

# SKID ROW

Erik Grönwall – vocals  
Snake Sabo – guitars  
Scotti Hill – guitars  
Rachel Bolan – bass  
Rob Hammersmith – drums

Remember that first time you heard Skid Row?

“Youth Gone Wild” was on MTV. “18 and Life” was a summertime hit single and the band was on the covers of *Hit Parader*, *Circus*, and *Metal Edge* magazines. That exhilarating sound of being young was everywhere. We saw and heard ourselves in the band and rallied around their oversized choruses of camaraderie and rebellion.

Rob Hammersmith saw himself in that gang mentality. “I was looking for that,” he remembers. “Everybody goes through that phase of me against the world, where you just have to stand up and assert yourself. Every kid goes through that, and Skid Row made you realize that you're not alone.”

Snake Sabo realized *he* wasn't alone after striking up a songwriting partnership with Rachel Bolan. “I saw all this talent he had — and has — and he brought something out of me. It made me go, man, this is the start of *something*. I'm like, yeah, this is where we're supposed to be at this moment in our lives. It was the birth of what would be Skid Row.”

That something — and that name — represented the unrelenting impulse of rambunctious kids, channeling their love of punk and metal into something understood by a worldwide audience of other kids just like them.

“Right when we came up with the name — Skid Row — *that's* when I realized we were going to build something really special that really drew on our influences,” Rachel remembers.

Their attitude and swagger was palpable in those songs. It was obvious. A demo of songs Rachel and Snake wrote together was the first time Scotti Hill heard Skid Row, and he wanted in. “It had three songs on it — including 'Clock Strikes Midnight' — and I loved all three of those songs. Right from the beginning, I loved where the music was going. I was like, I *gotta* be in this fucking band!”

That fucking band built something powerful and so timeless that years later, halfway around the world, it roused a young Swedish singer. “You’re young, a bit crazy — fist in the air and fuck yeah — that kind of feeling,” recalls Erik Grönwall. “Skid Row *are* the youth gone wild, and I wanted the same thing. I wanted that lifestyle.”

It’s cliché to say that a band has all their lives to write a first album. The truth is that they spend the rest of their lives trying to understand how they did it. *The Gang’s All Here* is the octane of an attitude that’s been festering since the band formed in 1986. Producer Nick Raskulinecz lit a creative wildfire by challenging them to deconstruct good ideas and rebuild them into something even better. Something timeless. He became the arbiter of their legacy, daring them to revert to instinct and be the same rambunctious kids who made their first two albums.

“On ‘World On Fire,’ I had written this very cool riff. Nick said, play the chord up *here*, an octave up from the original notes. It created a difficult move, and I didn’t know how to physically do that, but he challenged me. The one time I got it right, he goes, now *that’s* Skid Row. That was a heavy moment for me, this guy having to bring something that is Skid Row out of me, yet I’m a founding member of the band!”

“We were kids,” Rachel says about writing songs that debuted *Slave To The Grind* at #1 on *Billboard* and made the self-titled album a #6 multi-platinum hit. “We wrote from a vastly different perspective. Nick got us back to that train of thought: *what approach did we take on those first two records? What were we doing?*”

“I wound up feeling the same as when we wrote ‘18 and Life’ and ‘Youth Gone Wild,’ he says. “I felt like, whoa! We’re doing something really cool here!”

Making the new album *did* feel just like the beginning, when the gang meticulously crafted songs together in a garage in New Jersey. “It’s so much fun doing it like that, in a room banging it out,” Scotti says. “This felt like we were back in that garage again, like the old days. The only difference is now we’ve got air conditioning and we’re not breathing kerosene heater exhaust.”

Rob knows the feeling. “The way we spent eight to ten hours a day, just trying ideas and playing things, that took us back to the feeling of being a kid in the garage with your friends,” he says. “This album truly is a group effort, and I really enjoyed how much of a close knit group of guys this whole experience has been.”

That creative closeness led to the spontaneity of actually writing new songs during rehearsal. Someone demonstrating new riffs quickly turned into “World On Fire” and “Not Dead Yet” being written on the spot. “We’ve *never* done that,” Rachel says. “The other guys giving their input from square one, that *really* makes you work off instinct.”

Still, Scotti says Rachel and Snake writing together is most characteristic of Skid Row. “The best stuff is what they do together, just the two of them. Let them do what they do. That’s how it was in the beginning, and I think that’s the best result now, that combination of the guy who writes the giant guitar riffs with the guy who has the punk influence and poetic type of street poetry.”

“I wish *I* wrote these songs,” Erik laughs. “There are a lot of great songs here. It's a nice problem to have when you have too many potential singles. There's a lot of old school Skid Row in these songs on this album, like 'Tear It Down,' which *I* like, as a fan.”

That old school style makes *The Gang's All Here* immediately familiar. It's the sound of having a good time. “A lot of the songs are fun,” Rachel says. “They're songs you can sing and move to, which is what our first two records did. You can fight to these songs. Drink to them. Strip to them. *All* the bases are covered.”

Raskulinecz encouraged them to not be afraid to incorporate the signature accents that define their classic songs. He strove to make the band sound like the *band*, keeping the same philosophy producer Michael Wagener used to record them years ago.

“Nick is completely cognizant and respectful of the past,” Snake says. “But it's more about the essence and soul of why we started this thing in the first place. He said, everything from the beginning of 1985, when I met Rachel, to 2022 in Nashville, Tennessee, is *all* Skid Row, and he was there to remind us of it.”

Another déjà vu is Erik Grönwall and his snarling sound of a curled lip sneer that can turn on edge to soaring sweetness. “We wanted him to show his range,” Rachel says. “We wanted him to really draw on his influences — Skid Row just happens to be one of them — but mainly just let go and do what he does best.”

“That was my approach,” says Erik. “A good balance between the old school stuff and the way I sing. I just had so much fun recording this album because I really enjoy singing this kind of music.”

The first song he heard was “The Gang's All Here,” and it made him feel like a kid all over again. “It was old school Skid Row for me — the Skid Row I fell in love with. I thought, wow, they're really going back to the old school sound, and I think I can add some value here. I knew what I was going to do with it the first time I heard it.”

From songwriting to performances, the whole band agrees that the ten tracks on *The Gang's All Here* are some of their best songs — *ever*. There's also a noticeable connectedness in the songs that often gets lost in the technology of making music. “There's a thing Snake and I did together — October's Song — that we played a double lead at the end. It's real cool, and it was really fun to do. He stood on the left side of the room, I stood on the right, and we played together. That's how it needs to be done, and not a lot of people are doing that these days.”

There will always be uncompromising expectations about how Skid Row needs to be done. Erik expects rigorous comparison to other singers throughout the history of the band, but people caring so much is a good thing, he says. “People actually giving a fuck speaks to the greatness of the band. If they care so much, that means the band is relevant.”

“A lot of people have taken this ride with us,” Snake says. “But even though we've all grown older — and somewhat wiser — the essence of who we all are still exists.”

You won't be disappointed. *The Gang's All Here* is a revival of everything you ever loved about Skid Row. Snake calls it a rebirth. "There's a newfound energy and passion — and excitement — because we were challenged. When we're challenged, we rise to that challenge. We still have a lot left inside that we need to say. Making this album has shown me that we still have a lot left in the tank."

The gang's all here — you, the band, and the attitude of being forever wild and young at heart. *The Gang's All Here* will rekindle everything you felt that first time hearing this band. It's like the first time you heard Skid Row, all over again.

Better work up the money, because someone *is* getting busted.

— *Roger Lotring*