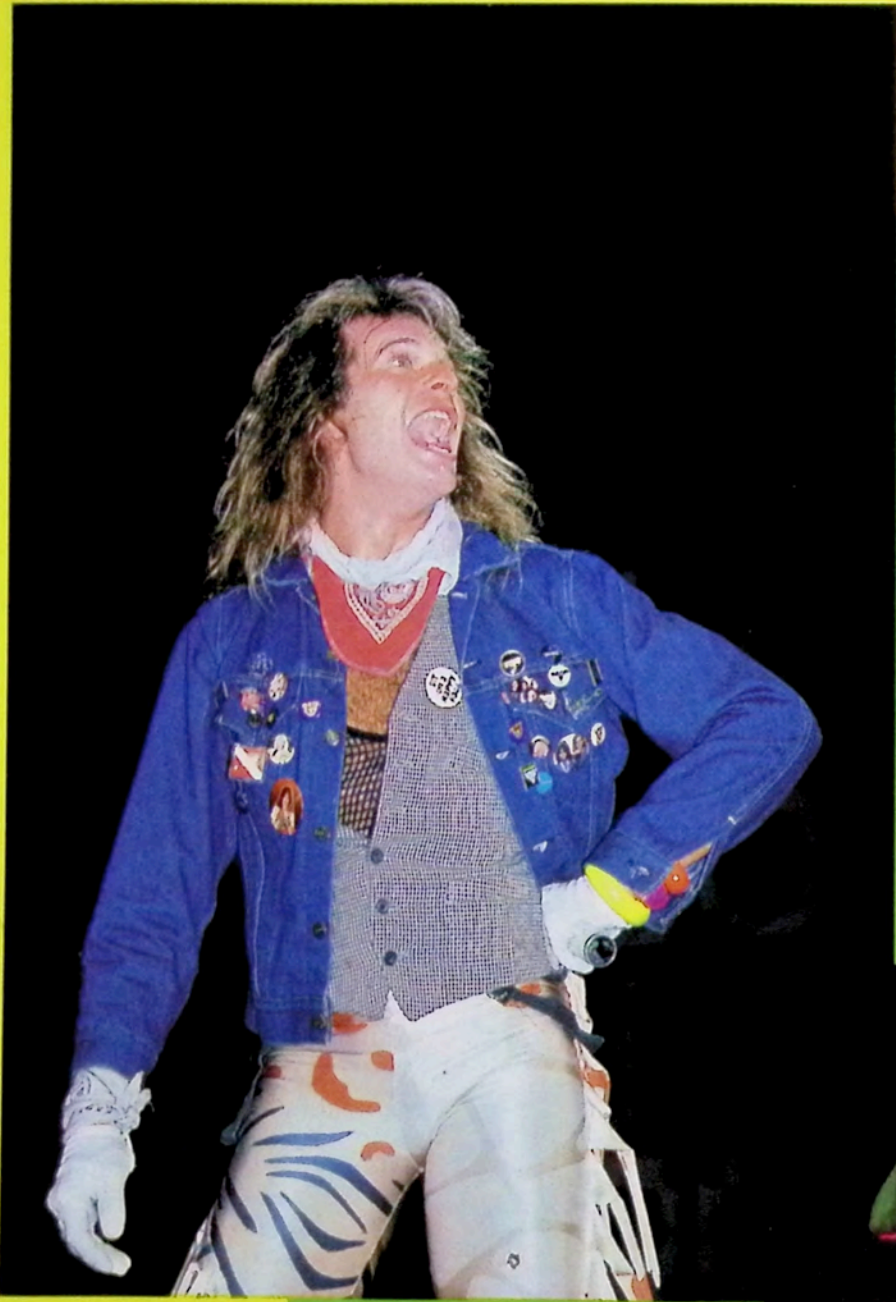
Women and Children First

—HS 3415

Well now, back to important stuff like album covers. This is the record that originally included the Helmut Newton poster of David Lee Roth in chains, and in retrospect that seems appropriate. For all the talk of Eddie Van Halen's maturing guitar style and the band's increasing power, little is made of the development of David Lee Roth as sex symbol and mouthpiece. Throughout Van Halen's first two albums, Roth's yelping increased and became more piercing, his voice almost a fourth instrument trying to cut through the monolithic crunch of Alex's drums and the dense vibration of Michael Anthony's biting bass. But it's here on **Women and Children First**, that Roth really begins to strut his stuff.

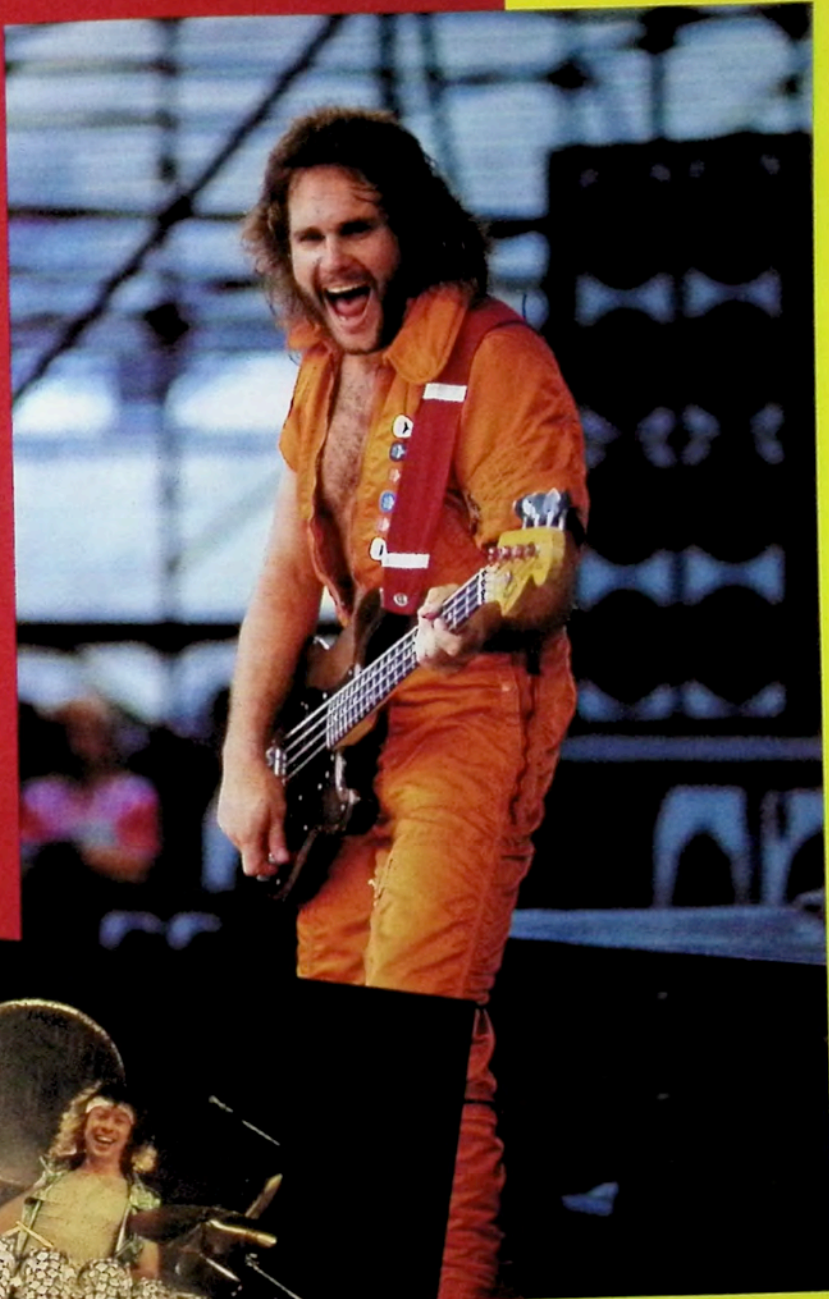
Of course, it doesn't hurt that he has some of the band's best songs to date to play with. But Roth's rapping on **Women** really sets him up as the bawdy, sexy, come-on artist he so loves to be. *Everybody*

Alan Kaplan/Star File



Mark Weiss

Mark Weiss



Richard Aaron/Star File

Wants Somell, with its jungle drums and baying intro, is one of the band's all-time best numbers with the surging, blatant desire of its chorus and Roth's infamous "leave-'em-on" striptease rap. But he's just warming up. Roth talks in and out of the verses on the blues grinder *Fools*; looks for "somebody to squeeze" on *Romeo's Delight* while doing his best breathy Robert Plant imitation; yells, laughs and does "Mayday" radio squawks through *Loss of Control*; and fishes out a gin-soaked blues croak for *Take Your Whiskey Home* and the in-studio-first, totally acoustic *Could This Be Magic* (with Eddie on slide). On **Women and Children First**, Roth's "Van Halen-ese" lyric style grows up and reaches puberty. The man of many words tries to expand his vocabulary and don more than one vocal guise and at least gets respect for trying.

At least from some. PEOPLE magazine didn't take too kindly to Van Halen's third, unrepentant in giving the album a solid F grade. ROLLING STONE at least acknowledged some songs as "works of high-volume art" despite describing the band as having tossed "melody—along with subtlety and good manners—straight out the barroom door." (Maybe that's really a compliment.) But, for the first time, CREEM managed unadulterated praise.

And the fans plainly offered unadulterated affection, sending **Women and Children** straight up to number six, going head to head with industry blockbusters like Pink Floyd, Billy Joel, Bob Seger, Linda Ronstadt and Eric Clapton (Eddie on a level with his idol). The young upstarts had struck again, and all without the help of a

hit, *And the Cradle Will Rock* being the only single release and managing just a brief visit to the 55th position. The boys had fun with this one with its palsy acoustic cuts, noisy preludes, fade-in codas, and even the first appearance of keyboards played through Eddie's wall of amps on *Cradle*. Van Halen convinced many with **Women and Children First** that they were no flashes and that a loud, sexy, sharp sound made by talented musicians having one helluva good time can be just as popular and important as any million-dollar superstar production. (Trivia note: only album title of more than two words.)

Fair Warning

—HS 3540

It's funny how the tastes and preferences of the critics and the public can pass each other like ships in the night. So it was with **Fair Warning**, the most critically acclaimed of the first four Van Halen albums but the least taken-to by the record-buying masses. Eddie Van Halen's guitar playing takes a giant step on **Fair Warning** and the band's sound seems even more sure and as big and overwhelming as ever. The group spent more time in the studio on **Warning** than on any previous album, but something didn't click with the fans.

Janet Macoska/Star File



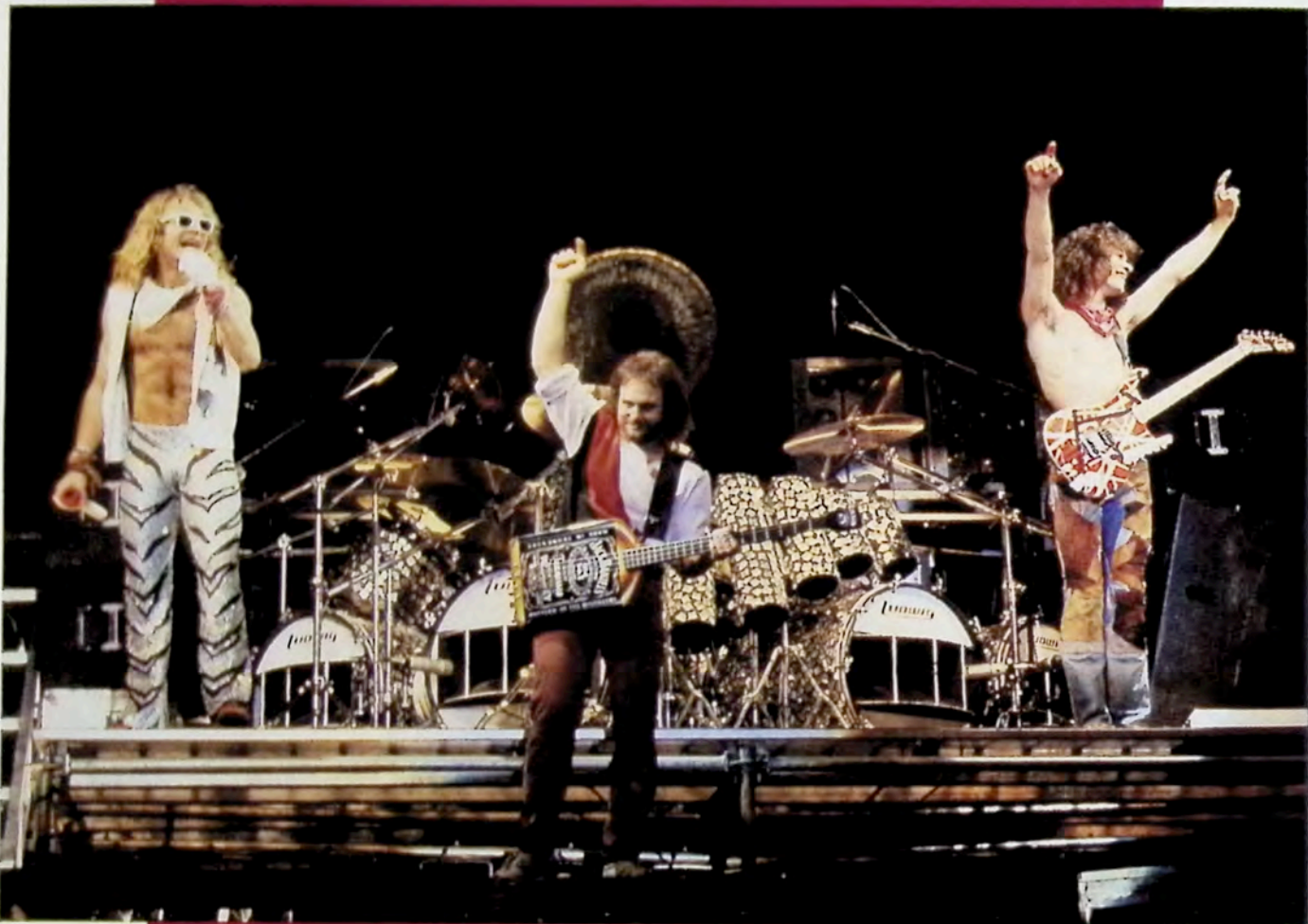
Sure, three weeks after it came out it rose to number five on BILLBOARD's chart, a new high, but it fell off completely in just 23 weeks, the shortest chart stay for any Van Halen album. And not one of its cuts cracked the singles chart, a first and last for the band. Despite complaints of a lack of Warner's promotional effort, the album just didn't grab hold like its predecessors.

But if some kids cooled to the sound, more and more critics climbed on the bandwagon. Noted rock writer Ken Tucker, in a VILLAGE VOICE review, dubbed the band "the coolest American heavy-metal band." (For some reason the critics have never been able to stop thinking of Van Halen as heavy metal when they plainly are not.) Both AUDIO and VARIETY magazines gave the album a B+, their highest grades yet. ("The boys showed improved writing and working skills but still suffer from unruliness, short attention spans and continually pester the girls," the teachers said.) PEOPLE even found it in its gossipy pages to tell mainstream America that **Fair Warning** was C- material, a considerable improvement. GUITAR PLAYER made comment, as did many, that "Eddie's not only red-hot, he's expanding." And CREEM's John Stix noted that **Fair Warning** was a "breakthrough album" showing a "great leap forward" in Van Halen's guitar playing.

Warning contains more overdubbing than any previous album and Eddie has said that he prepared himself more for this recording than any other. There is certainly more variety and subtlety in his playing than previously and his work is awesome for its breadth—he seems



Ross Marino



to get a myriad of new sounds from his guitars. The album's highlight is the sultry kick-funk of *Push Comes to Shove*. On it, Eddie fully integrates his guitar into the concept of the song, from some slippery chording and brief dancing breaks to his full-blown, cartwheeling solo that mixes tricky bends with his high-speed signatures. He chugs and squeals through the knifing on *Mean Street*, unravels a long, sinuous melodic line when the prom queen goes porno on "*Dirty Movies*," and cuts loose

his only "live" solo on the anxious boogie of the song with the F-word, *Sinner's Swing*. And his playing seems to have inspired his brother, because Alex's drumming is more propelling and inventive on **Fair Warning** than before. It becomes notable as more than just "end-of-the-world" crashing for the first time.

The album also features several other curiosities. We get the first recorded appearance of the band's stated fifth member, Ted Temple-

man, on *Unchained*, as the producer implores Roth to "give me a break." Dave complies. And we're treated to Van Halen's first instrumental keyboard piece, *Sunday Afternoon in the Park*, on which Eddie plugs a mini-synth into his Marshall amps and plays monster with Alex. The following *One Foot Out the Door* contains a keyboard melody as well, and clocking in at one minute and 56 seconds, finishes the band's shortest album—30:58.



Ross Marino

Diver Down

—BSK 3677

Coming off their poorest selling album and paradoxically, the one they'd spent the most time on, Van Halen went into the studio and cranked out the variety show of **Diver Down** for less money than they'd spent on any album. The result clearly mystified critics as the unpredictable band always seemed to do, and pleased fans.

The vicious pre-album cover of Roy

Orbison's *(Oh) Pretty Woman*, only the second Van Halen song without a guitar solo ever, shot up to #10, garnering new success for the band and necessitating the rapid turnout of long-playing product. Thus, the band may have been a bit unequipped with original material when they hastily put old together with new on **Diver Down**, but they ended up concocting their most complete album. With four originals, five covers and three of Eddie's guitar/noise experiments to make it flow, **Diver Down** is

the most assured aural representation of the free-wheeling spirit the band has come to represent. The album climbed even higher than **Fair Warning** on the charts, looking down from number three for three weeks, topped only by Paul McCartney and Asia.

The somewhat slapdash appearance of **Diver Down** didn't settle too well with Van Halen's friends across the sea at MELODY MAKER, as those wordsmiths called it "the worst yet," saying the band

had started well and "worked their way to the bottom." VARIETY opined that the album was "salvaged only by the meatgrinder covers." But several reviewers at the rather staid AUDIO magazine finally admitted that "a finer bunch of players of this genre is difficult to find." The reviewer in the VILLAGE VOICE, a weekly not noted for its affection for loud, popular music, called **Diver** "even better than its four platinum predecessors." Not many people argued with that. Eddie readily admitted that **Diver Down** was just plain fun to make. His guitar pieces, ranging from the intricate Latin lines of the *Little Guitars* intro to the riotous, elephantine noisemaking on *Intruder* (recorded as an extension for the video of *(Oh) Pretty Woman*), are perfect transitions for the original and cover mix. His synthesizer arrangement for *Dancing in the Street* (the LP's second single) was his most advanced of such work yet. The playful acoustic run-through of the old blues novelty tune *Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)* features the Van Halen brothers' father on clarinet, Michael Anthony on mariachi bass, Alex swishing the brushes and David Lee Roth doing his best blackface. *Secrets* is the closest thing to a ballad Van Halen had done, and, with Eddie's notably uncrazy guitar work, is one of the album's highlights. The no-brakes boogie of *The Full Bug* is as aggressive and stomping as the band gets, and even has the bonus of real David Lee Roth acoustic guitar and harmonica playing, as well as a short but sweet fusion break from Eddie that's an acknowledged nod to one of his current influences, Allan Holdsworth. There's a lot to pick



Ross Marino



Ross Marino

and choose from on **Diver Down**, more than the album often is credited with.

1984

—1-23985

After an uncharacteristically long time between albums, who would have predicted that Van Halen's sixth and soon to prove most successful album would start with a quietly majestic synthesizer introduction? And who could have known that the band would finally find the combination of rollicking abandon, bone-crushing rock and acute pop savvy to produce not just a Number

One single, but one of the best albums of the year of the album's title?

For the first time, there's not a weak spot on a Van Halen album. The obviously painstaking effort and time spent in the studio makes this record shine like none of those before it while still retaining the fresh, hot-to-the-touch, live feel. The hours Eddie Van Halen had spent in his new home studio playing, fiddling around, learning and "noodling" are evident in the layered, meaty sound and intricate overdubbed guitar. Check out *Drop Dead Legs* for some yowing guitar leads over drop-kicked rhythm fills. His willingness to experiment, evident on each Van Halen album,

shows here in the chances he and the band took recording two synthesizer-based tunes like *Jump!* and this-time-for-real ballad and the album's second single, *I'll Wait*. It's not without risk that a band whose livelihood owes much to the hottest guitarist in rock heads off into synthesizer land. On **1984**, Van Halen temporarily took themselves out of the arena, made themselves a studio band and struck gold doing it (or more truthfully, struck quadruple platinum).

Not that they didn't have fun. Just listen to David Lee as he works himself into a tizzy on *Hot for Teacher*. Any worries about Van Halen getting synth-wimpy are easily dissuaded by the manic guitar



Photo: Marino



Photo: Marino



Ross Martin



drive of *Teacher* and the album's third single (and second **1984** video) *Panama*. Those two songs, with Eddie cutting loose some of his juiciest, whiplashing riffs (see also *Girl Gone Bad*), are as hot as any boogie or brawl on record anywhere. Yet what makes the album so great, in addition to the amazing continued expansion of Eddie Van Halen's guitar vocabulary, is that a song like *I'll Wait* can follow *Hot For Teacher* and not slow the momentum one iota (due in part perhaps to Eddie's most complete and emotionally deep guitar solo on *I'll Wait*). Part of that success lies in Eddie's supe-

rior melodies, but much credit must also go to the massive work of brother Alex. His rumbling, warp-speed intro to *Teacher* and tom-tom breaks on *I'll Wait* are just as important to Van Halen's sound as Eddie's guitar.

1984 was a shock and is a revelation, but more important it's a giant jump ahead for Van Halen. The album even managed to convert *ROLLING STONE*, whose reviewer gave it four of a possible five stars. (They still haven't made the cover, though.) **1984** made everyone realize there is much more to this band than long hair, loud music and childish bluster. It doesn't

just show the skill and musicianship of Van Halen but also serves notice that even after six years and albums, there's no limit to the potential in this California time bomb. While **1984** continues to hang out in the Top 20 more than six months after its release, many can't wait for what's next. No doubt it'll be full of surprises. The devilish innocence of the cigarette-smoking angel on the album's cover seems the perfect image for the band. It almost looks like a boyish David Lee Roth. Now if they'd just say what those shiny metal pods are that are pictured on the album's inner sleeve. . . .

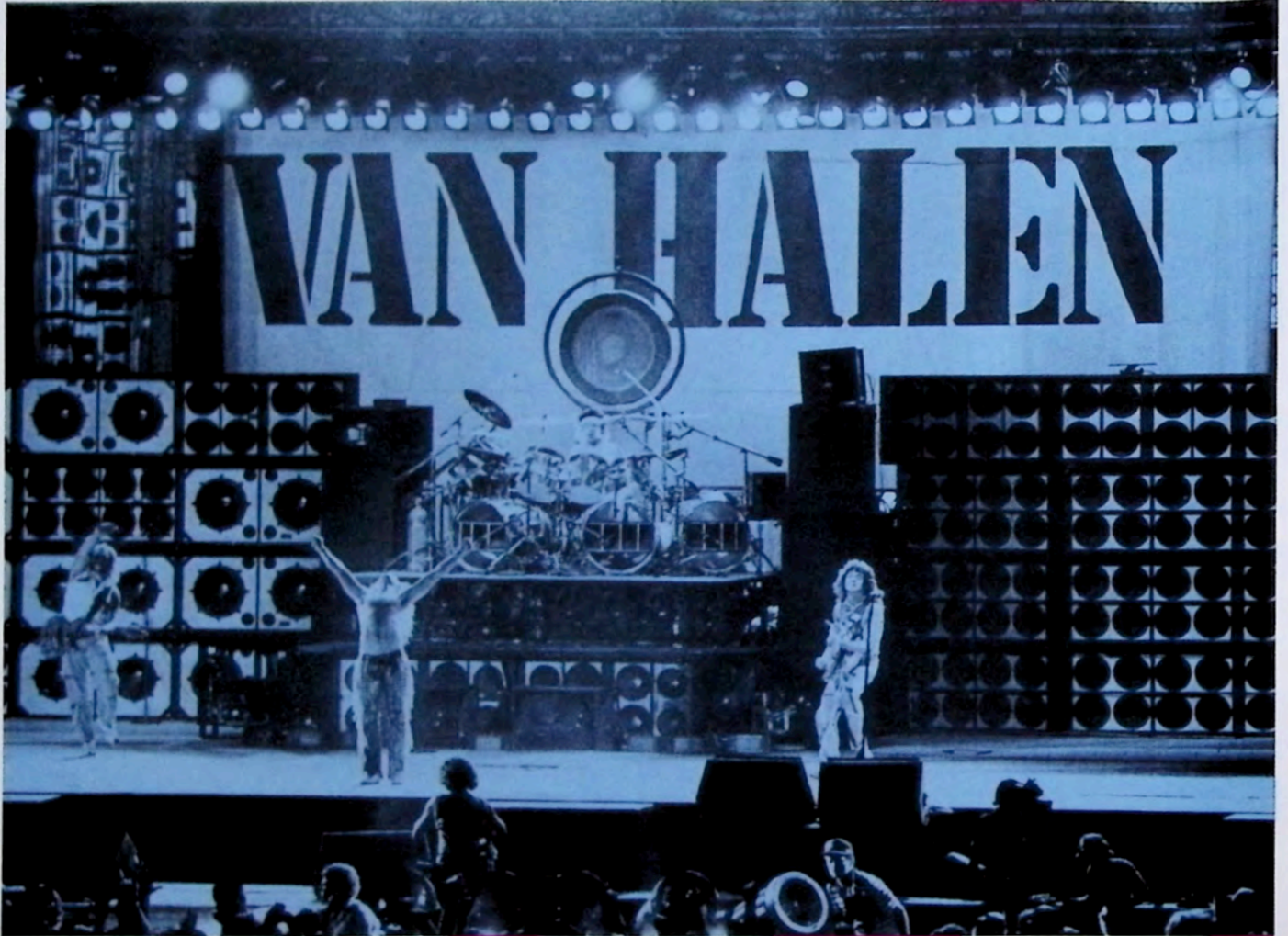
Chapter 6

The Van Halen Party

Hey, hold on! Whose party is this, anyway? Who's having more fun? 20,000 screaming fans bathing in the sound and light of another world tour of the four Californians on stage doing the exact same thing? Put those two groups together and there simply is nothing you can do to stop the mayhem. The only thing left to do is join the party, no matter what your tastes in music, even if you've already decided you hate David Lee Roth. It's infectious, contagious, just plain overwhelming. Van Halen—the music, facade, talent, obnoxiousness, popularity—it all boils down to one thing: people having fun and lots of it. They let us party with them every night, they let us believe that succeeding can be fun, they let us see ourselves on stage creating the best big rock in the world. Hey, all you have to do is let go and join in, it's your party, too. Go ahead and jump! Hey Dave, Eddie, Michael, Alex, wait up!!



Ross Marino

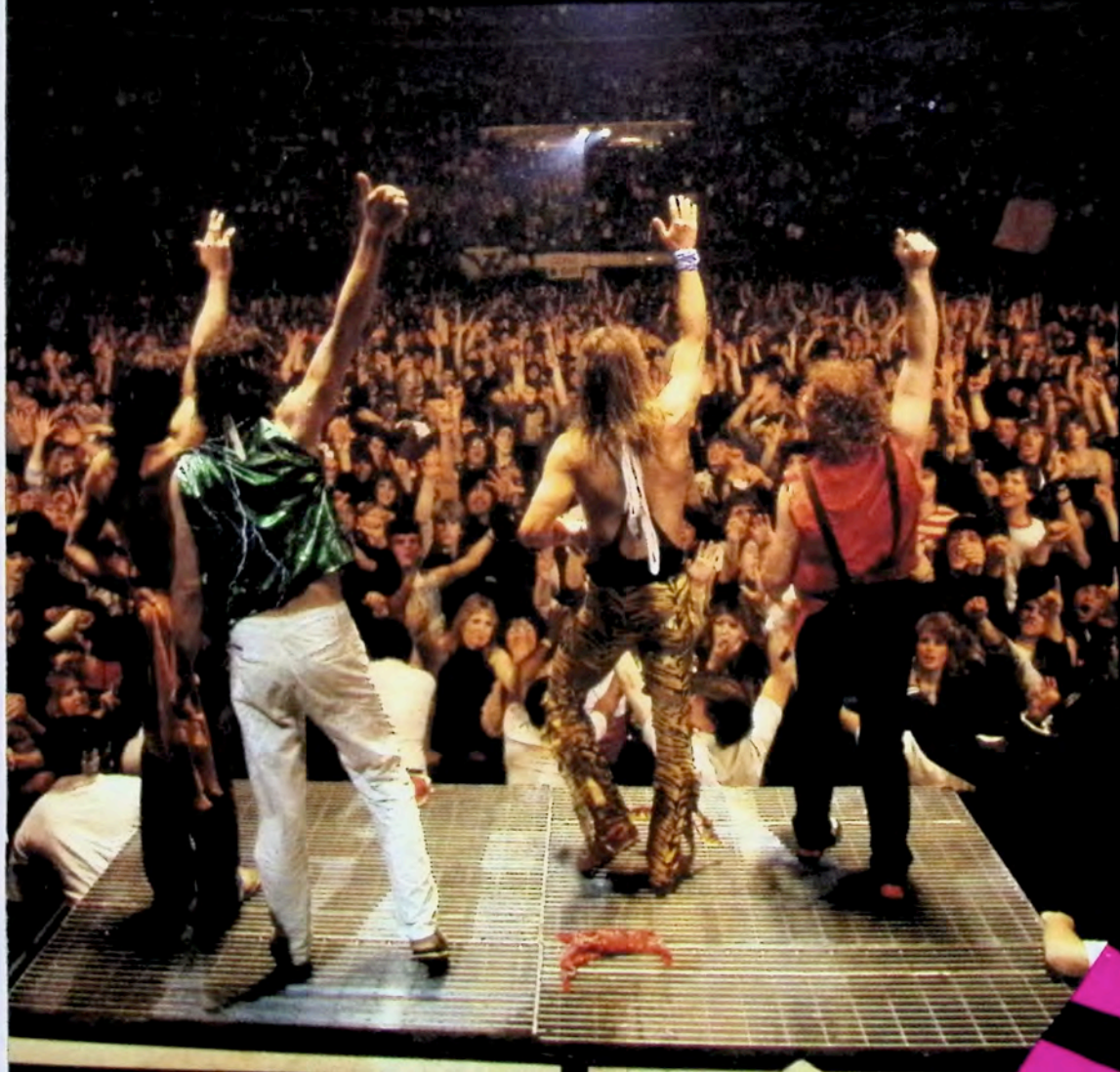


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