

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

SEX, LIES,

AND

HEADLOCKS

The Real
Story of
VINCE McMAHON
and
**World Wrestling
Entertainment**



"Shaun Assael and Mike Mooneyham form the perfect tag team to chronicle pro wrestling's improbable transformation from low-budget regional entertainment to billion-dollar entertainment."

—*Playboy*

SHAUN ASSAEL

Sex, Lies, and Headlocks: The Real Story of Vince McMahon and World Wrestling Entertainment, Shaun Assael, Mike Mooneyham, Random House LLC, 2010, 0307758133, 9780307758132, 272 pages. Current fans and recovering Hulkamaniacs alike should find [Sex, Lies, and Headlocks] as gripping as the Camel Clutch. Sex, Lies, and Headlocks is the ultimate behind-the-scenes look at the backstabbing, scandals, and high-stakes gambles that have made wrestling an enduring television phenomenon. The man behind it all is Vince McMahon, a ruthless and entertaining visionary whose professional antics make some of the flamboyant characters in the ring look tame by comparison. Throughout the book, the authors trace McMahon's rise to power and 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 WWE 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. With a new afterword, this is the definitive book about the history of pro wrestling. Reading this excellent behind-the-scenes look at wrestling promoter McMahon . . . is almost as entertaining and shocking as watching the most extreme antics of McMahon's comic-book style creations such as Steve Austin and The Rock. Publishers Weekly A quintessentially American success story of a cocky opportunist defying the odds and hitting it big . . . Sparkling cultural history from an author wise enough to let the facts and personalities speak for themselves. Kirkus Reviews From the Trade Paperback edition..

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Controversy Creates Cash , Eric Bischoff, 2006, Biography & Autobiography, 389 pages. The creator of World Championship Wrestling tells the story of the rise and fall of his organization in its head-to-head, no-holds-barred ratings war with WWE ("Nitro" vs. "Raw

Wide open days and nights on the NASCAR tour, Shaun Assael, Jan 20, 1998, Sports & Recreation, 335 pages. A behind-the-scenes look at a year in professional automobile racing, culminating in the sport's top contest for the NASCAR Winston Cup, explores the lives, loves, and feuds of

The McMahons Vince McMahon and Family, Angie Peterson Kaelberer, Jul 1, 2003, Juvenile Nonfiction, 48 pages. A biography tracing the life and career of Vince McMahon, the professional wrestling promoter whose family has been in the professional wrestling business for more than eighty

The Rise & Fall of ECW Extreme Championship Wrestling, Thom Loverro, May 22, 2007, History, 272 pages. An account of the rise and fall of Extreme Championship Wrestling describes its cult-like fan base, its influence on the rules and policies of World Wrestling Entertainment

Superstar Billy Graham Tangled Ropes, Billy Graham, 2006, Biography & Autobiography, 341 pages. Presents the autobiography of one of the most influential professional wrestlers of the past thirty years, from his Texas childhood to his careers as a bodybuilder, bouncer

Wrestling's Most Wanted The Top 10 Book of Pro Wrestling's Outrageous Performers, Punishing Pile Drivers, and Other Oddities, Floyd Connor, 2001, Sports & Recreation, 303 pages. Rates the best-dressed, the ugliest, the most mentally unsound, the most occult, the sexiest and other categories of world-class wrestler, supplying information about such

Steve Williams How Dr. Death Became Dr. Life, Steve Williams, Feb 14, 2012, Biography & Autobiography, . Dr. Death Steve Williams was given a second chance. In the prime of his life, Steve was diagnosed with T-4 throat cancer. With God by his side, Steve overcame all odds and

Mysteries of Wrestling Solved, Adam Kleinberg, Adam Nudelman, 2005, Sports & Recreation, 245 pages. This hysterical and informative look at the sports entertainment industry, written by the hosts of the longest-running professional wrestling radio show in history, reveals the

Wrestlecrap The Very Worst of Professional Wrestling, R. D. Reynolds, Oct 1, 2003, Humor, 269 pages. Outrageous costumes, cartoonish characters, and scripted storylines are featured in this retrospective look at the no-holds-barred stunts pro wrestling promoters have used to

Pile Driver , Kenneth R. Boness, Aug 22, 2003, Sports & Recreation, . Spanning the Roaring Twenties, Prohibition and The Great Depression, Pile Driver is set in one of the most colorful periods of United States history. The story of Charles

Hitman My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling, Bret Hart, Oct 8, 2008, Sports & Recreation, . Written without collaborators and based on decades of tape recordings he made throughout his career, HITMAN is Bret Hart's brutally honest, perceptive and startling account of

Vince McMahon, Jr. , Kyle Alexander, Aug 1, 2001, , 64 pages. A biography of the savvy wrestling promoter who has changed the face of professional wrestling since buying the WWF from his father in 1982..

It's Good to Be the King...Sometimes , Jerry Lawler, Dec 19, 2002, Biography & Autobiography, 384 pages. Jerry Lawler is hailed as one of sports-entertainment's most enduring and colorful characters. His life has been filled with hilarious, never-been-told stories...until now! His

Dungeon of Death , Scott Keith, 2008, Sports & Recreation, 210 pages. Wrestling journalist Keith examines the career and death of professional wrestler Chris Benoit and the infamous Hart Family Curse affecting all the alumnae of the Stampede

Sex, Lies, and Headlocks is the ultimate behind-the-scenes look at the backstabbing, scandals, and high-stakes gambles that have made wrestling an enduring television phenomenon. The man behind it all is Vince McMahon, a ruthless and entertaining visionary whose professional antics make some of the flamboyant characters in the ring look tame by comparison. Throughout the book, the authors trace McMahon's rise to power and 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 WWE 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.

Reading this excellent behind-the-scenes look at wrestling promoter McMahon, the current ruler of the wild and ruthless world of professional wrestling, is almost as entertaining and shocking as watching the most extreme antics of McMahon's comic-book style creations such as Steve Austin and The Rock. Combining hard investigative journalism with a genuine love for wrestling's weirder tendencies, Assael (senior writer for ESPN and author of Wide Open) and Mooneyham (who writes the wrestling column in the Charleston Post and Courier) have penned one of the closest looks so far at this industry, which moved from the cheap and smoke-filled Midwestern halls of the 1930s to become one of the most successful television enterprises ever by the 1990s. The authors focus on McMahon, who rose from a difficult childhood to take command of the World Wrestling Federation and almost singlehandedly invent the current style of extreme wrestling. The authors also carefully detail how McMahon's take-no-prisoners business style led him into his own bouts with financial, legal, sexual and drug problems, until finally he had become totally seduced by the loud, angry circus he'd created. But beneath the many stories about crooked promoters, armed wives, drug-crazed and sexually profligate wrestlers, the authors also skillfully illuminate pro wrestling's influence on the media, detailing McMahon's feuds with rivals like Ted Turner and World Championship Wrestling's Eric Bischoff, as well as his byzantine dealings with notables from such companies as Viacom and NBC. This is an essential read for both fans and enemies of pro wrestling.

Professional wrestling has become a lightning rod for controversy. Critics decry the violence and the rampant disregard for political correctness, while those who savor the spectacle think those are its

best qualities. At the eye of the storm is Vince McMahon, a third-generation wrestling promoter with a genius suited for the cable age. Assael and Mooneyham provide a brief history of the sport from its days as an early television phenomenon to its downslide into a regionally marketed sideshow in the seventies and eighties. The advent of cable created a need for cheap, quickly produced programming, and McMahon was there with wrestling, which he built into a show-biz spectacle. Imitators followed, and the stakes became higher as cable networks battled for viewers, steroids became de rigueur, and wrestlers died in stunts and from drug overdoses. There's no end in sight: the Rock, a premier wrestler, was a speaker at the Republican convention that nominated George Bush. Somewhere between expose and celebration, this account will be of most interest to fans who view the sport as a guilty pleasure. Wes Lukowsky

I'd recommend the book for all wrestling fans thought acknowledging that it is not perfect. There are some inaccuracies with dates and other information. The authors flip back and forth between topics. This can lead to some incohesiveness and rather pointless info that may be just included for pure shock factor.

At the end of the book there is a final chapter that is very rushed. It includes the XFL, demise of ECW, and the sale of WCW to Vince McMahon. I felt that the sale should have had a lot more detail since it was one of the biggest news stories in wrestling history. It would have been nice if the authors would have gone into more detail covering it.

The book was a bit short (258 Pages, not the 288 Amazon.com lists) and can be read at a fast pace. The language in the book is not the greatest. I can understand when the authors quote someone but I was surprised to see some of the words they used themselves. It did not bother me but it might not be a great choice to read for someone who is of a younger age.

The major concern I have is whether or not some rarely known facts were thoroughly researched. My concern comes from the fact that there were many inaccuracies in the book that I knew for a fact were wrong. For instance, the Rick Steamboat-Randy Savage WMIII match that Assael claims went nearly an hour, was actually a fifteen minute affair. Assael also writes that Lex Luger slammed Yokozuna on "July 4, 1995" just prior to his shocking appearance on Nitro. Problem was, the bodyslam actually took place July 4, 1993 - big difference. If he can't get this stuff right - which is can be found very easily in any old PWI Almanac - how can we trust him to know what was going on in meetings with Vince McMahon and Ted Turner held behind closed doors?

Centering around the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) dynasty is Vince McMahon, the company owner, with him being an essential focal point in the book. Virtually no stone is left unturned in the revelations of how he bought the company from his father and used, sometimes ruthlessly, whatever business tactics he needed to buy out his competition and solidify his domination in the wrestling market.

Not without its myriad problems during its rise to greatness, the WWF would absorb many situations that pushed it close to failure on several occasions. Among some incidents would be rampant steroid use by wrestlers and revealing sex scandals in the 1980s. Rebounding from this and moving into the 1990s, Vince McMahon would eventually go head to head with media mogul Ted Turner regarding their many ugly battles to ruin each other and gain domination in the cable television market.

This is billed as, "The Real Story of Vince McMahon and the World Wrestling Federation", but this book is REALLY about the history of the television development of the WWF, WCW, and NWA. The book is primarily about how wrestling gained exposure through cable television and how the WWF and WCW eventually became giants through television and how WCW "overtook" the WWF in the ratings, and then going back to second fiddle to their eventual demise.

Before starting Shaun Assael's Sex, Lies, and Headlocks, I was fearful that it would be a totally one sided bashing of Vince McMahon and the wrestling empire that he has built. And while the book is critical of many of the means that Vince used to get where he is, it is also a very nice historical

perspective of the history of the business itself. I didn't expect it to go into as much detail as it did on the rise and fall of some of the other organizations, especially WCW and its Monday Night Wars with the WWF. Having been a long time fan, much of what I read I had known of before, but there was information that I hadn't heard as well. This is a great read if you are interested in the business and the behind the scenes dealings of it. If you are a die hard Vince McMahon fan, you may not like or believe all of what you read. But, I can't imagine anyone with an interest in wrestling not gaining some knowledge of the business that they didn't have before.

This is an essential read to any wrestling fan and gives a fantastic insight into the way the business has developed over the years from a variety of small franchises and roadshows into one of the worlds most extravagant, popular and hugely entertaining sports. Not only does this book let the reader in on the history of the WWF (Now WWE) but also takes you on a journey through the beginnings of WCW all the way through to the "Monday Night Wars" that occurred in the mid to late nineties. A very enjoyable read that I could not put down and had it finished within two evenings.

I had been waiting for this book to come out for a while. A massive history and wrestling buff. This book would be right up my proverbial. It doesn't disappoint. It is obviously well researched and has a very impartial feel. It is however a little dry in spots and has no real message, but as a resource and piece of factual work and can't fault it. If you are a serious follower of the fucked up world of pro wrestling this one's for you. Shame about the cak cover though...

I managed to finish this book very quickly, for two main reasons; It is relatively short, and I couldn't put it down. It is a fascinating book for wrestling fans in general, not just fans of the current product. While at times I found SL&H confusing due to the volume of information thrown at the reader, it didn't hinder my enjoyment. Generally, the book is written very well, however, it was misleading in some places, especially to a new fan, or someone who doesn't know everything about the sport. (The book leads the reader to believe that Mick Foley made his WWF debut in 1997, for example, which is not true.)

One of the main selling points of this book is that it contains the things that won't feature in Vince's apparent, forthcoming official autobiography. It's another one of those wrestling books that its hard to put down once you start. One downside is a few mistakes, but the majority of information is spot on and it even threw up a few things that this longtime fan never knew about. It covers all aspect of Vince's life and the american wrestling business in general since before his involvement. For new fans and old, this book will enlighten you all.

I got this book on Friday (25.01.2008) and had it finished within the day. It was a gripping book but I feel the only let down was it was very statistic driven. Some of the stats relating to viewing figures and buying figures don't relate to us in the UK but aside from that it gave a great insight into how the business is run. A great insight into the world Vince McMahon occupies and how he runs his business, how ruthless he can be and at the same time how petty he can be. A book I'd recommend any wrestling fan to read.

"Sex, Lies, and Headlocks" is a fantastic read for fans of wrestling. The book is well written and informative. It quickly covers the history of the WWF (now WWE) from its early days through to 2001. It also briefly covers WCW at parts. The book is a quick read and very well written. However, non-wrestling fans may become confused with the amount of information that is thrown at the reader in the book. Although the book is fairly small it is packed with interesting facts and stories. Also, the mistakes that are littered through the book are also an annoyance. They may be smaller facts but are annoying all the same. Therefore, I would highly recommend this book to wrestling fans and non-fans but would offer caution to those with little knowledge of the WWF.

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O'Shea pay-per-view Pillman Piper promoter ratings Ric Flair ring Roddy Piper Rogowski Saturday night sell star started steroids talk taping television Thesz thing Titan Tower told took turned Turner Tyson Vasiri Viacom viewers Vince McMahon Vince's Vinnie walked wanted watched week who'd wife Wolff World Wrestling Wrestlemania Wrestlemania III wrestlers Wrestling Federation WWF's Zahorian

This is a really good book. But it is not all about Vince McMahon. It is about wrestling in general, the whole WWF, WCW, Eric Bischoff, the Monday Night Wars. I would have loved to read more behind the scenes stuff w/ McMahon. I don't know why the author named the book what he did, he should have made the title more general. I mean they do talk about Vince, his steroid trial, and the way he took over most of the wrestling world. But there are chapters full of info not involving Vince at all. But it is still very entertaining. I liked hearing why Ted Turner bought WCW, Dusty Rhodes almost destroying it with too many "Dusty finishes", how Vince put on Pay Per Views and even a free Royal Rumble on at the same time WCW shows were run, trying to destroy them (I didn't know that!!), the theory behind Goldust and how he started the new direction of the WWF, Brian Pillmans Loose Cannon personality actually being a gimmick Bischoff created, his death and how McMahon treated it, among other stuff.

The main problem I had was the author talked about certain wrestlers by their real name, not stage name, and it made me a little confused, I had to keep going back to see who they were talking about (I ended up reading about this guy I didn't know who it was, then realized it was Ole Anderson). And the Steroid trial, although informative, was a little too informative, too many names of attorneys and watchdogs mentioned. Other than those two tiny things, plus the title being misleading, I really found this book to be very good. Any wrestling fan should pick it up.

It is tricky to write a review about this book. As one reviewer pointed out already, this book is not specifically about Vince McMahon, 'really'. In fact, a big portion of the book gives you a pretty decent run through of how pro wrestling turned from a local thing to an international thing - sort of a 'pre-WWF history course' type of deal.

Some will claim that this book is inaccurate and mixed up but the only time that was really a problem for this reader isn't until around the last third of this book when the book inexplicably goes from May of 1998 to November of 1997. After the initial confusion though you do realize what is going on. This book does have tangents but no more tangents than *Wrestlecrap*, which is almost universally praised.

Other reviewers have mentioned the many factual errors in *Sex, Lies and Headlocks*, so those aren't worth rehashing. However, these apparently novice writers can't decide on a point of view - in one section they're cheering the WWE's or WCW's ratings dominance, the next they're presenting the actions of L. Brent Bozell as if his assertions had some basis in reality. And why is WCW even mentioned outside its role as a competitor? The book is subtitled "The real story of VINCE MCMAHON AND WORLD WRESTLING ENTERTAINMENT." Full chapters are devoted to Eric Bischoff and WCW, presumably to lengthen an already-brief book with plenty of fact-checking problems.

As Owen Hart arrived at the Kemper Arena in Kansas City, he felt queasy about what his paycheck required of him. Most of the wrestlers, or the Boys, employed by the World Wrestling Federation were willing to do anything that Vince McMahon, its dimple-chinned owner, asked of them. But Owen had recently begged off of performing a seduction scene with a former Miss Texas named Debra Marshall. The WWF had just come through the May sweeps having notched the four highest-rated shows in all of cable television. And Hart knew that the children in his son's private school in Calgary-like those in schools across America-watched its show on Monday nights. He didn't want to confuse his son, who was just seven, or his three-year-old daughter, by flirting with another woman before 6 million viewers.

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