



The Kill Riff

David J. Schow

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Lucas dreamed it every night...the glittering rockshow; ear-punching heavy metal music; gaudily costumed, outrageous performers; an insane mob that storms the stage. Kristen, his beloved daughter, dying, pounded bloody and broken by feet and fists. Kristen, dead-as dead as Lucas' most hidden desires.

In Lucas Ellington's eyes, the mindless crowd of rock n' rollers is blameless. His child was murdered by Whip Hand, the Ultimate Party Band. The main event.

Whip Hand dissolved soon after the arena disaster but the musicians are still alive out there, still alive and kicking.

Not for long. Lucas has sacrificed one set of dreams; he will not surrender another. Instead of Kristen, he cradles revenge to his breast.

His ultimate target: Gabriel Stannard. Whip Hand's lead singer.

The Kill Riff Details

Date : Published April 12th 1989 by Tor Books (first published 1988)

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Author : David J. Schow

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From Reader Review The Kill Riff for online ebook

Grady Hendrix says

The misogyny is strong with this one.

Sally Buckley says

[Lucas/Kirsten incest (hide spoiler)]

Peter says

Typical 80's writing that was popular back then, all guns and muscles with a pinch of rock music.

After lots of heavy reading this was a beautiful piece of mindless writing, the popcorn movie in book form. Don't take it too seriously, it's Arnie type gun fun.

ENJOY!

Matthew Catania says

David J. Schow's The Kill Riff is a lurid 80's revenge flick INSIDE YOUR HEAD!

Jeff Kart says

It was OK. The book is from the '80s. I dig the premise: dad sets out to kill the band that 'killed' his daughter. The author throws in some decent twists and action. But some of it seems unresolved by the end. Maybe I just took too long to finish it. Liked it. Didn't love it. Still love these types of 'undiscovered' '80s horror books that you can't buy on shelves. Thanks eBay.

James Oxyer says

David J. Schow has a bone to pick.

Looking at the author's note that starts the book ("If you claim this book made you do weird things, you should be locked away where you cannot hurt anyone. Repeat: I made it all up. That's why it's called fiction") as well as the year it was released (1988) and the subject matter (a heavy metal group being stalked by a crazed 'Nam veteran out for vengeance), you'd think he has a bone to pick with the frenzied Moral

Majority, the PMRC's release of the "Filthy 15," and other Satanic Panic nonsense. But that's not quite true.

Schow has a bone to pick, and he has a bone to pick with everyone.

Sure, he takes the time to throw some jabs at the religious nutjobs burning metal records for publicity. How can you not? But for a book targeted towards the horror crowd, many of whom likely would have been all over heavy metal during the Satanic Panic, Schow really takes the piss out of rock 'n' roll. Schow rebuffs capturing the "spirit" of metal and opts for the unfortunate truth of heavy metal in Reagan's America - hollow, publicity-fueled, deceptive. The lyrics denounce the Man, but the Man is behind the curtain operating everything. Even the novel's climactic adrenaline-rush of a showdown is, in the mind of the final musician left to fight the killer, nothing more than a publicity stunt.

There are no clear heroes and no clear villains. Destruction and carnage rule this world. When people die, even the good-hearted ones, they die horribly, often reduced to a gory pulp. It's a worldview Cormac McCarthy would wholeheartedly agree with. It's a challenge to stay engaged sometimes because there really is no one to latch onto (no one likable, anyway).

Schow's writing is the greatest strength, sizzling with vivid descriptions, twists and turns, and some surprisingly human touches. Even when things slow down to indulge in lengthy bouts of plot, the strength of the prose keeps things interesting.

It's an entertaining read for a Satanic Panic enthusiast and gorehound like myself, but it's as pleasant to cozy up with as molten iron. In that regard, I must commend Schow on crafting a work that's metal to its core - angry, fast, violent, uninterested in pleasing anyone and all too excited to lob scathing condemnations at anyone and anything, including itself. A fascinating read for its place in history, as well as a great piece of nihilistic splatterpunk entertainment.

Clint says

A really awesome and rare book about a crazy father bent on the assassination of a rock star. Bloody, exciting, funny.

Charles says

David Schow was one of the better writers to come out of the 80s horror explosion. This is a really tight book with lots of twists and turns. I really enjoyed it.

Vince Darcangelo says

First saw this book on the shelves as a rock-obsessed teenager. At that age, my limited disposable income went toward musical gear and cassette tapes, so I didn't buy it then. I read the first chapter in the store, though, and it has haunted me ever since. Came across the electronic version and loved it. I wouldn't describe it as a timeless tale, but more a time capsule from when horror and heavy metal had given way to camp. Still, love the earnest references to Betamax, Creem magazine and historic Denver locations such as

Stapleton airport and the Currigan Exhibition Hall. Also charmed by the legitimate plot device in which you could buy a plane ticket with cash, no ID and a fake name. Good times. That's a relic from an era as lost as a fossilized laser disc. An era I enjoyed revisiting in *The Kill Riff*.

Eugene Johnson Jr says

I thought The book was good, It has a lot of stuff involing the 80's. It has some slow momment's at the start, and there is alot of of over-powered dialouge at the first of the book it felt like to me it was crammed in, and Mr. Schow was saying "Ok, here we go, I am going to stuff as much as I can between two people in the first scene so you will know that I am a for real writer." Other then that it is a good book, has a great plot twist halfway through, For a first novel it is not bad at all, I just wish the first of the book was a little bit easier to read in the first scene, As soon as I opend the cover, I Thought "This is going to lose my intrest fast." But if you can get through the first part, it does get better.

Chris says

Set in the heyday of the excessive 80's, advertising guru and Vietnam vet, Lucas Ellington, returns from therapy following the tragic and accidental death of his daughter at a rock concert for Whip Hand. But what his therapist and work boss don't know is that Lucas is far from cured and he has plans, big deadly plans for members of Whip Hand, and more specifically, for Gabriel Stannard, frontman.

David Schow writes like a blisteringly snarky version of Ketchum mixed with a liberal dash of Skipp & Spector, but make no mistake, this reviewer loved his storytelling prowess, all his own, and will definitely be reading his backlist.

Highly recommended.

DJMikeG says

This was a pretty great psychological thriller. It suffered a tad from 'first-novel-itus', but even with its flaws, its a spectacular first novel. Its very, very 80s, as it is about heavy metal and was published in 1987. Some of the stuff that seems a tad too far-fetched in it (Gabriel Stannard's actions in the second half of the book) may appear that way because I was reading it through 2011 eyes. In the 80s, since nothing like this had ever happened, who knows? The way metal musicians presented themselves at the time made people think that they really, truly were renegade maniacs. The main character, Lucas Ellington, is one of the most incredible psychological portraits I've read, and the way he evolves and the story unfolds is very impressive. I'm definitely interested in reading more Schow, this is the first book I've read by him.

Gevera Bert says

This is an overwritten mess. And it is not horror.

Jenn says

I got halfway through this one, and found I just didn't care enough about anyone in it to finish it. It held a lot less gorey stuff than the usual horror I read and really felt like a chore to get through. I was annoyed by this as I thought since it was about heavy metal that I would thoroughly enjoy it.
