Van Vechten, Carl (1880-1964) Encyclopedia Article

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Van Vechten, Carl (1880-1964)

Carl Van Vechten was, in the course of his lifetime, a music, dance, and literary critic, a novelist, and a photographer. He was an early aficionado of ragtime and jazz and during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s wrote numerous articles in support of the movement. In his fifth and best-known novel, *Nigger Heaven* (1926), he meant to portray the life of Harlem in a realistic and sympathetic fashion. Though controversial, the book was generally praised by white critics; it was condemned and dismissed by black critics because of its ill-chosen title. Van Vechten sought to ensure that the African American contribution to American culture would be recognized and appreciated in perpetuity by founding, in 1941, the James Weldon Johnson Collection at Yale University.

Van Halen: (from left) Michael Anthony, Eddie Van Halen, Alex Van Halen, and Sammy Hagar, 1987.

Further Reading:

Kellner, Bruce. *Carl Van Vechten and the Irreverent Decades.* Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.

Lueders, Edward. *Carl Van Vechten.* New York, Twayne Publishers, 1964.