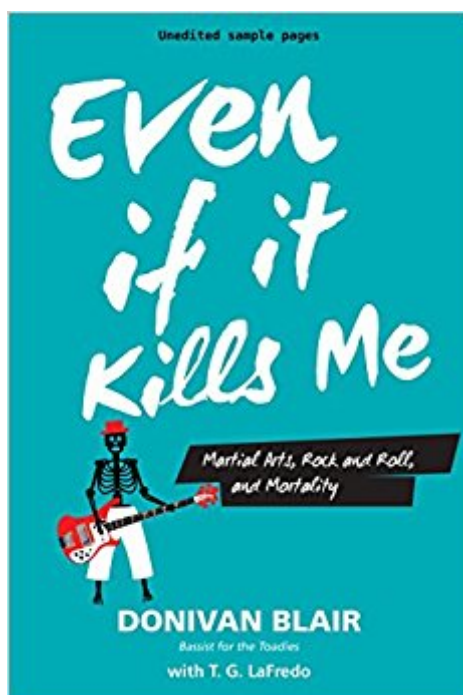


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# Even If It Kills Me: Martial Arts, Rock And Roll, And Mortality



## Synopsis

This is the true story of a rock and roll musician who takes up taekwondo at forty years old. Doni Blair, bassist for the Toadies, knows he's past his physical prime, but he's determined to push himself and pursue his dream of becoming a martial artist—even if it kills him. As a kid Doni was obsessed with ninjas and kung fu movies. He and his brother took up taekwondo—there was no ninja school in Sherman, Texas. Classes were expensive, especially considering their parents' tenuous employment status and fondness for alcohol. The family lived like a white-trash gypsies, Blair writes, adding that he got good at moving furniture at three in the morning. The Blair kids loved taekwondo, but the family just couldn't afford classes. Doni walked away from martial arts. Thirty years later, he's walking back. I'm not a kid anymore, he writes. I'm a middle-aged man trying to come to grips with being a middle-aged man. I'm not as fast as I used to be. It takes longer for the injuries to heal. I have to eat more bran. Doni discovers the road to black belt is rough and, well, weird. He meets martial seekers of every sort. He has run-ins with a teenage savant who seems determined to break the author's leg. He drives a van full of seven-year-olds for the dojang's after-school program. They puke everywhere. Even If It Kills Me is smart and funny, introspective and irreverent. It blends rock and roll and taekwondo—two of the coolest things in the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A rock musician chronicles his adventures at a taekwondo dojo in Texas. Blair's debut book is a

whirlwind through his broad range of experiences and eclectic interests. He is primarily known as a bassist for the alternative rock band the Toadies, whom readers may know for their 1994 hit "Possum Kingdom." But while Blair recounts his escapades with the band on the road throughout the work, the memoir mainly discusses the author's love of martial arts. After settling with his wife in Amarillo, Texas, Blair decided to get in better shape by picking up a passion from his past: taekwondo. He takes the reader on a tour of the limited dojo offerings throughout the city before settling on a World Taekwondo Federation dojang led by a coach for the U.S. Olympic team. Shortly thereafter, Blair was a white belt in his early 40s, sparring with teenagers far above his skill level, getting regular lessons in humility. The author writes in a wandering, conversational tone that can be digressive and difficult to follow at times. Occasionally, he includes personal critiques of his younger sparring partners that can seem oddly vindictive, but most of the time the narrative voice is amusing despite the excess of superfluous anecdotes. Once Blair settles into his dojang, he takes the reader through his growing obsession with taekwondo. He acquired equipment, trained constantly, and slowly won the respect and friendship of his more experienced peers in his quest to attain a black belt. Along the way, he learned a clichéd but heartwarming lesson about the philosophical value of martial arts: "Knowing kicks and punches is not what keeps us protected. It's the values and the self-control that allow us to live life and be better people." In addition to Toadies fans, this account should please readers looking for a lighthearted foray into a strange pocket of American culture: Texan taekwondo. An uneven but charmingly eccentric memoir detailing a bassist's martial arts journey. • Kirkus Reviews. (Kirkus Reviews, June 12, 2017)

Donivan Blair is the bassist for the rock band the Toadies. Over the past twenty-five years he has recorded seventeen albums and toured the world. Spoiler alert: He holds a first-degree black belt in taekwondo. Donivan Blair lives in Amarillo, Texas, and trains in a shed behind his house.

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