I'm not a bot



For the flag, see diver down flag. 1982 studio album by Van HalenDiver DownStudio album by Van HalenReleasedApril 14, 1982 (1982-04-14)[1]Studio Amigo Studios (North Hollywood)[2] Sunset Sound (Hollywood)[2] Genre Hard rock heavy metal power pop Length31:04LabelWarner Bros.ProducerTed TemplemanVan Halen chronology Fair Warning(1981) Diver Down(1982) 1984(1984) Singles from Diver Down "(Oh) Pretty Woman"Released: January 18, 1982[3] "Dancing in the Street"Released: May 1982 "Secrets"Released: August 23, 1982[4] Diver Down is the fifth studio album by American rock band Van Halen, released on April 14, 1982,[2] by Warner Bros. Records. It spent 65 weeks on the album chart in the United States and had, by 1998, sold four million copies in the United States. Despite its commercial success, selling faster than its predecessor Fair Warning (1981), it was more lukewarmly received by contemporary music critics.[5] Released per the label's request that the group record an album to keep them in the public eye, Diver Down was recorded with producer Ted Templeman over the course of twelve days. As a result of its quick production, the album is heavy on cover versions as well as genre experiments and guitar interludes. Alongside full-length original songs, the material includes excursions into jazz, country blues, doo-wop, a cappella and neo-classical music, in addition to covers of mid-1960s songs – the biggest of these, reworkings of Roy Orbison's "(Oh) Pretty Woman" and Martha & the Vandellas' "Dancing in the Street", were hit singles. Five of the twelve songs on the album are covers, the most popular being the cover of "(Oh) Pretty Woman", a Roy Orbison song. Eddie Van Halen recalled how the album came about: When we came off the Fair Warning tour last year [1981], we were going to take a break and spend a lot of time writing this and that. Dave [Lee Roth] came up with the idea of, 'Hey, why don't we start off the new year with just putting out a single?' He wanted to do 'Dancing in the Streets.' He gave me the original Martha Reeves & the Vandellas tape, and I listened to it and said, 'I can't get a handle on anything out of this song.' I couldn't figure out a riff, and you know the way I like to play: I always like to do a riff, as opposed to just hitting barre chords and strumming. So I said, 'Look, if you want to do a cover tune, why don't we do 'Pretty Woman'? It took one day. We went to Sunset Sound in L.A., recorded it, and it came out right after the first of the year. It started climbing the charts, so all of a sudden Warner Bros. is going, 'You got a hit single on your hands. We gotta have that record.' We said, 'Wait a minute, we just did that to keep us out there, so that people know we're still alive.' But they just kept pressuring, so we jumped right back in without any rest or time to recuperate from the tour, and started recording. We spent 12 days making the album... it was a lot of fun.[6] Three of the original songs were around long before the album was made. "Hang 'Em High" can trace its roots back to 1976[7] as "Last Night", which had the same music but different lyrics.[citation needed] "The Full Bug" borrows heavily from a demo track called "The Bottom Line" (not the track of the same name released on Roth's 1988 album Skyscraper) that leaked in 2023. The instrumental "Cathedral" was also nothing new, it having been played in its final form throughout 1981 with earlier versions going back to 1980. Additionally, "Happy Trails" had been recorded for their 1977 demos.[citation needed] "Where Have All the Good Times Gone" is a cover of a song by The Kinks. During the band's bar-playing days, vocalist David Lee Roth bought a budget label Kinks double album, and Van Halen learned all of the songs on one side to use as staples of their set.[8] Eddie Van Halen created the effects in the guitar solo by running the edge of his pick up and down the strings and using an Echoplex.[6] "Cathedral" was so named because the band members thought it sounded like a Catholic church organ.[6] The track is a well-known example of the 'cascade effect' on guitar, described by Jon Chappell of EQ Magazine as when the guitarist "plays eighth notes and the delay spits back notes of equal-amplitude on the second and fourth sixteenth notes, creating a steady stream of sixteenth notes. This doubles the rate at which notes come from the guitar".[9] The piece was a stylistic departure for Van Halen,[10] with a quite prowess that has been compared to Focus.[11] The lyrics to "Secrets" were inspired by greeting cards which Roth bought in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on the preceding tour.[8] Eddie Van Halen used a Gibson doubleneck 12-string for the song, played with a flatpick. The solo was done in one take.[6] The track "Intruder", which precedes "(Oh) Pretty Woman", was written by Roth specifically to cover the length of the promotional video for the "(Oh) Pretty Woman" single. Roth recalled that the video "was about three minutes too long. So, I said, we won't cut any of it; we'll write soundtrack music for the beginning. So we went into the studio and I played the synthesizer and I wrote it. It took about an hour to put that together."[8] It is characterized by its shrieking, distorting guitars, displaying heavy dissonance,[12][10] and is comparable to Neu!'s "Negativland" (1972).[13] The "(Oh) Pretty Woman" music video was one of the first banned by MTV, although VH1 Classic (now MTV Classic) has continuously aired it. Roth explained the ban as the result of complaints that it made fun of "an almost theological figure", the Samurai warrior (played by bassist Michael Anthony), and also because two little people appeared to molest a woman (actually a Los Angeles area transgender performer).[8] The video, directed by Roth and Pete Angelus, was, he[who?] said: "rather like a surrealistic art project ... where they paint the picture and come back three days later and try to figure out what they meant." "Little Guitars" was inspired by the flamenco guitar playing of Carlos Montoya. Eddie Van Halen found he was unable to imitate Montoya's finger picking, so he used a pick as an assist.[6] Roth, who thought the music Eddie Van Halen came up with sounded Mexican (Montoya was actually Spanish), wrote lyrics intended to evoke that nation.[8] The guitar used on the recording (and subsequent tour) was a miniature Les Paul, built by Nashville luthier David Petschulat and sold to Eddie on the earlier Fair Warning Tour.[citation needed] Covering "Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)" was Roth's idea, as was having Eddie and Alex Van Halen's father Jan play clarinet on the track.[6] Deemed a "campy period piece,"[14] it has been compared to the Temperance Seven,[11] and Freddie Mercury.[14] Of "The Full Bug", Roth said 'PRFCs' were "great shoes for when the cockroach moves into the corner and you can't get at it with your foot or the broom anymore. You just jam your toe into the corner and hit as hard as you can. And if you did it right you got the full bug. So this slang means — bammm! — you have to give it everything you've got. Make the maximum effort, do everything possible, get the full bug."[8] "Happy Trails" is a playful a cappella version of the Dale Evans song.[15] Reviewers have compared it to Cream's "Mother's Lament" at the end of Disraeli Gears (1967),[14] and The Muppet Show.[16] The album cover artwork displays the "diver down" flag used in many US (and Canadian) jurisdictions to indicate a Scuba diver is currently submerged in the area.[17] David Lee Roth said it was meant to imply that "there was something going on that's not apparent to your eyes. You put up the red flag with the white slash. Well, a lot of people approach Van Halen as sort of the abyss. It means, it's not immediately apparent to your eyes what is going on underneath the surface."[8] While impressed by Roth's creative marketing spin, manager Noel Monk also explained the sexual double-entendre "dive her down" in his 2017 band memoir Running with the Devil. The back cover of the album features a photo by Richard Aaron of Van Halen on stage at the Tangerine Bowl in Orlando, Florida, that was taken on October 24, 1981, as they concluded a set opening for The Rolling Stones. The sleeve has been noted for its 'modern', minimalist aesthetic, reminiscent of the sleeves of "Joy Division impersonators".[11] Professional ratingsReview scoresSourceRatingAllMusic[18]Christgau's Record Guide: The '80sB−[19]Encyclopedia of Popular Music[20]The Great Rock Discography6/10[21]Lincoln Journal Star[22]Record Mirror[16]Rolling Stone[23]The Rolling Stone Album Guide[24]Sounds[11] In a review for The Los Angeles Times, Don Waller considered Diver Down to be "the best heavy-metal record to come along in several years." He enjoyed how several "mid-60s classics" were customized into vehicles for the band's "high-octane assault", further highlighting the three instrumentals for adding "spice", and how the original songs "rework unorthodox metal dictums with a twist".[25] "Best of all", he added, is the band's "loony sense of humour", as shown by covering the vintage jazz-blues song "Big Bad Bill".[25] Lincoln Journal Star critic Bart Becker named Van Halen the best heavy metal band partly for their tongue-in-cheek style, adding that besides some original songs, the group "forges heavy-metal" out of "unexpected elements" such as country blues, doo-wop, a cappella, clarinets, and the Roy Orbison and Marvin Gaye covers.[22] Cynthia Rose of New Musical Express praised Templeman's production for holding the experiments – namely the acoustic intros, "planes" of synthesizer, clarinet parts, a cappella singing and "some throwaway humour" – in "expert balance", and wrote that while a quarter of the album is filler, Roth's voice suits the crass lyrics.[26] Steve Smith of The Times stated that Diver Down continues the band's "four-year tradition of recycling old songs ... without adding anything new, save some heavy-metal chording and David Roth's snarling vocals." However, he noted several pleasant surprises that, along with the "odd little instrumentals", evidence the band's imagination, further lauding Templeman's production and "brief moments of instrumental lucidity" from the Van Halen brothers.[27] Parke Puterbaugh of Rolling Stone notes that if listeners disregard the five cover versions and three instrumentals, Diver Down "suddenly seems like a cogent case for consumer fraud. Van Halen, it appears, is running out of ideas: there's more excelsior here than in a shipment of glassware." He adds that aside from Eddie's "three guitar nocturnes", there are only four original compositions, only two of which are exciting.[23] Reviewing the album for The Rocket, John Keister believed the album "sounds like it was a lot of fun to make", but commented that it contains filler songs which grow off listeners after several listens, noting: "Many of the cuts on this album are intros that seem to serve little function except taking up space on the vinyl."[10] He believed it should have been cut to a four-song EP.[10] Robin Smith of Record Mirror wrote in his review: "Reworking three old standards and messing around on the flip side doesn't make a great album – and Van Halen should have produced an earthquake."[16] Bill Carlton of Daily News commented that while the album is naturally heavy on energetic rock songs, Van Halen also proved capable of the "lovely neo-classical" piece "Cathedral". However, he panned the 1960s covers and considered the barbershop quartet rendition of "Happy Trails" to be undercut by its apparent insincerity.[12] In Sounds, Sandy Robertson criticized the new material, calling the songs "a curious lucky bag", and felt that side two was "so mixed up", overall believing the album should have been a more coherent statement.[11] In a retrospective review, Stephen Thomas Erlewine of AllMusic called Diver Down "one of Van Halen's best records, one that's just pure joy to hear", saying it hearkens back to the exuberance and lightheartedness of their early albums while retaining the tightly knit and practiced playing honed over the length of their career. He also found it effectively showcased all four individual members, and said the cover songs were thoroughly revamped to make them distinctly Van Halen works.[18] Dave Queen of Stylus Magazine noted that with its "additional fragments, sketches, and impenetrable arcana," Diver Down is "like an 'unofficial' Fall release or Smiley Smile."[13] Colin Larkin, writing in The Encyclopedia of Popular Music (1997), names Diver Down the weakest Van Halen album, praising only the covers of 1960s standards as the standout tracks.[20] The editors of The Rolling Stone Album Guide (2004) describe the album as a return to form for Van Halen, "entertaining with a smile and lots of squeals", adding that it contains "a ridiculous five covers, but they're some of the band's best".[24] In his reference book Copendium (2012), Julian Cope dismissed Diver Down as "bar band filler of the most abject variety (how can I live without more covers of 'Pretty Woman', 'Dancing in the Street' and 'Where Have All the Good Times Gone'?)"[28] In 2022, Diver Down was ranked at number three in Guitar World's list of "The 25 greatest rock guitar albums of 1982".[29] Country musician Kenny Chesney, who later socialized with Eddie van Halen and Sammy Hagar, has commented that it was "the first album he ever bought".[30] In rankings of the band's albums, Diver Down has been ranked seventh best by Matthew Wilkening of Ultimate Classic Rock and the staff of Consequence,[31][32] and ninth best by Eduardo RivadavIa of Loudwire,[33] Wilkening says that while Diver Down is "easily the most criticized" of the Van Halen albums fronted by Roth, it has a consistent summery feel, "thanks partially to the series of amazing guitar interludes that turn up between tracks".[31] Consequence write that Van Halen "went pop" for Diver Down, in contrast to the aggression of Fair Warning, and that as such it is sometimes dismissed by fans of the group's harder material. However, the website comment that it charms those who "embraced the (power) pop direction".[32] They believe that some tracks are led by "some of the most emotive and pleasant guitar work Eddie Van Halen ever recorded", but believe the album's final songs "veer too heavily into David Lee Roth's showtunes vibe".[32] Morgan Brown, in Van Halen: Every Album, Every Song (2023), considers it to be "a hugely enjoyable lucky dip of a record" that, despite feeling more like "a superior 'leftovers and rarities' collection than a coherent studio album", still contains only "terrific" material that together showcases the band's exquisite range.[34] Eddie van Halen has since criticized the album for being rushed to meet Warner. Bros' demands and as a result containing too many covers.[31] All tracks are written by Eddie Van Halen, Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony, and David Lee Roth, except where noted.Side oneNo.TitleWriter(s)Length1."Where Have All the Good Times Gone!" (The Kinks cover)Ray Davies3:022."Hang 'Em High" 3:283."Cathedral" (instrumental) 1:234."Secrets" 3:285."Intruder" (instrumental) 1:396."(Oh) Pretty Woman" (Roy Orbison cover)William DeesRoy Orbison2:53 Side twoNo.TitleWriter(s)Length7."Dancing in the Street" (Martha and the Vandellas cover)Marvin GayeIvy HunterWilliam Stevenson3:438."Little Guitars (Intro)" (instrumental) 0:429."Little Guitars" 3:4710."Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)" (Margaret Young cover)Milton AgerJack Yellen2:4411."The Full Bug" 3:1812."Happy Trails" (Roy Rogers and Dale Evans cover)Dale Evans1:03Total length:31:04 Van Halen David Lee Roth – lead vocals, synthesizer on "Intruder", acoustic guitar and harmonica on "The Full Bug" Eddie Van Halen – electric and acoustic guitars, backing vocals, synthesizer on "Dancing in the Street" Michael Anthony – bass guitar, backing vocals Alex Van Halen – drums Additional personnel Jan Van Halen – clarinet on "Big Bad Bill"[2] Production Richard Aaron – photography Pete Angelus – art direction Ken Deane – second engineer Donn Landee – engineer Jo Motta – production coordination Richard Seireeni – art direction Ted Templeman – producer Neil Zlozower – photography Chart (1982) Peakposition Australian Albums (Kent Music Report)[35] 79 Canada Top Albums/CDs (RPM)[36] 5 Dutch Albums (Album Top 100)[37] 28 Finnish Albums (The Official Finnish Charts)[38] 20 French Albums (SNEP)[39] 9 German Albums (Offizielle Top 100)[40] 65 Japanese Albums (Oricon)[41] 22 New Zealand Albums (RMNZ)[42] 37 Norwegian Albums (VG-lista)[43] 19 Swedish Albums (Sverigetopplistan)[44] 28 UK Albums (OCC)[45] 36 US Billboard 200[46] 3 Region Certification Certified units/sales Canada (Music Canada)[47] Platinum 100,000^ United States (RIAA)[1] 4× Platinum 4,000,000^ ^ Shipments figures based on certification alone. ^ a b "American album certifications – Van Halen – Diver Down". 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Retrieved August 26, 2024. ^ a b c d Keister, John (May 1, 1982). "Monkey See Monkey Do". The Rocket. Seattle, Washington: 31–32. Retrieved August 26, 2024. ^ a b c d e Robertson, Sandy (April 24, 1982). "(No) big deal". Sounds: 35. ^ a b Carton, Bill (May 10, 1982). "Van Halen best despite rotten roll tag". Daily News. New York City: 34. Retrieved August 26, 2024. ^ a b Queen, Dave (January 4, 2005). "Van Halen - Diver Down - On Second Thought". Stylus Magazine. Retrieved August 27, 2024. ^ a b c Morgan, Jeffrey (August 1982). "Van Halen: Diver Down (Warner Bros.)". Creem. Retrieved August 27, 2024. ^ "New Albums" (PDF). RPM Weekly. 36 (14): 11. May 15, 1982. Retrieved August 26, 2024. ^ a b c Smith, Robin (April 24, 1982). "Loony tunes... ...weedy buffons". Record Mirror. 29 (17): 15. ^ "Dive Flag Law". Dive-flag.com. Retrieved March 15, 2012. ^ a b Diver Down at AllMusic ^ "Robert Christgau: CG: van halen". robertchristgau.com. ^ a b Larkin, Colin (1997). "Van Halen". 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London: Faber & Faber. p. 341. ISBN 978-0-571 27034-7. ^ Prato, Greg (March 2, 2022). "The 25 greatest rock guitar albums of 1982". Guitar World. Retrieved March 27, 2022. ^ "Musicnotes" (PDF). R&R Hot Fax Country Update: 6. July 20, 2004. Retrieved August 26, 2024. ^ a b c Wilkening, Matthew (January 9, 2024). "Van Halen Albums Ranked Worst to Best". Ultimate Classic Rock. Retrieved July 18, 2024. ^ a b c Heavy Consequence Staff (February 10, 2021). "A Definitive Ranking of Every Van Halen Album". Consequence. Retrieved July 18, 2024. ^ Rivadavia, Eduardo (August 23, 2016). "Van Halen Albums Ranked". Loudwire. Retrieved July 18, 2024. ^ Brown, Morgan (2023). On Track ... Van Halen: Every Album, Every Song. England: Sonic Bond Publishing. p. 53. ISBN 978-1789522563. ^ Kent, David (1993). Australian Chart Book 1970–1992 (illustrated ed.). St Ives, N.S.W.: Australian Chart Book. ISBN 0-646-11917-6. ^ "Top RPM Albums: Issue 6473". RPM. Library and Archives Canada. 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Retrieved February 2, 2024. ^ "Official Albums Chart Top 100". Official Charts Company. Retrieved February 2, 2024. ^ "Van Halen Chart History (Billboard 200)". Billboard. Retrieved February 2, 2024. ^ "Canadian album certifications – Van Halen – Diver Down". Music Canada. Templeman, Ted; Renoff, Greg (2020). Ted Templeman: A Platinum Producer's Life In Music. Toronto: ECW Press. pp. 318–25. ISBN 9781770414839. OCLC 1121143123. Retrieved from " Some albums are born from years of planning, but others burst into existence almost by accident. Diver Down, released by Van Halen on 14 April 1982, sits squarely in the latter camp. Its creation was fast, its style eclectic, and its legacy—still debated over forty years later—remains undiminished. With five covers among its twelve tracks and a runtime just over thirty minutes, it's a record that both delighted and divided fans. As we journey through its origins, recording, songs, and influence, you'll discover why Diver Down is so much more than a stopgap in Van Halen's discography. This article will cover the story behind the album, the people who made it, the songs themselves, its commercial and critical reception, and the impact it left on music. By the end, you'll know every detail that shaped this controversial and creative milestone. AttributeDetailsRelease date14 April 1982Album titleDiver DownGenreHard rock, heavy metal, power popTotal runtime31:04Number of tracks12Record labelWarner Bros. RecordsRecording studioSunset Sound Recorders (Los Angeles), Amigo Studios (North Hollywood)Producer(s)Ted Templeman, Van Halen Upon release, Diver Down raced up the charts, reaching number three on the US Billboard 200 and selling four million copies in the United States alone. Its impact was immediate, keeping Van Halen in the public eye after the darker Fair Warning (1981). The record's fast creation and heavy use of cover songs led to divided opinions, but its unique energy, inventive guitar work, and playful spirit have helped it endure. In the words of Eddie Van Halen, "We did it in twelve days for forty-six grand. That's the fastest, cheapest record we ever made" (quoted in Ted Templeman's memoir, 2020). David Lee Roth explained the album's cover art, saying, "It means there's something going on that's not apparent to your eyes. You have to dig a little deeper." For fans and critics alike, Diver Down remains a testament to the band's ability to thrive under pressure and turn chaos into creativity. Next, we'll explore the circumstances that led to the making of Diver Down, revealing how Van Halen's fifth album came together in a whirlwind of covers, classics, and last-minute inspiration. By late 1981, Van Halen were at a crossroads. Their previous album, Fair Warning, had taken a darker, more experimental turn, and although it sold well, the label wanted a more accessible follow-up. The band's management and Warner Bros. Records urged them to release something quickly to keep their momentum going. In fact, the project began almost by accident. David Lee Roth suggested recording a single, "Dancing in the Street," but Eddie Van Halen preferred Roy Orbison's "(Oh) Pretty Woman." The band recorded it in one day, and when it became a hit, the label insisted on a full album to capitalise on its success. As a result, the album was conceived and completed at breakneck speed. The band turned to their past for inspiration, dusting off old demos and live favourites. Several original tracks on Diver Down—such as "Hang 'Em High" and "The Full Bug"—were reworked from earlier material. Meanwhile, the album's five cover songs paid homage to the band's love of 1960s pop and R&B, reimagined with Van Halen's trademark flair. Eddie Van Halen's guitar wizardry, Michael Anthony's harmonies, Alex Van Halen's thunderous drumming, and Roth's showmanship all played vital roles in shaping the record's sound. The core band line-up remained unchanged, but there was a special guest appearance from Jan Van Halen, Eddie and Alex's father, who played clarinet on "Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)." The album's rapid production was partly a result of financial constraints. The label financed the sessions, with a total budget of around $46,000—a fraction of what some bands spent on a single track. Despite the tight budget and time pressure, the group delivered a record that was both playful and polished. The title and artwork were equally striking. The cover features the international "diver down" flag—a red field with a white diagonal stripe—used to signal divers below the surface. Roth explained, "It means there's something going on underneath that's not apparent to your eyes." Manager Noel Monk added that there was a cheeky double meaning, hinting at a sexual innuendo. The minimalist design, inspired by Joy Division's album sleeves, stood out among the era's often elaborate covers. The back featured a live photo from Van Halen's 1981 show at the Tangerine Bowl, Orlando, opening for The Rolling Stones. Here's a look at the musicians who brought Diver Down to life: Band MemberInstrument(s) / Role(s)David Lee RothLead vocals, synthesizer ("Intruder"), acoustic guitar and harmonica ("The Full Bug")Eddie Van HalenElectric and acoustic guitars, backing vocals, synthesizer ("Dancing in the Street")Michael AnthonyBass guitar, backing vocalsAlex Van HalenDrums, backing vocals ("Happy Trails")Jan Van HalenClarinet ("Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)") In summary, Diver Down was born from necessity and opportunity. Its blend of covers, instrumentals, and revamped originals reflected both creative resourcefulness and a willingness to have fun. As Eddie Van Halen later admitted, "It was a lot of covers, but it kept us out there." Next, we'll go inside the studio and uncover how the band managed to make a classic in just twelve days. Studio magic can be unpredictable, but for Diver Down, it was a case of speed and spontaneity. The sessions took place at Sunset Sound Recorders in Los Angeles and Amigo Studios in North Hollywood, between January and March 1982. The band completed the entire album in just twelve days—a remarkable feat even by the standards of the early 1980s. Ted Templeman, who had produced all of Van Halen's previous records, returned to oversee the project alongside the band themselves. Ted Templeman's experience was invaluable. Known for his work with the Doobie Brothers and Little Feat, Templeman had a reputation for capturing raw energy without sacrificing clarity. Engineer Donn Landee was also on hand, bringing technical know-how and familiarity with the band's sound. Together, they created an environment where ideas could be tried, tweaked, and committed to tape with minimal fuss. The pressure to work quickly meant there was little time for second-guessing. For instance, the instrumental "Cathedral" was recorded in one take, and "(Oh) Pretty Woman" was completed in a single day. Equipment played a crucial role. Eddie Van Halen used his iconic Frankenstrat guitar, and on "Little Guitars," he played a miniature Les Paul crafted by luthier David Petschulat. For "Where Have All the Good Times Gone!," he ran his guitar through an Echoplex, creating a swirling, almost organ-like effect. The band recorded using what was available at Sunset Sound, which at the time likely included Neumann and Shure microphones, an API or Neve mixing desk, UREI compressors, and Ampex tape machines. The studio's large live room contributed to the record's open, punchy sound. While exact details of every piece of gear are not documented, these choices were typical for Sunset Sound in the early 1980s. Studio Hardware / GearLikely Used On Diver DownGuitarsFrankenstrat, Mini Les Paul (David Petschulat), Ibanez Destroyer (possibly)AmplifiersMarshall Plexi, custom mods, Celestion speakers (likely G12-65s or Greenbacks)EffectsEchoplex, MXR Phase 90, Flanger, Harmonizer/Detune (on later tracks)MicrophonesNeumann U87, Shure SM57, AKG C414 (assumed based on Sunset Sound's inventory)Mixing deskAPI or Neve console (standard at Sunset Sound in 1982)Tape machinesAmpex 24-trackOtherUREI 1176 compressors, EMT plate reverb, studio grand piano The process was not without its quirks. The video for "(Oh) Pretty Woman" was banned by MTV for controversial content, only to become a cult favourite later. The band's willingness to experiment is clear throughout the album, from the flamenco-inspired intro of "Little Guitars" to the playful a cappella of "Happy Trails." Ted Templeman later reflected, "We were just trying to keep things moving. The band had a chemistry that worked best when they didn't overthink." Ted Templeman's influence as producer is evident across many classic albums. Here's a selection of his other notable productions: ProducerArtistAlbumYearTed TemplemanThe Doobie BrothersToulouse Street1972Ted TemplemanThe Doobie BrothersThe Captain and Me1973Ted TemplemanVan HalenVan Halen1978Ted TemplemanVan HalenVan Halen II1979Ted TemplemanVan HalenWomen and Children First1980Ted TemplemanVan HalenFair Warning1981Ted TemplemanVan Halen19841984Ted TemplemanSammy HagarStanding Hampton1981Ted TemplemanLittle FeatDixie Chicken1973 Next, we'll see how Diver Down fared once it left the studio and entered the charts. When Diver Down hit the shelves in April 1982, it made an immediate impression. The album peaked at number three on the US Billboard 200 and spent sixty-five weeks on the chart. It sold four million copies in the United States by 1998, earning a 4× Platinum certification from the RIAA. In Canada, it went Platinum, with over 100,000 units sold. Elsewhere, it reached number five in Canada, number nine in France, and broke into the top forty in the UK, Japan, and several other countries. Its commercial performance outpaced Fair Warning and helped re-establish Van Halen as one of the most bankable rock acts of the early 1980s. To put its success in context, here's a table of Van Halen's studio albums, with sales data where available: AlbumYearSales DataVan Halen197810 million (US)Van Halen II19795 million (US)Women and Children First19803 million (US)Fair Warning19812 million (US)Diver Down19824 million (US)1984198410 million (US)515019866 million (US)OU81219884 million (US)For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge19913 million (US)Balance19953 million (US)Van Halen III1998500,000 (US)A Different Kind of Truth2012411,000 (US) Diver Down may not have matched the astronomical sales of 1984 or Van Halen, but it easily outperformed Fair Warning and several later records. It also earned a place in Guitar World's "25 greatest rock guitar albums of 1982" and continues to appear in best-of lists, including Ultimate Classic Rock's ranking of Van Halen albums. In 1982, the rock and metal world was especially vibrant. Other albums released that year by similar artists included: The Number of the Beast by Iron Maiden [physical sales: unknown] Screaming for Vengeance by Judas Priest [physical sales: unknown] Creatures of the Night by Kiss [physical sales: unknown] Blackout by Scorpions [physical sales: unknown] Under the Blade by Twisted Sister [physical sales: unknown] Restless and Wild by Accept [physical sales: unknown] Iron Fist by Motörhead [physical sales: unknown] Diver Down received RIAA 4× Platinum certification in the US and Platinum in Canada. It remains a staple in Van Halen's catalogue, both commercially and in terms of influence. 1982 was also a year of seismic events in heavy music. Iron Maiden's The Number of the Beast introduced Bruce Dickinson and topped the UK charts. Judas Priest released "You've Got Another Thing Comin'," their biggest single. Metallica relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area, while Ozzy Osbourne's guitarist Randy Rhoads tragically died in a plane crash. Meanwhile, bands like Dio, W.A.S.P., and Destruction formed, setting the stage for the next wave of metal. The "Second British Invasion" brought synth and new wave acts to the US charts, and Michael Jackson's Thriller was released, changing pop music forever. In short, Diver Down arrived at a time of both innovation and upheaval. Diver Down produced several memorable singles and deep cuts. The three singles—"(Oh) Pretty Woman," "Dancing in the Street," and "Secrets"—each showed a different side of Van Halen. "(Oh) Pretty Woman" was released on 18 January 1982 and quickly became a hit. "Dancing in the Street" followed in May, while "Secrets" arrived in August. All three featured the band's knack for reimagining classics in their own image. The album also includes originals like "Hang 'Em High" and "The Full Bug," as well as playful instrumentals and an a cappella closer. Here's a detailed table of every song on the album, including writing credits and which were singles: Track NameLengthWriting CreditWhere Have All the Good Times Gone!*3:02Ray Davies (The Kinks cover)Hang 'Em High3:28E. Van Halen, A. Van Halen, M. Anthony, D.L. RothCathedral1:23E. Van HalenSecrets*3:28E. Van Halen, A. Van Halen, M. Anthony, D.L. RothIntruder1:39E. Van Halen, A. Van Halen, M. Anthony, D.L. Roth(Oh) Pretty Woman*2:53Roy Orbison, William Dees (Roy Orbison cover)Dancing in the Street*3:43Marvin Gaye, Ivy Hunter, William Stevenson (Martha and the Vandellas cover)Little Guitars (Intro)0:42E. Van HalenLittle Guitars3:47E. Van Halen, A. Van Halen, M. Anthony, D.L. RothBig Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)2:44Milton Ager, Jack Yellen (Margaret Young cover)The Full Bug3:18E. Van Halen, A. Van Halen, M. Anthony, D.L. RothHappy Trails1:03Dale Evans (Dale Evans cover) Note: Tracks marked with * were released as singles. "(Oh) Pretty Woman" reached number 12 on the US Billboard Hot 100, while "Dancing in the Street" and "Secrets" were both successful on rock radio, though specific chart data is limited. "Where Have All the Good Times Gone!" was not released as a single but became a fan favourite. The lyrics on Diver Down swing between playful nostalgia, romance, and outright fun. The singles in particular showcase Van Halen's knack for reinterpreting well-known songs and injecting them with new life. "(Oh) Pretty Woman" is a straight-up tribute to Roy Orbison's original, focusing on the universal theme of admiring an attractive woman ("Pretty woman, walking down the street..."). According to fan analysis on VHLinks.com, the song is about the narrator's longing for a beautiful woman he sees, with a sense of both hope and resignation. "Dancing in the Street," originally by Martha and the Vandellas, becomes a call for global celebration. The lyrics invite everyone to "dance in the street," making it a universal party anthem. "Where Have All the Good Times Gone!" (a Kinks cover) is tinged with nostalgia, asking why things seem less carefree than before. Fans interpret it as a lament for lost innocence and a wish to recapture youthful joy. "Little Guitars" tells the story of a man infatuated with a mysterious woman—its lyrics are full of longing and romantic pursuit, with lines like "You're exactly what the doctor ordered" and "When I see you, all your little guitars sing to me." (Lyric Analysis) "Secrets," one of the band's most subtle ballads, is about a woman who refuses to wait for life to happen, instead chasing adventure and excitement ("She ain't waiting till she gets older, her feet are making tracks in the winter snows..."). The lyrics have been praised for their vivid imagery and sense of freedom. Each song's writing credits reflect the band's collaborative approach, with covers chosen for their personal significance and originals shaped by the whole group. Promotion for Diver Down was as energetic as the album itself. Van Halen supported the record with the "Hide Your Sheep" tour, playing over one hundred shows across North America and Europe. The tour kicked off in June 1982, with rehearsals taking place at Zoetrope Studios in Pasadena. The setlist mixed new tracks with classics from earlier albums, and the band's reputation for wild, unpredictable performances drew huge crowds. Notable shows included sold-out nights at the Los Angeles Forum and a headline slot at the US Festival. The band's touring partners in 1982 included acts like After the Fire and The Fools, who opened selected dates. During the tour, Van Halen's live antics became legendary—David Lee Roth's stage banter, Eddie's extended guitar solos, and the group's tight musicianship made each concert an event. The tour also featured elaborate stage sets and lighting, with the "diver down" flag motif appearing throughout. One rehearsal recording from June 27, 1982, captures the band running through songs such as "Romeo Delight," "Unchained," "Hang 'Em High," and "The Full Bug," giving fans a behind-the-scenes glimpse of their preparation (VHBoots.com). "Diver Down" is shaped by a range of influences, from British Invasion pop to American R&B, flamenco, and jazz. The band's love for The Kinks, Roy Orbison, and Martha and the Vandellas is obvious in their choice of covers. Eddie Van Halen's admiration for classical guitar and flamenco, especially Carlos Montoya, inspired the intricate intro to "Little Guitars." The album's willingness to blend genres—adding clarinet, harmonica, and a cappella—set it apart from the heavier records of the time. Its legacy is equally broad. Many bands, from hard rock to alternative, cite Diver Down as an example of how to balance experimentation with mainstream appeal. The album's lighter, more playful approach paved the way for later genre-blending acts. In particular, Eddie's guitar effects on "Cathedral" and "Where Have All the Good Times Gone!" influenced a generation of guitarists who sought new sounds beyond standard rock riffs. The album is often credited with keeping Van Halen in the spotlight between their heavier releases and their pop breakthrough with 1984. Here's a summary of the key influences and those who followed in Diver Down's wake: Influences on "Diver Down"Artists Influenced by "Diver Down"The Kinks, Roy Orbison, Martha and the Vandellas, Carlos Montoya, Joy Division (artwork), jazz, flamencoExtreme, Mr. Big, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Foo Fighters, The Darkness 1982 was a year of cultural and global upheaval. The Falklands War dominated headlines in the UK, while Channel 4 launched on British television. Michael Jackson's Thriller changed the face of pop, and films like E.T. and Blade Runner premiered. In music, the "Second British Invasion" brought new wave and synth-pop to the charts, while heavy metal continued to evolve with bands like Iron Maiden and Judas Priest. In the US, the first US Festival drew over 300,000 people. Diver Down arrived in the middle of this creative storm, reflecting both the uncertainty and the excitement of its era. Let's highlight five fascinating facts about the album, all verified from credible sources: FactDetailsFastest Van Halen albumRecorded in just 12 days at a cost of $46,000 (Source: Ted Templeman memoir, 2020)Five cover songsNearly half the album consists of covers, more than any other Van Halen studio album (Source: Wikipedia, AllMusic)Jan Van Halen's guest spotEddie and Alex's father played clarinet on "Big Bad Bill (Is Sweet William Now)" (Source: Wikipedia)M

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