



Sex, Lies, and Headlocks: The Real Story of Vince McMahon and the World Wrestling Federation

Shaun Assael , Mike Mooneyham

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From the cable television ratings to the bestseller lists, professional wrestling is red-hot. How it got that way is not a pretty picture, but it's one that is painted in more detail than ever before in **Sex, Lies, and Headlocks**, the first in-depth, journalistic look at the world of wrestling.

At the heart of the story is Vince McMahon, the mercurial owner of the World Wrestling Federation. The authors trace his beginnings as the forgotten son of a second-generation wrestling czar who left rural North Carolina to stake his own claim to the family business. They detail his early, ruthless genius in declaring war on the old territory czars who had grown fat and lazy. And they show how his first brush with fame in the 1980s with Hulk Hogan and Cyndi Lauper sowed the seeds for the drug and sex scandals that nearly toppled his empire in the 1990s. They also tell us the inside story of McMahon's blood feud with Ted Turner, adding some surprising details about the two men's quests to ruin each other.

Throughout the book, the authors examine the appeal of the industry's biggest stars—including Ed "Strangler" Lewis, Gorgeous George, Bruno Sammartino, Ric Flair, and, most recently, Stone Cold Steve Austin and The Rock. In doing so, they show us that while WWF stock is traded to the public on Wall Street, wrestling remains a shadowy world guided by a century-old code that stresses secrecy and loyalty.

Sex, Lies, and Headlocks is the ultimate behind-the-scenes look at the history, personalities, back-stabbing, scandals, and high-stakes gambles that have made Vince McMahon the king of the ring and wrestling an enduring television phenomenon.

Sex, Lies, and Headlocks: The Real Story of Vince McMahon and the World Wrestling Federation Details

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From Reader Review Sex, Lies, and Headlocks: The Real Story of Vince McMahon and the World Wrestling Federation for online ebook

Ill D says

Phenomenal.

Luke Koran says

In the widely-covered history of the era in professional wrestling popularly known as the “Monday Night Wars”, the 2002 book “Sex, Lies and Headlocks: The Real Story of Vince McMahon and the WWF” somehow manages to provide a fresh look on the events of the decade through interviews with key players and diligent research (especially via the dirt sheets). I am also convinced that this work received my approval as it was not published under the WWE name; thus, this work has the advantage of being an outsider’s perspective with free reign to proclaim the whole truth and to express their informed opinions without fear of editing reprisals by Mr. Vincent Kennedy McMahon.

This book does an excellent job providing relevant background information on the rise of WWF and WCW, beginning with the territory system and followed by some forgotten events that helped transform Vince McMahon and Ted Turner into wrestling tycoons and the business into sports entertainment. Though the title insinuates that Vince McMahon would be the main topic, Vinnie Mac is only one of several featured stories. As much as I feel pressured to only give this book 2 or 3 stars and to jump on the reviewer bandwagon in diminishing it because of a supposed too many “inaccuracies”, I have to stick with my gut on this one on the basis of the small but significant details that even the most ardent wrestling fans have yet to hear of (especially since this would have been among the first books to document the era, as it was published in 2002).

AnnMarie says

There's a lot of good history, but it's not well written and seems clearly biased at times.

Anthony Brennan says

3.5/5 stars. Really fun, interesting read. Especially in the origins of the business and in the 80s. But the 90s things seem to fall apart from a fact checking perspective. Some stories I know had to be have some creative telling for space purposes, but some were just wrong. Still, a really entertaining read, I lost the book after starting (at WWE Survivor Series), and was determined to finish it after getting hooked by the first chapter.

Jeff Wetherington says

Not the best writing and there wasn't anything I haven't heard/read before, but it was nice to have the bulk of it on one place.

Optimus says

Good read

This is for anyone who wants an unbiased look on Wrestling and the crazy things in it.

Peter Allen says

This was an excellent reminder of why I loved professional wrestling so much as a youth. Here we get intimate portraits of not only Vince McMahon, Ted Turner and Eric Bischoff, we also get a refresher course on long forgotten wrestling bosses like the old N.W.A. network of federations. If you grew up watching the World Wrestling Federation on UHF, or World Championship Wrestling on TBS, than this is the book for you!

Cleveland Public Library says

Reading for book discussion on November 12th at Main Library

CJ Harries says

This was a great intro to wrestling history, covering (in brief detail) the WWF/E, WCW, and ECW. It skimmed many details and often played loose with time, which was frustrating. As a history, it's not great. As an intro, it's amazing.

Jeremiah Graves says

This was a pretty good book, lots of facts and background information, but short of some of the revelations about Vince's personal life prior to the '80s it didn't have anything that was really *new* or groundbreaking to me. It was a big re-hash of most of the information that is pretty much old hat for wrestling fans; from Vince's expansion of WWF, to the steroid trials, to the Monday Night Wars, it was all just another version of the same story. Entertaining, because the source materials is very entertaining, but just the same old story with a new voice.

The biggest issue for me was that the author got some pretty simple facts wrong throughout the book and I feel like you can't get that stuff wrong, especially when you're trying to write an exposé, if you want to keep

your credibility. If I remembered the accurate information without having to look it up, it means that it shouldn't have taken a legit fact-checker more than a few seconds to catch the errors. Inexcusable.

Russell says

The fact that, in one throw away sentence, Assael purports the expansion of WWF's pay-per-view roster (1989) to have occurred concurrently with the public implication of the WWF in Zahorian's trial (1991) and Hogan's year long sabbatical (1992) is generally indicative of the indifference to factual accuracy that damns this book as any sort of authoritative document on the history of the company.

However, riddled with factual inaccuracies and ludicrously condensed timelines though it may be, this does feature a wealth of scintillating anecdotes that expand the bizarre mythology of Vince McMahon. See, for instance, Vince snorting piles of coke off his desk at titan towers whilst declaring that he can "never get hooked," Vince ducking into side rooms during TV tapings to bang out a few reps of compulsive dumbbell curls, and Vince hiring a personal assistant whose job it is to keep him so flush in cans of tuna-fish that a pungent odor begins to encircle his corporate office.

I guess, at the end of the day, there's a charm to that.

The truth is: people who'd care that this book constitutes a very sloppily edited timeline of WWF's rise to mainstream popularity already know the actual facts and those who don't probably won't mind or notice in the first place. As someone who's read more about this god forsaken topic than I'd ever admit in polite company, Assael's spirited bolstering of these already bizarre personalities - be it rooted in fact or appropriately indiscernible fiction - is a satisfying alternative to the truth.

Donald Trump (Parody) says

hey look this is a TERRIBLE book, and im not just saying that because Vinnie is a real good friend of mine. this is poorly researched and full of LIES. the fake news throughout this is really something. this shaun ASSael needs to leave the country if hes gonna be spreading lies about one of america's greatest sports. really real stuff happens in that ring, i know it because this one time i main evented a wrestlemania and showed everyone who was boss. i threw the most convincing punches youve ever seen in your life. believe you me you dont want to be wasting your time with this. Vinnie is a really swell guy and he loves his wife and has always been faithful to her. Vinnie told me he can deadlift around 600 pounds and i believe him, i mean look at the size of that fucker, i tell ya. all these guys calling Vinnie a drug dealer and a murder dont know him like i do. a real american legend, Vinnie is. what a DISGRACE this trash is!!!

Artiom Karsiuks says

If I had a nickel for every time a person I've met was dismissive of or ridiculed professional wrestling, well... I'd have quite a few nickels.

Silly old *rasslin'*, right? Wrong. When you see Hulk Hogan saying his prayers and eating his vitamins or John Cena preaching "hustle, loyalty, respect" on screen, you only get the tip of the iceberg of what pro-wrestling is. This book gives you a good look at what lies hidden "underwater", behind the fun characters

and colorful entertainment facade that you see on your TV sets. The reality of this business is much more complicated than it seems to be, and when you start flipping through the pages, you are taken behind the scenes of this microcosm: it's almost like opening up a Pandora's box full of overinflated egos, cut-throat backstage politicking, steroids, drugs, broken lives and premature deaths. There is nothing rosy or pretty about people injecting elephant-dose cocktails of painkillers and steroids to numb their many injuries and grow cartoonish muscles.

The story centers around one Vincent Kennedy McMahon. If you considered WWE to be a religion, then he'd be the equivalent of His Holiness, the Pope. A brilliant, creative, competitive, ruthless, lying, egomaniacal son of a bitch of a pope. **Gotta love Vinnie.** True, like many critics of this book have said, it is not a flattering portrayal of Vince if you worship the ground he walks on [like many do], but I believe that it is a fair portrayal. It tells the story of a man hell-bent on succeeding, at all cost. When he dealt with his competition (like NWA and WCW) he was merciless and conniving. And you know what? He admits it. The important thing that McMahon fans who try to berate this book are missing is that Vince himself brags that he was a bloodthirsty asshole. More so, he is *proud* of it! As he should be, because all of the raunchy, scandalous television that he produced in the late 90s gave birth to the golden age of professional wrestling known as The WWF Attitude Era. It was glorious and, on a random side note, today Hollywood wouldn't have Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson without it.

As with any genius, McMahon isn't a saint, nor does he claim to be one. He is a perfect mess of both good and bad qualities. This cool little book gives a good summary of both his spectacular achievements and embarrassing blunders (WBF and XFL). I use the word "summary" with a purpose, because the readership that this book was crafted for is the casual reader, not a hardcore wrestling fan (or a *smark*). So if you are a Wrestling Observer Newsletter subscriber, you'll find nothing new or groundbreaking here, but if you're an average Joe who heard about this "raslin" thing, then I suggest you educate yourself by laying the *smackdown* on this book.

(view spoiler)

Ryan says

Holy shit, I actually enjoyed a book about the history of professional wrestling. The good news is that you don't have to be a childhood fan of the WWF like me to take something away from this book. The history of wrestling is also the history of vaudeville, boxing, and cable television. Recommended for fans of 20th century American history and pop culture.

Rob Rains says

A fairly well written tale full of tawdry anecdotes about one of America's most successful traveling circuses, World Wrestling Entertainment. Chairman Vince K. McMahon is endlessly fascinating and some of the stories here don't disappoint. It's hard not to draw parallels between how McMahon runs his wrestling empire and how the NFL treats its labor. Probably a better read for wrestling fans than just casual sports fans. This book also is more for cynics and steer clear if you want an uplifting story.
