

"Live fast, love hard and don't let anyone else use your comb."

— The Fonz

Heavy Metal: A fan's guide to the top ten

BY JONATHAN DUNAGIN
GRADUATE ASSISTANT

Editor's note: This list is intended to introduce music listeners to the thirty-year-old genre of heavy metal. In no way is it intended to be all-inclusive, but more of a benchmark for those interested in becoming fans of the music.

In no way am I claiming to be an authority on the subject. Although I love listening to metal, I am far from being as knowledgeable about the genre as some people are. However, I do know what I like, and these are the albums that have made it to this list.

There were two criteria to make this list: I had to own the album (or had to have listened to it before), and the album had to be classified as metal. Determining this was the harder than deciding what albums should be named. They are many albums that have been classified as metal over the years, and, in fact, the definition of metal itself has evolved. However, I decided to name albums I viewed as metal and were classified as metal when they were released.

Overall, I believe this list will introduce some people to music they might not have listened to before and will hopefully alleviate the stereotypes that a metal band either has big hair and makeup, or is all noise with totally undecipherable lyrics.

10. Ozzy Osbourne, *Blizzard of Oz* & Metallica, *And Justice for All*
With a genre as diverse as heavy metal, it was inevitable that in a list of ten there would be at least one tie. And what two albums are better than these two?

Ozzy's 1980 release and Metallica's 1988 release both represent a turning point musically for each band, Ozzy's album being the first one released after he departed from Black Sabbath, and Metallica's being the first released following the death of bassist Cliff Burton.

The two albums share many characteristics. Both bands are perhaps the most popular heavy metal acts, with Metallica coming in fourth in the '90s in album sales, and both have two of the most pop-

ular songs in music: Ozzy's "Crazy Train" and Metallica's "One."

These songs are also played by two of rock's legendary guitarists: the late Randy Rhoads for Ozzy and Kirk Hammett for Metallica, their solos having been listed in *Guitar World's* top 10 solos ever written. All this in addition to the other remarkable songs found on the albums, including "Mr. Crowley" and "Suicide Solution" off of Ozzy's album, and "Blackened" and "Harvester of Sorrow" from Metallica's album.

9. Helmet, *Meantime*

If you've ever listened to Helmet, you understand why they are listed in my top 10 albums.

This 1992 release was the first to establish the band among mainstream listeners. The hit song "Unsung" secured the band a strong following and paved the way for their future albums.

But this album is not in my top 10 based on the success of one song. Just one listen to the album would prove that "Unsung" isn't even the best song on the album. Helmet made the list because of their ability to produce a well-rounded and musically sound release.

With songs like "In the Meantime," "Ironhead" and "Turned Out," there's no question this band had a unique sound. Under the searing lyrics of Page Hamilton came an array of distorted bass grooves and flipped drumbeats that make every song on the album worth mentioning. The only disappointment is that this band wasn't able to produce more music together.

8. Slayer, *Seasons in the Abyss*

In a time when music is constantly changing and challenging the senses, Slayer has established themselves as one of metal's enduring acts. Few bands have been on the scene as long and still remained true to their original sound. And their 1990 release marks the pinnacle of their career.

Songs like the title track, "War Ensemble" and "Dead Skin Mask" prove to other bands it is possible to tap feelings of aggression, channeling hostility into an outstanding album.

It's this hostility that is Slayer's trademark: Fans who listen to their music and attend their concerts know what they are in store for, and welcome the chance to vent their frustrations through deep, thundering guitars and devastating double-bass choruses.

Music like this that has helped inspire many heavier acts of today.

7. Megadeth, *Rust in Peace*

Musically, this album is probably the best on the list, containing some of the finest solos and alternating guitar solos ever written. Megadeth's influence, however, is often overlooked by critics.

Part of this stems from the band's past. Dave Mustaine, lead vocalist and guitarist and Metallica's original guitarist, has always been hard to get along with. This trait ultimately resulted in his dismissal from Metallica, and it has also constantly threatened Megadeth's future because of numerous line-up changes.

In 1990, they finally found a chemistry that worked. With the addition of Marty Friedman on guitar and Nick Menza on drums, the band had musicians equal in caliber to the music they wrote, which is evident in songs like "Holy Wars...The Punishment Due," "Hangar 18" and "Tornado of Souls." These songs blend a style reminiscent of early Metallica with the often-political message of Mustaine, resulting in a tumultuous combination.

Because of recent differences in musical paths, the band is again undergoing changes; but as long as Mustaine is at the helm, there is no doubt that Megadeth will remain a musical force.



Above: (left to right) Terry "Geezer" Butler, Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi and Bill Ward, the original members of Black Sabbath.

Lower left: Album cover for Guns N' Roses "Appetite for Destruction"

6. Danzig, *Danzig II - Lucifuge*

Danzig is perhaps the most elusive band listed in my top 10. Although they found success with the live version of the song "Mother," for the most part, this band has managed to remain underground and innovative.

Danzig is the brainchild of former Misfits and Samhain front man Glenn Danzig. Every note and every lyric is written by him. Although some see this effort as being tyrannical, it has proven effective.

With the 1990 release of their sophomore album, Danzig showed the music industry that Black Sabbath's formula of combining heavy guitars with the blues was still effective. On top of this, he added some of the most distinctive and powerful vocals available, to craft an album with power and subtlety.

Standout tracks are abundant and contain such varying styles as the bass-driven track "Her Black Wings," the overpowering vocals in "Blood and Tears" and the innovative guitar sound of "Devil's Plaything."

Danzig has produced four more albums since this release, and their latest effort, *Danzig 6 - Satan's Child*, is one of the best metal albums made this past year.

5. Life of Agony, *River Runs Red*

People familiar with the genre may question this album's placement on the list: It's by a band that no longer exists, and every album following this 1993 release failed to live up to the aggression and style of the first. To me, this album is irreplaceable.

This album is always with me. No matter where I go, I always take it. Though not as revolutionary as the albums placed higher in this list, this contribution never fails to impress.

With a mixture of hardcore music, tight breakdowns and heavily distorted guitars, Life of Agony (LOA) defines melodic metal in an otherwise disjointed genre. In general, bands of this sort combine their music with fast-paced, screaming lyrics. But LOA vocalist Keith Caputo's took voice lessons to make bassist Alan Robert's lyrics distinctively powerful, rivaling those of other bands.

Songs like "The Stain Remains," "Through and Through" and the

