

Enter Megadeth and Metallica

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Almost a month ago I ventured up to Ground Zero in Spartanburg to see Megadeth perform. This was the third time I'd seen Megadeth in concert (I've also seen Metallica three times), and I was greatly impressed. But the one thing that stuck with me, even after the ringing in my ears had faded, was what Mick Minchow, one of the co-owners of Ground Zero, said to me after the show:

"Heavy metal and rock and roll are dead."

So how are these bands able to succeed, with one enjoying immense popularity while the other relies more heavily on their musical ability, and both in a musical genre that seems to be dead? The answer is one that varies from one fan to another, but all answers seem to fall into two categories.

While many longtime Metallica and Megadeth fans will argue that the bands have sold out (as I believe is the case with Metallica), there are others who see the change as a progression of their musical ability and of the times (as I believe is the case with Megadeth).

Nevertheless, both bands truly no longer belong in the almost extinct classification of heavy metal, a genre where both have a storied history. In 1981, James Hetfield answered an ad in a newspaper called the Recycler. The ad was placed by Lars Ulrich, and he said he was looking for people to form a band. Although Hetfield was unimpressed in their first meeting, due to the fact that Ulrich knocked over his cymbal every time he hit it, the two shared a common taste in music.

A few months later, after Ulrich returned from England from following the tour of his favorite band, Diamond Head, he gave Hetfield an offer that he couldn't refuse. Although Ulrich didn't have a band, he had a spot reserved for him on Brian Slagel's album *Metal Massacre*. This marked the formation of Metallica and the creation of their first song "Hit the Lights."

For this first recording, the band consisted of Hetfield on rhythm guitar, bass, and vocals, Ulrich on drums, and Lloyd Grant filled in the lead. Shortly thereafter, Ron McGovney, Hetfield's roommate, joined the band to play bass, and Dave Mustaine, the founder of Megadeth, replaced Grant as lead guitarist.

After playing a number of shows, the band recorded a demo in July of 1982 called *No Life Till Leather*, which stirred up a lot of interest in the band and eventually helped them secure a record label. In fact all of the songs on this demo are also on their first EP, with the exception of "The Mechanix," which appears on Megadeth's first CD. This song was rewritten after Mustaine left the band and renamed "The Four Horsemen."

Also, around this same time, Hetfield and Ulrich discovered bass phenom Cliff Burton in a band called Trauma. Knowing that his addition would improve the band's ability, by February of 1983 the band had moved from Los Angeles to San Fran-

cisco to accommodate Burton and had gotten rid of McGovney.

The band continued to play in the Southern California area until Jon Zazula heard a copy of their demo and invited them to New York to record on his Megaforce label. Upon arriving in a stolen U-Haul, the band announced that Mustaine had to go. Although it is unclear why Mustaine was asked/told to leave, it is highly speculated that drugs were the reason.

Following his departure, which involved a four-day bus ride back to California because the band was too poor to afford an airline ticket, Metallica asked Kirk Hammett of Exodus to join. Then in late 1983 Metallica's first album, *Kill 'Em All*, was released.

Metallica followed this album with a tour and in 1984 released their second album *Ride the Lightning*. This album, although it still contained the power of their first release, was more mature both musically and lyrically and allowed the band to be recognized for their ability and signed by the major record label Elektra.

In 1986 Metallica released their third album, *Master of Puppets*, and began a tour with Ozzy Osbourne. This tour marked the last time the band wouldn't headline a tour. During this tour Hetfield broke his arm skateboarding and was unable to play guitar. However, John Marshall, Kirk's guitar roadie, filled in until Hetfield was able to return.

Later that year, on September 26, 1986 Hetfield returned to duty in Stockholm, Sweden. However, that show not only marked his return, but also the last time Metallica would perform with Burton. Early the next morning, the tour bus skidded out of control on a sheet of black ice, tumbling numerous times and killing Burton.

Once Jason Newstead was established as the band's bassist, Metallica released their fourth full-length album, *And Justice For All*. This was the album that finally cemented Metallica's place in music. The album peaked at #6 on the US charts, received a Grammy nomination, and most importantly contained the song "One." With



Metallica combined the power of metal music with the beauty of classical music in S&M.

"One," Metallica received their first Grammy for the single and made their first music video. In 1991, Metallica released their self-titled "black" album, which was a departure from their previous albums in that the songs were shorter and the sound was fuller and deeper. This album went straight to #1, won a Grammy, and spawned several award-winning videos including "Enter Sandman."

Following the "black" album's release, Metallica toured constantly for about four years before recording the material for *Load*. Originally they had planned to release a double album, but instead released *Reload* a year later. These two albums marked a complete change in the band's sound, which many contribute partially to Bob Rock who produced these two albums along with the "black" album.

These latest two albums released by the band are *Garage Inc.* and most recently *S&M*. The garage album is two CDs and includes on disc two their old cover songs from the original garage days albums.

On *S&M* Metallica accomplishes a feat that had never been attempted before by a band of their stature. They successfully blended a symphony with their music. And although the newer songs

seem overblown in an attempt to make them into epics, the older songs can send chills down the back of any long-time fan.

Following his departure from Metallica, Mustaine was searching for something to write lyrics on during his bus ride back to California. While on that trip he picked up a handbill to write on that stated, "The power of megadeath can't be rid." Mustaine decided that would be a good name once he started up his own band.

Following his return to California, Mustaine played briefly for a band called "Fallen Angels." This band wasn't going anywhere, but Mustaine soon met David Ellefson, who would become Megadeth's bassist. Mustaine and Ellefson, who were neighbors, met after Mustaine through a pot into Ellefson's window for practicing too early in the morning. Soon after, the two became friends and formed Megadeth.

Megadeth was a lot like Metallica, except the band added an emphasis on instrumental skills and increased the music's tempo. The pair quickly recruited guitarist Chris Poland and drummer Gar Samuelson to round out the lineup. Originally intended to be a five member band, Mustaine only began singing after an unnamed singer showed up with a six pack of beer and makeup on his face. Mustaine quickly disposed of the singer, kept the beer for himself, and became not only the lead guitar player, but the singer.

Eventually, Megadeth was signed by Combat, an independent music label, and they released their debut album, *Killing is My Business... And Business is Good!*, in 1985. This album sold very well and received a lot of praise from the music community.

Because of its success, Megadeth had signed with Capitol records by the end of the year and released *Peace Sells... But Who's Buying?* In 1986. Although this album also received great reviews, Mustaine was suffering from drug addiction, and

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Megadeth left to right: Jimmy DeGrasso, David Ellefson, Marty Friedman and Dave Mustaine