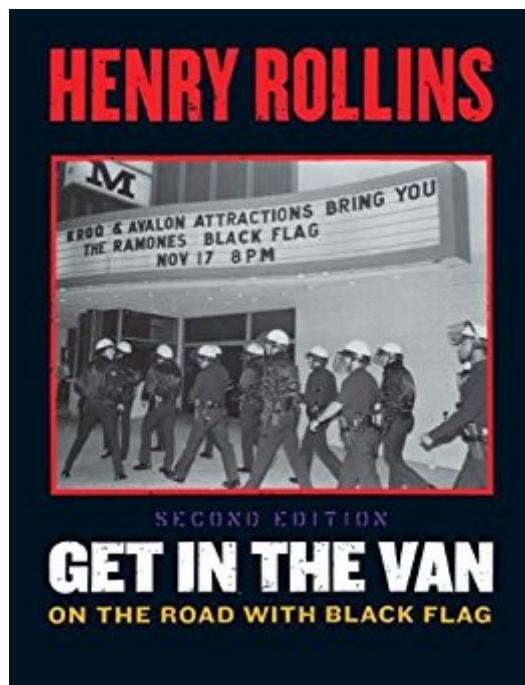


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Get In The Van



Synopsis

As a member of the seminal punk band Black Flag, Henry Rollins kept detailed tour diaries that form the basis of *Get in the Van*. Rollins's observations range from the wry to the raucous in this blistering account of a six-year career with the band - a time marked by crazed fans, vicious cops, near-starvation, substance abuse, and mind numbing all-night drives. Rollins decided to revise this edition by adding a wealth of new photographs, a new foreword, and an afterword to include some "where-are-they-now" information on the people featured in the book. This new edition includes 40 previously unpublished black-and-white photographs from Rollins's private collection and show flyers by artist Raymond Pettibon. Called "a soul-frying experience not to be undertaken by lightweights" by *Wired* magazine, *Get in the Van* perfectly embodies what one critic called the "secular gospel" of one of punk and post-punk's most respected and controversial figures.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book truly represents a moment in time (or, rather, an extended moment in time). The Henry we see here is bleak, brooding, and rather negative, likely the result of a young man working hard at a thankless, nonpaying, and unrewarding task. The image of the guys pushing the bus says it all:

Sisyphus. The 2004 afterword provides the reader hope in a Henry transformed to a Rollins: a more positive and hopeful examiner of the world and the existential condition that we are more familiar with from post Black Flag works. As an aging punk rocker and person who lived through these times, I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Even if you weren't even born then, it's a good object lesson in "back in the day". Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm late for a TV party.....

I'd got this tour diary of Rollins' days in Black Flag when it came out in 1994 but never finished it, and reading it again, I can tell right where that spot was. Touring starts to become truly harrowing and ugly as the fans night after night attack Rollins before, during and after shows and he starts to go insane. His writing in his diary continues but it becomes weird, disembodied steam-of-consciousness that is really dark and misanthropic. I didn't make it through this part before but I did this time, and Rollins comes out on the other side stronger but in some ways really damaged. He takes on a new philosophy: "Disrespect is a two-way street." He starts unloading on fans who behave badly toward him and, at times, it's scary how violent he becomes. But how do you not get that way when stuff like this happens: "I had a bad one in Chicago the other night. We were in the second set and I was pulled off the stage and thrown to the floor by the audience. Most of my pants were torn off and people started kicking me. I remember feeling the glass that was on the floor going into my back. Dukowski pulled me back on stage and then I kind of freaked out during the next song. Duke carried me off stage and that was the end of the show. I sat on the stairs and shook for about 20 minutes." Or this: "Last night in Vienna was real bad for me. A guy took the microphone from me, called me a pig and bashed me in the mouth with it. People spat on me, hit me in the face. One guy burned me a few times with a cigar. I got these big burns on my leg. Some big guy got on stage and bounces were trying to hit him. I got between them to try to save the guy and for my trouble, the guy hauled off and punched me in the jaw. After that, it got wild. The police came and the crowd beat the s*** out of them, the police dog too. Some punks were wearing the pigs' hats." Things get far wilder when Rollins starts fighting back. Lots of good quotes: "It would be nice to be touched by hands that didn't want to kill me or congratulate me" and "I don't want to do everything. I want to do anything." Anyway, the second edition is far better. A ton more photos, often from the shows in question, and a ton more fliers. Plus it seems he took out a kind of sexist story that always troubled me.

I first read this book 20 years ago when it came out and several times since then, and it still holds up all these years later. I admire Henry and all of Black Flag for what they went through all for the sake of entertainment. The harsh realities of the road, the endless supply of ill-behaved concert goers, and the sheer dedication these guys had is amazing. Any up and coming band should read this to learn about the scary nature of what being on the road can do to a person. It's basically the rock and roll equivalent of being in a war.

I expected the book to be more than what it is- a lot of fluff from his personal diaries of life on the road. The first 30 or so pages are his own dialog on the Flag & SST but beyond that it gets pretty boring. I consider myself a follower of Rollins- even by chance meeting him in a downtrodden record store in a wayside Midwestern city and NOT asking for his autograph; but c'mon man... Give us a little more sustenance. Please?

It's.... listen this is a historical artifact. It's not a super book. I think you should read it if you've got a connection to the lifestyle or the subject matter, but it's more or less the venting of a troubled young guy going to war. From what I can see, it's basically Rollins outlet from a really high stress lifestyle, and as such is a very selective set of snapshots of his life. Basically it's almost all low points and petty grievances. But there's stuff you don't and can't get anyplace else, raw and unfiltered. And the writing gets better as handsome hank gets practice. If you buy the book, expect a mixed bag of insight and frustration at what Rollins chooses to put to paper, and a steady uptick in writing quality, coming from admittedly a pretty rough starting point.

As a professional musician, this had me gripped. Reading about how things were "back in the day" makes me glad I'm doing this the way I am now. Henry's straight shooter descriptions of bars, cops, audience members and everyone else in between is just epic! A joy and Hell ride all at once.

Think the "rock star" life is glamorous? Read this tome and find out all the details on the glitz of being on the road for 88 shows in 85 days. Oh sure there is tales of the girls, the drugs, the booze and the fabulous hotel room parties. But wait there is more! How about the daily search for food? Being spit upon? Vehicle breakdowns? Getting punched, pinched and groped while trying to perform? Yup, its there too. Henry certainly keeps it simple. Does get a bit repetitious by the end, but I think that is part of the tale too. A good read if you ever wanted to be in a band out touring the country and even Europe.

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