

THE SUNSET STRIP

West Hollywood is a city in Los Angeles, California. Incorporated in 1984, it is home to the Sunset Strip. The Sunset Strip is the name given to the mile-and-a-half stretch of Sunset Boulevard that passes through West Hollywood. It extends from West Hollywood's eastern border with Hollywood at Havenhurst Drive, to its western border with Beverly Hills at Sierra Drive. The Strip is probably the best-known portion of Sunset, embracing boutiques, restaurants, rock clubs, and nightclubs that are on the cutting edge of the entertainment industry.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Sunset Strip became a haven for a number of well known music groups. Bands such as **Led Zeppelin**, **The Doors**, **The Byrds**, **Frank Zappa**, and many others played at clubs like the Whisky a Go Go, the Roxy, Pandora's Box and the London Fog. The Strip became a major focus for punk rock and new wave during the 1970s, but with the arrival of **Van Halen**, **Quiet Riot**, **Dokken**, **Mötley Crüe** among others, it soon became the center of the glam metal scene throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, hosting some of the world's most renowned bands and groundbreaking albums that would influence sounds and be imitated for years to follow.

1970s - VAN HALEN & QUIET RIOT

Van Halen, originally named **Mammoth**, formed in Pasadena, California in 1972 consisted of Eddie Van Halen on guitar, keyboards, and vocals, Alex Van Halen on drums and percussion, Michael Anthony on bass and vocals, and David Lee Roth on lead vocals. **Van Halen** became a staple of the Los Angeles music scene during the mid-1970s playing world famous Sunset Strip venues Whisky a Go Go and Gazzarri's. In 1976, after seeing the **Van Halen** play, Gene Simmons produced their demo tape, but later opted out of further involvement after he took the demo to **Kiss** management and was told that "they had no chance of making it" and that they wouldn't sign them.

In mid-1977, Mo Ostin and Ted Templeman of Warner Bros. Records saw **Van Halen** perform at the Starwood in Hollywood. Although the audience was small, the two were so impressed with **Van Halen** that within a week they offered the band a recording contract. The band recorded their debut album at Sunset Sound Recorders studio in fall of 1977 and eventually reached No. 19 on the Billboard Music Charts, one of rock's most commercially successful debuts.

During the 1980s, **Van Halen** also had more Billboard Hot 100 hits than any other hard rock or heavy metal band. According to the Recording Industry Association of America, **Van Halen** is the 19th best selling band of all time with sales of over 56 million albums in the USA and is one of five rock bands that have had two albums sell more than 10 million copies in the USA. **Van Halen** would release *Van Halen II* (1979), *Women and Children First* (1980), *Fair Warning* (1981), *Diver Down* (1982), *1984* (1984), *5150* (1986), *OU812* (1988), and *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* (1991).

Quiet Riot was founded in 1973 by guitarist Randy Rhoads and bassist Kelly Garni under the name Mach 1, later changed the name to Little Women before settling on **Quiet Riot** in May 1975. **Quiet Riot** often opened for **Van Halen** in several Los Angeles clubs, before either band had a record deal. In 1977, the band secured a deal with Sony Records and the original four members recorded their debut album in 1978 and the follow-up in 1979, but their albums would only be released in Japan. **Quiet Riot's** 1983 US debut, *Metal Health*, was the first glam metal album and the first heavy metal album to reach number one in the Billboard Music Charts. The group's follow-up, *Condition Critical* (1984), though successful, it was a relative critical and commercial disappointment, selling only 3 million units and reaching only No. 15 on the Billboard Music Charts.



EARLY 1980s - DOKKEN, MOTLEY CRUE, STRYPER & RATT

The early 1980s were loaded with groundbreaking debut albums from the Sunset Strip glam metal and heavy metal scene including the band **Dokken**. In early 1981, after **Dokken** recorded a bunch of demos with Michael Wagener and with the help of German heavy metal band **Accept's** manager, Gaby Hauke, a deal was secured with Carrere Records. Recorded between July and September of 1981 at Studio Stommeln with Wagener and Dieter Dierks, *Breaking the Chains* was initially released under the name Don Dokken before it was changed to simply **Dokken** on subsequent pressings. **Dokken's** follow-up album *Tooth and Nail*, released on Elektra in 1984, sold more than one million copies in the United States alone; peaking at No. 49 on the Billboard Music Charts, while selling another estimated one million copies worldwide.

Mötley Crüe, founded by bassist Nikki Sixx and drummer Tommy Lee, who were later joined by guitarist Mick Mars and vocalist Vince Neil, the group self-produced and released their debut album *Too Fast for Love* on Leathur Records in November 1981, selling 20,000 copies. The band would eventually sign with Elektra Records in late spring 1982 and the debut album was then re-mixed by producer Roy Thomas Baker and re-released in August 1982. **Mötley Crüe** would release several best-selling albums during the 1980's, including *Shout at the Devil* (1983), *Theatre of Pain* (1985), and *Girls, Girls, Girls* (1987). **Mötley Crüe** reached its peak popularity with the release of their fifth album; the Bob Rock produced *Dr. Feelgood* (1989). On October 14th of that year, it became a No. 1 album and stayed on the Billboard Music Charts for 109 weeks after its release. **Mötley Crüe** would eventually become one of the best-selling bands of all time, having sold more than 100 million records worldwide.

In complete contrast to **Mötley Crüe**, **Stryper**, originally named **Roxx Regime** and composed of brothers Michael Sweet on lead vocals and lead guitar and Robert Sweet on drums became the become the first overtly Christian glam metal band to gain acceptance in the mainstream. **Stryper** signed with major label Enigma Records and released their debut album *The Yellow and Black Attack* (1983). **Stryper's** first full-length album, *Soldiers Under Command* (1985), was the band's first gold record. **Stryper** achieved platinum sales status selling over one million copies with the release of *To Hell with the Devil* (1986) and went on to release two more gold albums before breaking up in 1992.

Ratt signed with the independent Los Angeles recording label Time Coast Records in 1983. Later that same year, Ratt released their self-titled independent EP. Soon after, the band signed with Atlantic Records and immediately started writing and recording what would be its breakthrough album *Out of the Cellar* released in March 1984, reaching Platinum status several times over. *Out of the Cellar* became a commercial success, going platinum many times over in the United States. **Ratt** would release four more albums by 1990: *Invasion Of Your Privacy* (1985), *Dancing Undercover* (1986), *Reach for the Sky* (1988), and *Detonator* (1990), all of which reach Platinum status.



MID-1980s - GUNS N' ROSES

By the mid-1980s, glam metal had begun to be a major mainstream success. Los Angeles continued to foster the most important scene around the Sunset Strip, but arguably, the greatest success was **Guns N' Roses**. Originally formed from a fusion of bands **L.A. Guns** and **Hollywood Rose**, **Guns N' Roses** played with a grittier and rawer sound than many of its predecessors. **Guns N' Roses** formed in Los Angeles in 1985. The classic lineup as signed to Geffen Records in 1986 consisted of vocalist Axl Rose, lead guitarist Slash, rhythm guitarist Izzy Stradlin, bassist Duff McKagan, and drummer Steven Adler.

A year after its release, **Guns N' Roses'** debut album *Appetite for Destruction* in 1987 reached No. 1 on the Billboard Music Charts. The album has sold in excess of 28 million copies worldwide, including 18 million units sold in the United States, making it the best-selling debut album of all time. The success of their debut album was followed by the eight-song album *G N' R Lies* (1988), which reached also No. 2 on the Billboard Music Charts. The twin albums *Use Your Illusion I* and *Use Your Illusion II* (1991) debuted at No. 2 and No. 1 on the Billboard Music Charts and have sold a combined 35 million copies worldwide, including 14 million units sold in the United States alone.



LATE 1980s - THE SCENE EXPLODES

By 1987, West Hollywood's Sunset Strip scene had exploded! Hard rock and glam metal was now dominating the top of the Billboard Music Charts, selling millions of copies multiple times over, selling out world-wide tours, as well as producing chart-topping singles while opening the door to MTV and commercial success for other bands at the end of the decade. Hard rock and glam metal bands were in heavy rotation on the channel, often at the top of MTV's daily dial countdown, and many appeared on the channel's shows such as *Headbanger's Ball*, which became one of the most popular programs with over 1.3 million views a week.

Los Angeles, California had it all ...the venues ...Gazzarri's, Rainbow Bar and Grill, The Roxy Theatre, Troubadour, Whisky a Go Go, Coconut Teaszer and more; the publications ...L.A. Weekly, Rock City News, Bam and Screamer; one of the best radio stations in the country ...KNAC Pure Rock 105.5. Throughout the decade and into the early 1990s, the Sunset Strip would be on full display with countless major label signings such as the **Armored Saint**, **Badlands**, **Bad Moon Rising**, **Bang Tango**, **Bangalore Choir**, **Bulletboys**, **Barren Cross**, **Cold Sweat**, **Electric Angels**, **Faster Pussycat**, **Great White**, **Guardian**, **Holy Soldier**, **House of Lords**, **Hurricane**, **Jailhouse**, **Johnny Crash**, **Junkyard**, **Keel**, **Kik Tracee**, **King Kobra**, **L.A. Guns**, **Lion**, **Lita Ford**, **Little Caesar**, **Lizzy Borden**, **London**, **Love/Hate**, **Mr. Big**, **Nitro**, **Poison**, **Pretty Boy Floyd**, **Racer X**, **Rough Cutt**, **Salty Dog**, **Shark Island**, **Southgang**, **The Four Horsemen**, **The Scream**, **Tuff**, **W.A.S.P.**, **Warrant**, **Wildside**, **XYZ**, among others. Needless should we say ...hundreds of very talented unsigned bands, many of which are featured on **Volume 1** and the upcoming **Volume 2**.