



Reign in Blood

D.X. Ferris

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Issued on America's premier rap label at the peak of the thrash metal movement, Slayer's controversial *Reign in Blood* remains the gold standard for extreme heavy metal, a seamless 29-minute procession of ten blindingly fast, apocalyptic songs. The first English book about Slayer explores the creation of the most universally respected metal album and its long road to the stores, through original interviews with the entire band, producer Rick Rubin, engineer Andy Wallace, cover artist Larry Carroll, and Def Jam insiders from Russell Simmons to M.C. Serch. From Tori Amos to Pantera's Phil Anselmo, dozens of fans and artists discuss the record's ongoing impact and Slayer's status in the small fraternity of rock's greatest groups.

Reign in Blood Details

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Author : D.X. Ferris

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From Reader Review Reign in Blood for online ebook

Patrick Sprunger says

This 33 1/3 series is really a mixed bag. Some selections careen down esoteric pathways, taking readers on a spirit journey - like Jonathan Lethem's solipsistic treatment of Fear of Music. Others maliciously try to wick away every vestige of magic and mystery from our most beloved records and turn them into the flaccid subject of too-long freshman term papers - like this volume here.

I think it's incredible that Rick Rubin coaxed Reign in Blood from four guys who were nobly, but aimlessly toiling in the muck of Show No Mercy and Hell Awaits. How curious that a big time producer teased out the Slayer of Reign in Blood and Seasons in the Abyss. That is colossally interesting. But you know what isn't? Where Kerry King went to middle school. What kind of car Tom Araya drove. And every other pointless shit detail of the humdrum suburban tableaux that was Young Slayer circa: 1980.

And, you know what? Everybody loves Slayer (at least the Slayer of Reign in Blood). That's what makes Reign in Blood an enigma. And it's what also makes soliciting marginal D list rock celebrities like the-dude-from-Sum-41 and the-dude-from-Every-Time-I-Die and a fucking Tori Amos comment about bleeding vulvas and the Taliban, accessed on the god damned Internet completely valueless. Getting a bunch of unlikely contributors like Michael McKean and Sarah Vowell to talk about They Might Be Giants makes sense - because it shows what diverse types like They Might Be Giants. But everyone likes Slayer (at least the Slayer of Reign in Blood), so what value does a bunch of unnecessary interviews with utterly uninteresting rock dudes add? Shit. Zip. Nada.

And I have to echo someone else's comment: Referencing how Slayer has never ::quote:: "made a bad album" (technically true, but barely) does nothing to enhance a discussion of Reign in Blood. Even generous appreciation of South of Heaven and Seasons in the Abyss has to admit they're only an admirable display of taking the downward slope from Reign in Blood with grace. Being honest, it's all down hill from Reign in Blood. And by the time we get to those albums from the 2000s, Slayer's (understandably) pretty far down the mountain and vanishing into the distance.

If this volume does anything, it's show how there are actually flaws in Reign in Blood. The lyrics, for example: pretty terrible. The perils of being flippant with holocaust imagery. I knew those warts were in there (in fact, the whole SS fetish has bothered me for, oh, 25 years or so...). Thanks rock-biographer, for calling them to my attention without giving me something new to ponder over to compensate me for my trouble.

Thinking about this volume of 33 1/3? Skip it.

Darcy McLaughlin says

This is the 4th or 5th 33 1/3 book I've read, and it is by far the worst one. I'll preface this entire review by saying I love Slayer and I've listened to the album Reign in Blood uncountable amounts. Any positive feelings I had regarding this book came solely from the fact that I appreciate the band and their music (at least up until Seasons in the Abyss but that's another story...)

First off, this book seems like it never passed through the hands of an editor. There's typos throughout, including significant things like mistakenly stating that Slayer's album *South of Heaven* came out in 1998 (when it really came out 10 years prior). These are commonly small slips, but they add up enough to be irritating. It's silly to think such a short book couldn't have at least been proofread decently. One of the strangest typos occurs late in the book when the author misspells the song "Raining Blood" as "Reigning Blood", then correctly spells it two paragraphs later.

Even without technical issues, the book leaves a lot to be desired in terms of content. So much time is spent trying to convince the reader of how cool Slayer is because they've won a Grammy in 2007. There's half a dozen mentions of Rick Rubin working with the Dixie Chicks. It's like a cycle of stupidity. So much time is invested in trying to convince you this band is super badass and has all of these impressive achievements, when the average Slayer fan would just want to read about the record. Sure it may be an attempt to draw in non-fans with impressive accolades, but I don't think non-fans are really investing over a hundred pages about a 1986 thrash record.

The only really interesting part is the song by song analysis, which again becomes "Angel of Death/Raining Blood + some other songs" like the rest of the book. Some tracks get 3-4 sentences breaking them down, then we get the millionth "Angel of Death" is controversial because "Auschwitz" blurb. Again much of the book is just recycled bits using slightly different wording to pad the page count.

I've read books about heavy metal before. *Choosing Death* is great book about the history of Death Metal, and *Decibel* magazine does fantastic 33 1/3esque write ups for their Hall of Fame series. It is possible to make an interesting, well written analysis of metal music. This just isn't one.

(One last note that irritated me. There's a quote from a musician in the book praising Slayer for playing songs in E standard and not tuning down like modern metal groups do to get a "heavier" sound. This would be a great sentiment but everyone with a guitar probably knows the band tune down half a step to E-Flat. Just another simple factual error that would easily have been spotted if anyone knew what the hell they were doing.)

Shenanitims says

Reign in Blood might forever be one of those albums shrouded in mystery. How did Slayer pull off such an amazing album when its predecessors were so (to my ears) lackluster? What changed in the band to make them tighten up so incredibly yet so quickly?

To be fair, Ferris is quite up front about his inability to give details. He notes that the band has gone on record a number of times saying that they don't remember much about the 10 year span containing *Reign in Blood* and its followups. Record, tour, record. As such, the little detail we do get should be appreciated.

But there's so little substance here once you realize that the band has nothing to add about the album. By my estimation nearly half the quotes in this book tell of how much other people love Slayer and their album. Which surely validates the creation of the book, but isn't the buyer already agreeing to an album's "unfuckwitable" status when they buy a book dedicated to it?

I don't care that Aimee Mann loves the album, I love it too! If there's no amazing in-studio tales to tell, then

share some gossip. Why did Lombardo (truly the backbone to the album) feel compelled to leave the band as they were touring to support it? I know Ferris does give explanations as to the whys behind both of Lombardo's departures from Slayer, but neither give insight into the decision. (Lombardo left once, the second time I believe, to be with his wife as she gave birth. Understandable. By why leave the first time? And why come back after leaving?) Talk about how the critical perception of Slayer changed once the album was released. How they became such a defining band in metal despite refusing the mainstream success that hurt the other members of the "Big Four" club.

So much that could've been done and just wasn't.

Dave Hofer says

OK. This book was a letdown, but because it's Slayer, I'll give it four instead of three stars.

I think this is DX's first foray into publishing a book, so I'll go easy: my biggest gripe with this book is the fact that there's too much talk of current Slayer events. Grammy wins, the fact that Rick Rubin went on to produce both the Dixie Chicks and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, the fact that Andy Wallace mixed Nevermind, etc.

A valiant effort, it simply seems that it's been so long since Reign in Blood was deemed a classic, that the whole book is overshadowed by one big "No shit."

James Dunphy says

If you're like me you're obsessed with heavy metal, and have been for practically half your life. As a connoisseur of the genre and an amateur historian of it I take great pride in not only finding new metal bands, but going back in time and discovering the all the extreme bands that laid the roots for today's modern heaviness. Despite being born a whole year after what was arguable their greatest trilogy of work (Reign in Blood, South of Heaven, Seasons in the Abyss), I am a huge Slayer fan...or as we would say \ m / F*CKING SLAYYYERRRRRRRRRR!!! \ m /.

Since I wasn't around for the glory days this book is a way for me to go back in time and learn some things about one of my favorite bands in what was arguable their most important point in history. Reign in Blood is one of the cornerstone albums of the metal genre of music that is still cited by bands and critics today as being one of the best standing albums that shows no age. Outside of metal it has influence punk bands, hardcore groups, and even Tori Amos in the last 25 years. The album is so important it was selected by congress to be preserved as a piece of American culture. Of course, all of this is detailed within the book. The author does a great job not only profiling the men involved with the album's creation – from Slayer kingpins Kerry King and Tom Araya to seminal producer Rick Rubin, and down to the artist who created the hellish cover art). It may seem weird to read a book that is dedicated to only one album, but the short length of this small sized book keeps the narrative quick and non repetitive. Ferris interviews tons of people in the modern metal and alternative culture scenes that really flesh out the lasting influence of both the band and album.

Granted if you're not a fan of heavy metal this book will probably do nothing for you. It certainly won't convert you to the sonic ear raping that brings such calm to my life. You definitely have to have listened to RiB at least a dozen times (I'm on listen 500+ by now) to understand the analysis of the songs, but that being

said it's awesome to read this book while listening to the album in the background (if you can prevent yourself from headbanging long enough to actually read it). If you're a fan of F*CKING SLAYYYYERRR or 80's thrash metal then you owe it to yourself to pick this up and read it while you take a few craps (it's that short). I know a lot of the kidz who go to modern metal shows these days largely consider Slayer a relic of the past with no bearing on the current musical landscape, but they too should attempt to read this while blasting *Reign in Blood* to perhaps get a sense of what the past actually sounds like. I sound like a dinosaur old music fart when I say stuff like that, but this would be the one album I attempt to shove down any supposed metal fan's throat who says they haven't listened to it before. Read the book, listen to the tunes. It may just change your view of what is actually heavy. I consider this the appetizer to D.X Ferris's Slayer biography that I need to buy ASAP.

Scott says

A note to anyone who is even considering writing a book for this series (yeah, like any of them would ever read this - I know - but, hey, I've got to start these reviews out with something): entries like this should serve as your blueprint. D. X. Ferris shows you how to get it done: give me a bit of background about the principle folks involved, tell me what they did to make the album so special, talk about each song (optional, in my opinion), talk about the impact/influence the album had, and then "get off the pot" so to speak.

Any book series like this with multiple authors, etc. is bound to have some duds, but the 33 1/3 series is, for me, turning out to be a mixed bag, at best. I have thus far been unable to get though the one for *Ok Computer* (actual quote:

Airbag (Information from first chart: $4.44/284/x = 86$)

Intro: 9 (preceded by one-note upbeat)

Verse: 12 (6+6)----“In the next world war...”).

And the one for *Bee Thousand*, while it did do its job overall, had some unforgivably bad sections (the more I think about it, I need to lower that one from 3 stars to 2, because 3 was far too generous). This one, however, was well worth reading, even if you're not a Slayer fan. Pretty much perfect. Proceed with caution for the other books in this series though.

Jeff says

1st Read: June 13, 2018 - June 17, 2018

It was a great look into the making of one of the best albums of all time! It is still on my regular playlist to this day!

Jake Cole says

A decent overview of perhaps the best metal album of all time (or at least the MOST metal album), and a better consideration of the album's merits than you can easily find 'round the Internet. Unfortunately, as evocatively as Ferris elicits the morbid charms of this classic, he devotes quite a bit of time to the same "Fuckin' Slayer!" catch-all cries of fans. He just rephrases that short-n-sweet appraisal with a host of

interview subjects who agree that, indeed, fuckin' Slayer. And as much as Ferris stresses how outside the mainstream the band is, he sure does like to mention any Grammy won by the band members or those who worked for them. Still, Jeff Hanneman's death put me in the mood to revisit Slayer's music and seek out some quality writing on it. Ferris fits that description, but it's a shame he devotes only a portion of this short work to the brass tacks of this great album.

Timothy Minneci says

The 33.3 series is always hit 'n miss, luckily this one was a hit. It gives me detailed backstory, interviews with all the important players, the relevance of the music to the genre at the time of release and going forward on future artist, and injects enough of the authors voice to provide personal insights and a unique take.

Kurt says

I started reading a history of the band Slayer that was written after the death of one of their founding members. That book said that it wasn't going to reiterate much of anything that was in this book, which covers the recording of one of their best albums. I stopped reading that one to read this before going back. Sadly, there were less behind the scenes details than I really was looking for.

Ben Loory says

it's not a terrible book but it doesn't do much to explain just how reign in blood came to be so different and so much better than the slayer albums that came before it. "just happened," basically, it seems. the guys in slayer have never been particularly helpful in explaining their process (which i get, they're musicians, they think in sounds and rhythms), but what's the point of writing this book if not to put into words something about the album that the band can't or won't explain themselves? either that or (distant second) there should be a bunch of gossip about the guys in the band and the recording sessions, of which there is... very little, verging on none. so it's a little... empty. really it seems to be more about rick rubin than slayer (and not particularly about rick rubin's actual production of THIS album, either... just kind of general bio of rick rubin (who seems like a cool guy, whatever, got nothing against him, but he's not slayer)).

but anyway, it made me listen to reign in blood about 90 times in the span of three days, so that's cool...

Colin says

Very informative. Ferris is a mediocre writer and typos on every page.

Steven McKay says

Pretty good read but it's littered with spelling mistakes. There's mention of Phil Anselmo contributing his thoughts but honestly I can't even remember him saying a single thing in the book.

However, the thoughts of Kerry, Dave, Tom and, in particular, Jeff are really worth reading.

The author doesn't seem to be a musician so don't expect any great detail in his dissection of the songs (from my memory of the Jethro Tull book in this series that was MUCH more in-depth). The one time I remember a discussion about the technical aspects was when some guy talks about how amazing it was that Slayer could make this album so heavy yet still tuned to E standard (like Metallica did on Kill 'Em All). Well, anyone trying to play guitar to this in E standard will have a hard time doing it, since it's in E flat!

I really did enjoy this book, just would have liked it to have been a bit more detailed. Still, the band members themselves don't seem to have great memories of the period so perhaps it's not the authors fault if he doesn't know how the songs were recorded!

I have his other book about Slayer, the Jeff and Dave years. Hopefully there's a bit more meat in that one.

Juan Valdivia says

Like other reviewers already noted, this book could have benefitted from some further editing. There were too many spelling and grammatical errors. What was most frustrating for me were the numerous instances throughout the book when the author lauded Slayer or *Reign in Blood*. I'm a huge Slayer fan—the prime demographic for this book!—but how many times do we have to hear that Slayer fucking rules, or that *Reign in Blood* was one of the greatest thrash metal albums of all time? I got it after the first time I read it, man, but it was repeated so many times throughout this short book. The constant repetitions made the book seem more amateurish, and also made it seem like Ferris had Slayer's cock and balls all up in his mouth.

That said, I mostly enjoyed the book; I looked forward to reading it. Compared to the book about *OK Computer*, this one was highly readable, and I thought it was well structured. Sure, the book oftentimes felt like a long-winded text version of a VH1 special, as well as a compilation of information and approving quotes about the album (and band), but I appreciated the enthusiasm Ferris had in writing about this classic album. It was infectious. Reading the book inspired me to listen to *Reign in Blood* many, many times throughout my reading which is why I felt it deserved three stars instead of two. Unlike other 3 1/3 books I have read, this one actually got me excited about revisiting the album it discussed.

Thomas says

This was my first 3 1/3 book, and will probably be my last. There were some interesting anecdotes, but in general, I thought it was too much information, but not necessarily the info i wanted. I did like learning about the cover artist (love that album cover!), but didn't care much about members of other bands re-iterating over and over and over that Reign in Blood is indeed a classic. Similar in style to the talking heads rockumentaries made for VH1. I'd rather just listen to Slayer. Also, the book spent lots of space on post-Reign In Blood Slayer history. It was mentioned at least six times that during the 90's there was a different drummer in the band, without ever once mentioning his name. It was Paul Bostaph- and he wasn't just some lame replacement- he's a totally bad ass drummer.

