



# Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling

*Bret Hart*

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## **Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling** Bret Hart

In his own words, Bret Hart's honest, perceptive, startling account of his life in and out of the pro wrestling ring.

The sixth-born son of the pro wrestling dynasty founded by Stu Hart and his elegant wife, Helen, Bret Hart is a Canadian icon. As a teenager, he could have been an amateur wrestling Olympic contender, but instead he turned to the family business, climbing into the ring for his dad's western circuit, Stampede Wrestling. From his early twenties until he retired at 43, Hart kept an audio diary, recording stories of the wrestling life, the relentless travel, the practical jokes, the sex and drugs, and the real rivalries (as opposed to the staged ones). The result is an intimate, no-holds-barred account that will keep readers, not just wrestling fans, riveted.

Hart achieved superstardom in pink tights, and won multiple wrestling belts in multiple territories, for both the WWF (now the WWE) and WCW. But he also paid the price in betrayals (most famously by Vince McMahon, a man he had served loyally); in tragic deaths, including the loss of his brother Owen, who died when a stunt went terribly wrong; and in his own massive stroke, most likely resulting from a concussion he received in the ring, and from which, with the spirit of a true champion, he has battled back.

Widely considered by his peers as one of the business's best technicians and workers, Hart describes pro wrestling as part dancing, part acting, and part dangerous physical pursuit. He is proud that in all his years in the ring he never seriously hurt a single wrestler, yet did his utmost to deliver to his fans an experience as credible as it was exciting. He also records the incredible toll the business takes on its workhorses: he estimates that twenty or more of the wrestlers he was regularly matched with have died young, weakened by their own coping mechanisms, namely drugs, alcohol, and steroids. That toll included his own brother-in-law, Davey Boy Smith. No one has ever written about wrestling like Bret Hart. No one has ever lived a life like Bret Hart's.

*For as long as I can remember, my world was filled with liars and bullshitters, losers and pretenders, but I also saw the good side of pro wrestling. To me there is something bordering on beautiful about a brotherhood of big tough men who pretended to hurt one another for a living instead of actually doing it. Any idiot can hurt someone.*

—from *Hitman*

## **Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling Details**

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## From Reader Review Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling for online ebook

Stuart says

**"A show of excellence of execution in how to write a autobiography"**

Bret Hart, one of twelve brother and sisters born to Stu and Helen becomes one of the greatest professional wrestlers of all time. This is his story of what happened from his childhood to a life in the ring.

As a kid I watched this guy rise from a jobber (slang for someone who always loses) to a world champion. I loved his intensity and no shit attitude. What I never knew was what made him the wrestler he was. It's an extremely honest if somewhat diary style autobiography, in which he talks about his home life to other wrestlers such as Jim "The Anvil" Neitheart, The Dynamite Kid and Davey Boy Smith. Bret is very open about the drug culture within wrestling and certainly is candid about the sex and violence that accompanied them while touring, especially during their Stampede days during the 80s.

There are parts of the book which will no doubt shock and appall the reader, Bret and many other wrestlers like him, lived in a world of temptation - it's going to shatter a few childhood illusions, if you buy into what Bret writes.

The first half of the book focuses on his childhood, and his extending family. I particularly enjoyed reading the parts that involved his early days as a wrestlers for Stampede Wrestling and some of the tours that he went through, look for his days with a Puerto Rico organisation, it's rather amusing. Another worthwhile mention is the camaraderie he shared with wrestlers, driving around in a banged up old van with ten other wrestlers for hundreds of miles. There's some funny antics and ribbing during these journeys.

Some of the real beauty of this book involves the shared camaraderie as I've mentioned. There are also examples of behind-the-scenes glimpses into other wrestlers lives, from Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, The Undertaker and other less known figures. Bret doesn't pull any punches when it comes to who was a good worker, who sucked and who was good and bad for the business. I wasn't surprised to read The Ultimate Warrior was a terrible worker and had no interest in mixing with the other wrestlers. There are also some candid opinions about Triple H, Shawn Michaels, Scott Hall and Kevin Nash - this being the so-called "Clique" who apparently were running the WWF show behind the scenes.

According to Bret, Vince McMahon believed Bret was too small to make it in the big time. This was during the time of big muscles and steroid crazy elephant men in the 80s. In time he would prove Vince wrong - perhaps this lead to the infamous "Montreal screwjob", that lead to Bret, literally, being cheated out of his world championship belt by Vince McMahon and Shawn Michaels.

Bret talks about the death of his brother, not just how it affected him personally, but also how it tore his family apart. It's a rather sad tale of greed overruling Bret and his mother and fathers chance to grieve. He certainly shoots from the heart.

Having said all of this, we're only presented with one side of the story, which has many many other angles to it. This is typical with a autobiography and some of the claims could be suggested to be mere speculation - we're never know, so feel free to draw your own conclusions. For me, I enjoyed reading about the parts that were directly about the wrestling and how Bret evolved from being a kid to a world class athlete.

## Sean Wilson says

The sport of professional wrestling, or *business*, has always been a mystery. Even in this day and age where it is an *open secret* and popular form of entertainment for television, pro wrestling is *still* a mystery that baffles many people. While the UFC and the sport of mixed martial arts now rivals pro wrestling and delivers legitimate and unscripted bouts, the WWE and pro wrestling in the USA still aim to deliver scripted but nonetheless physical matches designed purely to entertain, rather than be strictly competition.

Lou Thesz states that it was in the mid-1920's when pro wrestling became sports entertainment, rather than pure sport. Other historians and wrestlers state it being a little later and others say it was even earlier, during the days of Frank Gotch and Georg Hackenschmidt, but this seems like pure speculation as championship matches back in those days lasted up to six hours. Whenever it was, professional wrestling used to be a combat sport, where highly conditioned athletes fought in real competition and the wrestlers themselves were legitimate wrestlers. However, decades later pro wrestling became worked, and this attracted a higher amount of showmen and superstars rather than legit shooters and pure wrestlers. Gimmicks, stories and rivalries became commonplace in order to heighten the entertainment value too. Kayfabe was a must in order to keep up the illusion that wrestling was real until the 80's when Vince McMahon publicly declared that wrestling was '*fake*' and the athletes were entertaining rather than competing.

Bret Hart rarely sugarcoats wrestling. While defending it as a tough activity, he makes sure the reader knows just how each match works. The great thing is: Bret Hart was for real. A former champion amateur wrestler and a highly trained submission artist, Bret brought a legit atmosphere to each of his matches all without ever trying to hurt his opponents. Wrestling during the 80's and 90's looked tough as hell, and Bret Hart had a grueling and mentally destructive career. Steroids, alcohol, painkillers and other drugs were commonplace and Bret seemed to be floating through this cartoon world of entertainers, huge events and constant traveling. The great irony of the title is that, while seen as a popular form of entertainment, where larger than life wrestlers jump around a wrestling ring with outlandish moves, costumes and gimmicks, deep in the cave lurked career ending injuries, drug abuse, backstage politics and many -way too many- early deaths.

Bret Hart is a fantastic writer. His analytical prose flows well through a near 600 page book and his memoir is novelistic in its execution. It's an honest, frequently startling and deeply interesting memoir about a destructive yet insanely addictive sport that will always remain a mystery to the average Joe.

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## you know that you want my books ;) says

Very good book. Bret is now with the WWE and McMahon again. If things were so bad why does he keep going back? He seems like the spouse that calls the cops to report their spouse for abuse and then refuses to divorce the spouse. He seems to like the drama. I don't believe that he was always this way. As time and injuries have caught up with him, his options have sort of run out.

Bret has money. Bret has the ability to speak and write well. He was a hero to many because he always stayed true to himself. I hope that he will continue to act and get away from the world of wrestling.

It is not that wrestling is bad, or that Bret Hart is bad. Wrestling is a drug to him. It takes him back to a time in his life when things made sense. When he steps into the auditorium and he is cheered or booed it reminds him of his late brother Owen, his father Stu cheering him on, and the Members of the Hart Foundation (Most

of whom had drug/steroid related deaths) at his side. There is no looking back. If you live in the past, the present becomes sour and turns into poison in your heart.

Great Book.

Not a tragedy.

Bret planned ahead and has money.

Definitely not a fairytale.

A tale of hope and redemption....but not victory.

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### **Jake Cole says**

Bret Hart is my favorite wrestler, but I would never tag him as a particularly gifted speaker. Imagine my surprise, then, that his memoir (which, despite the blurred reality surrounding wrestling, everyone insists he wrote entirely himself) is so fluid, engaging and impassioned. Hart offers copious anecdotes of growing up in a hot-headed clan of 12 siblings all placed in the crucible of local notoriety and domestic hyperreality as the son of a legendary wrestling promoter and trainer; the chapters on the wrestler's pre-WWF life and career could almost be their own stand-alone volume of sometimes scary, often hilarious tales of vying for attention from exhausted parents and regional promotions.

But it is when Hart moves on to his entrance into the mainstream that the book becomes truly captivating, laying out the endless backstage politics, arduous ladder-climbing and endless push for innovation that goes into getting even the smallest break. You can end this book with the impression that simply getting yourself booked properly takes more of a toll than the actual wrestling. It's thrilling to see Hart, in his own recollection, finally edge toward a long-delayed breakthrough and become, for a time, the top draw in American wrestling, only for it all to fall into despair as more and more people in Hart's life succumb to drugs, injury, jealousy and dejection. I wonder how this book might have been written if he'd waited until this decade, after his complete reconciliation with WWE/McMahon, the professional debuts of the next generation of Harts, and the general softening of time. As it is, though, misery is fresh in Hart's mind, and even the mild glimmer of hope budding at the end cannot dilute the sheer horror of a family's collapse by the end of the book. There's plenty of bullshit here (Bret always seems to be the only voice of reason in an industry rapidly losing its way yet becoming more profitable than ever, and everyone always seems to need his help and instruction to wrestle to their fullest) but this is nonetheless a great, often raw autobiography that both underscores the greatness of truly inspired, artful wrestling and the horror of an industry built around faked results and real pain.

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### **Ben Fowlkes says**

Once again, a pro wrestling autobiography delivers the Schadenfreude like no other work can. Bret Hart is a narrator who is always willing to give himself the benefit of the doubt, while still assuming the worst about other people's intentions.

For example, other wrestlers took steroids because they wanted a quick path to the top. Hart did it because he

hurt his knee and needed to keep working to feed his family. And his many, many, many extra-marital indiscretions -- covered in enthusiastic detail, of course -- yeah, he takes some responsibility for those, but he's not afraid to put a lot of it on his wife. I mean, sure Hart nailed tons of chicks on the road. But did his wife have to be such a bitch about it, even if she was raising their children all on her own while he spent a few hundred days a year on the road, wrestling and boozing and nailing chicks?

Yeah, that's the kind of ride you're in for. And it lasts over 600 pages, in small print, because Bret just has to tell you all about every single match he ever worked. Strap in.

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### **Steven Taylor says**

Simply speaking, this is the best wrestling autobiography ever written. At almost 600 pages, it is incredibly detailed thanks to Bret Hart keeping diaries and voice-recorded journals throughout his career. The book also encompasses other aspects of his life besides wrestling. Such as: the tragic history of his family, drugs, adultery, marriage, having children, etc. After reading the book, one gets the feeling that Hart is more honest than most of his colleagues. With other books written by Hulk Hogan or Shawn Michaels, you get the feeling they are stretching the truth a bit. Make no mistake... Hart's ego is very present in this book. He likes himself a lot. However, unlike the Shawn Michaels or Hulk Hogan autobiographies, he has the testicular fortitude to admit the things he did wrong professionally and personally.

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### **Andy Stanford says**

It may have taken me 8 years to get to this book and a trip to Canada to get a chance to get a proper start but it's all worth it.

Fantastic read. Bret truly is the best there is, the best that was and the best there ever will be.

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### **Aaron Orgill says**

Once upon a time, from 6th through about 9th grade (approximately 1990-1994), I was a pro wrestling fan. Not just a fan, but a fanatic. In fact, you could say my obsession became a significant tool I used to survive junior high purgatory. Despite (and possibly because of) shameless gimmicks and ridiculous storylines, I was hooked. Call it moronic, call it fake, or stupid, or juvenile; you could never say it was boring. And one of the greatest ever to grace a leotard was Bret "Hitman" Hart. He brought actual skill to the ring to a sport where theatrics reign supreme, during an era where steroids were starting to get out of control (more on that later). I somehow got nostalgic about this era of my life a few years ago, and started searching for books on the subject. I got Davis County Library System to order Hart's autobiography, brilliantly titled Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling. And in May, I read all 600 pages of it.

Anyone familiar with pro wrestling knows that it's as real as it is fake. There's only so much you can do to cushion yourself from the impact of piledrivers and suplexes (and turnbuckles and chairs). But the wear wrestlers' bodies take in the ring is just a start. In fact, if you Google the phrase "dead wrestlers," your computer will start to smoke like Snoop Dogg at Mardi Gras. There have been some high-profile casualties in the business, but many others, even famous ones, that have not generated much publicity. The media doesn't care because, at the end of the day, the general public doesn't care that much about a fake sport with

scripted endings, even when there's a list of wrestlers who have died before the age of 50 - and the list is more than 70 names long. But if it were any other sport, those figures would make for a major scandal. Pro wrestling has grueling schedules, brutal physical punishment, and a tacit understanding that performance enhancers are okay. There is no off-season. There are no pension plans for retired wrestlers. The industry chews these guys up and spits them out, then their bodies give out and they die.

At any rate, Hart's insights into that industry are part of what made this a thinking book for me. But really, it only takes a paragraph or so to realize that even if you were an uppity reader, picking the book up out of sheer snobbery, Hart is a very intelligent man who cares deeply for the strange industry he was born into as well as his fans. I got the wistfulness I was looking for, especially the first 150 pages or so that focus on the early days working for his father's company, Stampede Wrestling, along with many others who would later become stars when wrestling had its heyday in the 1980s and 90s. And it went a long way for me that Hart doesn't attempt to make himself look perfect. He is completely forthcoming about his extramarital affairs on the road (which were many) and use of steroids (much more cautious than most of his contemporaries). Imperfections notwithstanding, I came away with an enormous amount of respect for the man behind the Hitman persona, and can't recommend this book highly enough.

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### **Markus says**

Bret Hart is 'Best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be', can be also said where this belongs with the other wrestling related books. Mick Foleys Have A Nice Day: A Tale of Blood and Sweatsocks wins only for the one count, being a funniest wrestling autobiography. Bret Hart give's a honest and fascinating look of behind the scenes of a crazy world WWF/WCW and other promotions, i especially liked the 80s steroid-boosted era related stories. Chapters leading to the Montreal Screwjob and the chapter were edge-on-your-seat reading, even if you know all about this controversial (real life) professional wrestling event, it still is a great read. Almost everything after that is sad, depressing... wcw, accident, stroke, deaths...it gets under your skin and in the end i got little teary eyed, which is something to say of a book about 'cartoon world of wrestling'. I hope Bret Hart writes bonus chapter for future edition, because this ends before he get's back to WWE. This books is really a 'The Excellence of Execution'.

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### **Jason Schmitt says**

His opinions and thought in his career and life are his own. Of course, any autobiography must be read with this in mind. Obviously, he puts himself in the best light always, so negativity I have read in other reviews falls on deaf ears. It is an entertaining read with some fun stories and interesting reflections on an extraordinary life.

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### **Joseph Copeli says**

[This review also appears on FingerFlow.com, a site for review and discussion of creative works.]

*Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling* describes in great detail the life of one of the greatest professional wrestlers of all time, as written by himself. Bret Hart paints a vivid picture of living at the legendary Hart house: what it was like to grow up poor in a huge family whose financial fortune was

slowly sinking due to an unprofitable wrestling promotion that daddy Stu Hart wouldn't close. Having tough old Stu as a father and many older brothers hardened Bret, but for some reason it didn't embitter him. As his brothers and sisters backstabbed him and each other many times, Bret remained considerate and helpful when he could.

As a child of the 80s, my favorite parts of the books were Bret's descriptions of the fledgling WWF and it's subsequent monopoly over the pro wrestling business. Although his version of events seem a little bit one-sided, Bret reports many instances of being the nice guy while other wrestlers manipulated, cajoled and strong-armed their way to fame and riches. I couldn't help but feel Bret was naïve until the very end in his dealings with Vince McMahon, owner of the WWF/WWE. In his writing, it comes through that he knew McMahon was sneaky but let Vince walk all over him anyway.

Despite his attempts at objectivity, it's pretty clear from his first mention of him that Bret wasn't too fond of Shawn Michaels. I'm no fan of Michaels myself, but I could understand how he could negatively interpret some actions that Bret took against him, both in the ring and out. Bret took great umbrage at the direction pro wrestling was going and the people that were blocking him from having a better career, but from my perspective, it seemed like an old horse being angry at the road for having cars on it. Wrestling was changing and at the time, Bret didn't see that he didn't fit very well into what wrestling was morphing into: a more risqué, even sleazy, harder and more dangerous form of entertainment.

I'm sure many wrestling fans would be interested in picking up this book for Bret's side of the infamous "Montreal Screwjob," the event at which McMahon promised to allow Bret to keep the World Championship, but then ended the match abruptly to make it seem as if Bret had succumbed to a submission hold by Shawn Michaels (Bret's own Sharpshooter hold, in fact). Although it was disappointing to read about how Bret was forced out of the WWF unceremoniously instead of graciously, it wasn't this part of the book that struck me emotionally. For me, it was the end of Bret's career at rival promotion WCW and the aftermath that were very difficult to get through.

Bret's career ended because of a kick from an inexperienced wrestler that caused a concussion. Bret ignored the concussion, letting it get worse until a doctor told him he would end up worse than Muhammad Ali if he didn't stop wrestling immediately. The last part of the book is devoted to a description of Bret's stroke and recovery. It's heart-wrenching read, as it usually is when reading about a strong hero weakened by injury or old age.

For a wrestler/professional athlete, Bret is a very capable writer. Some of his descriptions of his matches get repetitive after a while and he refers to too many matches as "the best match [he:] ever had." He does a good job describing most typical wrestling terms, though there were a few that were not explained that I had to look up online. For the most part, Bret's view of himself is very even-handed: he points out his own faults and shortcomings, but revels in his successes. All in all, Hitman is an interesting and engaging read for wrestling fans, and especially for fans of the wrestler many consider to be the Best There Is, the Best There Was and the Best There Ever Will Be.

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## **Patrick Adams says**

Excellent book about wrestling and about Bret himself. I was riveted through most of this, knowing a lot of the ground he would cover going into it. The Montreal Screwjob, WCW, Owen's Death, Davey Boy Smith's death, etc made for a number of amazing stories. Although a platform sometimes to blast people he was pissed at like Vince McMahon and Shawn Michaels, you can overlook that as his view at that point in time. He is a critic where criticism is needed. This was one of the best wrestling books I have read and probably will ever read.

## Chris Cole says

What I thought was a book about pro wrestling turned out to be a book about life, family and loss. I always respected Bret Hart, though to be honest, he was never my favorite wrestler.

He is now.

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## Jeremy says

Favorite quote (something to the effect of): "Wrestling is as real and as fake as you think it is."

First of all, from a writing standpoint, Bret Hart's memoir was mesmerizing. I couldn't put it down, and that's what, to me, makes a great read. By the end of the work I totally buy his allusions to Dante and Hemingway. I think he's probably much more well-read and well-rounded than anybody assumes he is. I would truly give this five stars with a bullet if I could. It's a fascinating, gripping account of a life spent in professional wrestling, much of which (the in-ring stuff, anyway) I remember vividly from my childhood.

I was a huge wrestling fan as a kid from the ages of 7-12 and cared more about it than baseball, football, or any other sport combined. It was about the only thing I'd put down a video game controller for. So it was great to read Hart's memoir and not only be drawn back to those days (and the days before and after) but to see it done with such credibility and straightforwardness. It's alternately dark, witty, deep, heartbreaking, and hilarious. Hart manages to come off a little egocentric, like all great performers tend to be, but tempers it with so much humanity and honesty that I really feel I'm getting not just a wrestling book, but a book that uses wrestling as a metaphor for life with all its quirks and frailties. Mainly he just comes off as a good man with failings. Also he sort of describes how he became an advocate for enhanced safety, medical attention, and unionization for those in the pro wrestling business. I applaud him for that given that I can think of a dozen wrestlers I watched as a kid that died before they hit their late forties.

Hart speaks with equal honesty about his brother's death and his extramarital affairs. But the best, most memorable anecdote is his time touring Jerusalem while on a wrestling tour at the height of his popularity. It's a fantastic inside look into the quirks of wrestling, the behind the scenes history, and the hidden artistry that made wrestling from BH's era so entertaining to watch. It stirred up my long abandoned childhood dreams of being a professional wrestler.

What would my gimmick be? Probably something about a mad scientist.

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## Alokmahajan says

Hmmm I don't know how to start with. This is my third post on a wrestling book. It started when I got my hands on Hulk Hogan, Mick Foley followed by Bret Hart.

Pink soldier HITMAN was positioned in my mind with Pink Lowers, black Jacket and amazing sunglasses which I always wanted. I still remember when I used to play trump cards my friend said that HITMAN is a hero and loves kids. At that time jargons of wrestling like baby face and heels were an alien concept to me.

To clear things baby face is a hero and Heel is a villain in analogy to a movie.

As events turned out one day I stumble upon this book. I tried to get it from many websites but I was not able to get it as most of the times it went out of stock as I was ordering a cheaper version. One day I thought lets go get it, I removed the price constrain from my mind and ordered a slightly expensive version. It took around a week to get delivered but once I got it in my hand, I was amazed. Paper Jacket is of Pink Colour which reminds me of Boomer Bubble Gum ;). It has around 600 pages and I thought wow, I hope it's amazing. When I started reading it , I was not disappointed. He takes you to a wonderful journey which is bit sweet, bit sour , had taste of blood, excellence, sex and not to forget wrestling!! . Bam Bam Yeahh!!.

Bret Hart shares your soul with you when he explains memoir of childhood, his father started Stamped Wrestling long in year 1940 in Canada, his growing up days , catch 22 question” Is wrestling fake”, his married life, Unmarried Life ;), love for his brother Owen Hart and again not to forget wrestling.

Ok wait.! Don't you think these are common in all books so what is so special here for which Foam Acclaimed “ There are surprising number of books written by professional wrestlers about their peculiar trade ....Hart has written Mother of them all “. I guess this an unbarred account of his experience where he bashes Vince MCMohan( Owner of wwe ) , kicks butt of Shaan Michale and HHH openly, explains killer calendar where wresters die in road accidents due to excessive travel and his love for his family, accident of Owen and the camaraderie between the fellow wrestlers. Also this books is funny as hell. While reading it I realized wrestlers with big physiques at the core are just like us , they have same set of fears , live for occasion of happiness just all of us do. There is a chapter where he takes you through his experience in India and you have to read it yourself. I felt happy and sad. I will not spoil the beans.

Montreal Screw Job makes you wonder about the corporate greed which I felt recently . This epic tale has memories where you are stunned and while flipping pages there are surreal occasions which made you ponder on various aspects.

For all the wrestling fans/air conditioners/ toasters whoever you are read it and you will enjoy every minute of it. ( I hope so J ).

I think her daughter is hot. See <https://twitter.com/#!/hartler> . Hitman Don;t give me a sharpshooter after this.

This blog is dedicated to

“AJ the wrestling Guru who can beat Brock Lesnar any time” [https://twitter.com/#!/The\\_wAY\\_Im](https://twitter.com/#!/The_wAY_Im)  
Parteek Jain our Val Venis, Chick Magnet, Tornado from Texas <https://twitter.com/#!/parteekjain>

I am the best there is, the best there was and the best there ever will be!”- Hitman.  
My Rating 12/10.

Source: <http://humangb.blogspot.in/2012/06/br...>

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## **Dan Schwent says**

Hitman: My Real Life in the Cartoon World of Wrestling is the autobiography of former wrestler Bret "Hitman" Hart.

For a great portion of my wrestling fandom, Bret Hart was my favorite wrestler. He wasn't very big or very flashy but his matches were always the most believable on the card. Surprisingly, it took me quite a few years to actually pick this up but I'm glad I did.

For a wrestling book, this is a pretty hefty tome at close to 600 pages. Heavy enough to bludgeon another wrestler to death when the referee's back is turned, in fact. It also covers over forty years of Bret Hart's life. It covers Bret's pre-wrestling career a little more than I'd ordinarily like but since Bret grew up in the wrestling business, it didn't feel out of place. It covers Bret's sometime brutal childhood as 1 of 15 kids, wearing hand me downs and being left to his own devices a lot of the time.

Once Bret gets into the wrestling business, things take off. Bret talks about working in tiny towns for no money, driving Andre the Giant around, learning his craft and meeting veterans who came to his father's territory, Stampede Wrestling. Bret wrestles in Puerto Rico, the south, and Japan, before finally making it to the big time, the WWF.

Since Bret spent most of his career in the WWF, that's where most of the events in the book occur. He talks about forming the Hart Foundation, having great matches with the British Bulldogs, and finally being allowed to shine on his own as a singles wrestler. He talks about who was easy to have matches with, who his friends were backstage, and who was hard to deal with. He's honest about his drug use and many affairs, and what it was like to work in the WWF during the big downturn in the business around the time Vince was indicted on steroid charges.

When Bret leaves for WCW, the book takes a dark turn, not surprising since his tenure in WCW sucked from the moment he walked through the door to the moment he got his career ending concussion. From there, the constant infighting of his siblings, his stroke, and the deaths of his parents made the last 20% difficult to read.

Bret's a very good writer, especially considering he's suffered a severe concussion and had a stroke in the last decade. The book had a lot of road stories and he didn't paint himself to be better than everyone else, though his ego was probably pretty healthy.

As far as wrestling biographies go, it'll be hard to top this one. 4.5 out of 5 stars.

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## **C Baker says**

Bret Hart's account of his career in professional wrestling is not only an outstanding autobiography of an icon in the sport, but also of the history of pro wrestling period.

Bret Hart grew up in a wrestling family. His father, Stu Hart, was a pioneer in the sport, promoting wrestling matches in Canada through the late 1940's through most of the rest of his life. Up to the 1990's wrestling was largely controlled by regional promoters who respected each other's territories and shared wrestling talent for main events. As Bret tells of his growing up and early years in the sport wrestling for his father, you learn it really was a complete carnival like atmosphere. From regular size true tough men and wrestling pioneers like Lou Thesz, to behemoths like Andre the Giant, to midgets and women wrestling, it was all quite a circus.

He tells of those early days in Canada and his friendships with Davey Boy Smith, Tom Billington known as the Dynamite Kid, and Jim the Anvil Neidhart, while traveling around in cars or vans full of wrestlers from one small town to another performing matches. As will be detailed throughout the book, drugs and steroids

destroyed the lives of Billington and Davey Boy Smith, and nearly did the same for Neidhart.

The regional system, by many accounts, worked out well for both wrestlers and promoters in an industry where many could make money. But then came Vince McMahon, Jr. and his drive to monopolize the sport and destroy the regional system built up over the years by the sport's icons. McMahon was basically successful in his effort.

Hart went on to star in McMahon's World Wrestling Federation (WWF), now called World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) and held its championship belt on multiple occasions.

What is utterly fascinating about the entire industry is the rampant personalities and politics that go on behind the scenes to determine how matches will be promoted and how they will end, which is critical to build up a clash and audience, and to build up a career. And it is that desire to stay strong and be a viable superstar that leads to be biggest challenge in determining how matches are going end. No star wants to be beaten and pinned unless it's to build up for a big clash. And that desire not to be placed on the losing end of matches causes the most conflict in the sport.

Hart is brutally honest about the rampant use of steroids and illicit drugs in the sport. Most attribute the early deaths of many wrestlers like the tragic Von Erich brothers, Chris Benoit, and Davey Boy Smith, to name only a few, to abuse of steroids and drugs. Further, while the matches might be decided ahead of time, the physical toll constantly wrestling takes on the body is also evident in the debilitating injuries or deterioration many wrestler's suffer late in their career or after they retire. It is clear from Hart's account of the wrestling business that promoter's like McMahon see their wrestler as disposable commodities and treat them as such. There's always another young buck to come along and replace today's stars. The life of a wrestler is both glamorous but physically and mentally debilitating.

Vince McMahon comes off looking like a total cretin in Hart's account of all the lies and false promises and dirty machinations behind the scenes. Late in Hart's career when he decided to leave the WWF for a rival promotion he was set to fight Shawn Michaels for Hart's championship belt. He and McMahon agreed that in a match with Shawn Michaels in Montreal that the fight would end in interference from outside the ring and huge brawl with no real outcome to the match and then Hart would lose later to Michaels for the championship belt before he left. Instead, a secret plot concocted by McMahon lead to chaos and the infamous Montreal Screwjob. Hart let Michaels put him in a submission hold during the match, which he was supposed to reverse, but McMahon came out and had the bell rung to end the match and declared Michaels the winner, even though Hart did not submit. Hart did not want to lose in front of his fans in Montreal and McMahon betrayed him. Leading up to all this was what can only be described as hatred and even jealousy between Shawn Michaels and Hart. Their animosity toward each other stirred the cauldron even more.

Bret Hart went on to Ted Turner's promotion the World Championship Wrestling but was not very successful there. Other accounts, including Hart's, talks about what a disjointed soap opera the promotion was with internal politics among legends of the sport like Ric Flair and Hulk Hogan calling most of the shots.

Along the way in Hart's journey through life we meet many personalities of the wrestling world and what it was like to be star wrestler traveling the world. Part of this memoir also includes memories of Bret Hart's younger brother, Owen Hart, who died in a tragic ring accident in May 1999.

In 2002, Hart suffered a stroke that kept him out of action and rehabilitating for quite some time. Sadly, Hart, at nearly 53, is even wrestling again. As he said in his book, it's hard to give up the sport.

Overall this is a surprisingly well-written and organized autobiography and history of the sport and highly recommended.

## Jen from Quebec :0) says

SO SO good and very well written- Bret Hart is actually a really well read person and writes this himself, without help from another author or ghostwriter. This book is awesome- especially if, like me, you're a hardcore Hitman fan and total WWE/wrestling mark (fan). I have been watching WWE since I was about 7 years old + watched my 1st match at the home of cousins in the '80's. (It was a Macho Man Randy Savage match). That was IT. Since then, I have spent 25 years screaming at the TV, spending \$\$ on merchandise, traveling to WWE events (including RAW 3X, one episode of SmackDown, too many 'house shows' to count and 2 Pay Per View events, including Survivor Series 2016 in Toronto, where the Hart family wrestling tradition continues, as Bret's niece- Jim 'the Anvil' Neidhart's daughter, current WWE Women's Champ, NATAYLA fought. She is awesome).

Even if you are not a WWE fan, this story is great, especially if you're Canadian and grew up knowing about the famous Hart family of Alberta. Stu Hart, Bret's dad, ran STAMPEDE WRESTLING, a Canadian televised wrestling show, for decades, and the entire Hart family has been in the business. There are 12 kids in the Hart family, and all the boys were 'in the biz' in some way, with Bret being most famous, followed by his brother Owen Hart, and brothers-in-law, Jim 'the Anvil' Neidhart and 'British Bulldog' Davey Boy Smith. This book tells the bitter crazy truth of the world of wrasslin'- who was 'stiff', who was great, who was a drug addict, who was REALLY in charge in the locker room. (Apart from Vince MacMahon, of course).

All the dirt is here, but the book is NOT 'gossipy'. The details of Owen's death while in WWE at a PPV in 1999, the 'Montreal Screwjob' where Vince f\*\*\*ed Bret out of the title and the arena almost rioted, the 'Monday Night Wars' between WWE and WCW, the life of superstars on the road, the beginnings of the careers of the Undertaker, Mick Foley, the Rock, Stone Cold Steve Austin and just HOW BIG an asshole Shawn Michaels really was at this time. (Shawn himself later admits that yes- he WAS a terrible human being in the 90s and hated by most other wrestlers, but hey- he was a drug addict, you know? Sigh).

Bret is a really good writer, although he DOES paint himself as completely selfless a little too much, perhaps. At least he is honest enough to admit to cheating on his wife on the road and other such things. These honest admissions leads readers to be able to believe the honesty behind the more unbelievable stories Bret tells.

I cannot recommend this book enough, especially is you're a WWE fan....but if you're not a fan, this is STILL an incredible biography of a crazy life and awesome athlete. --Jen from Quebec :0)

THE BEST THERE IS, THE BEST THERE WAS, THE BEST THERE EVER WILL BE! Bret Rules! I'm a fan for life, yo, and Bret's the best ever, IMO! (sorry...I kind 'marked out' there!)

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## Brandon says

Bret Hart was my childhood idol, so I might have enjoyed this book more than the average person. There were more than a few things that shocked me - mostly the actions of his family members - but ultimately, it's a great companion to the stellar 3 disc DVD collection released in 2005. It could have used just a little more background on his WCW days but when you spent 12 years working for one company and 2 and a half working for another, you're going to concentrate less on the latter.

## **Tiara says**

3.5 stars. To quote my good friend, Monica: "Brett Hart is Brett Hart's biggest fan."

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