

Metal is more than a music genre, it is a family, a community, and for many it is their reason for getting out of bed in the morning. My personal experience with this genre directly ties into these feelings of togetherness and inspiration. I started listening to metal when I was thirteen years old with my friends on the bus ride into my first day of my freshman year of highschool. I didn't have my own music taste before I found metal—it changed my life for the better. The first song I listened to was 'Before I Forget' by Slipknot. Slipknot's lead vocalist Corey Taylor says "some of the smartest people I know are metal fans"—from my experience this statement rings true. Even though most people likely believe the stereotype that metal fans are violent, brutish, and satanic, the metal genre actually has one of the most loving, awesome groups of fans in the world. Adrian North, a Heriot-Watt University professor who studies genre listeners, did a study that found metal listeners are creative, at ease with themselves and introverted. These traits remind me of myself and my fellow designers. Metal is a genre that packs a punch and leaves it's listeners feeling free, uplifted and inspired.

The history of how metal came into existence begins with the Blues singers in the early 20th century. Blues is expressive music evokes emotion and lets us fill in our own stories rather than telling their own narrative. Coming from the songs of slaves working in the fields Blues was truly the foundation that shaped metal music's draw from struggle to make music with meaning. Blues was largely underground music or only played in black clubs back during the days of Jim Crow and segregation. So when Elvis Presely and Little Richard took the Blues music they heard and loved and made it their own they were able to reach the audience that was missing out on this exciting music and sorely suffering from lack of it. After Elvis things really exploded with The Beatles. Bands like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and The Who are considered the third generation of rock and roll (behind Elvis and Blues). Each of these groups contributed to the creation of the "rock band" (metal) archetype: loud, unpredictable, rebellious, and possibly dangerous (but not actually dangerous). The end of the 60s saw groups like Led Zeppelin and The Jimi Hendrix Experience rock a generation

increasingly disaffected by social injustice and the escalating war in Vietnam. These bands are set apart from the rest as more hardcore due to the technological advances that enabled new heights in sonic disruption—an application in the field of acoustics which applied the use of ultrasonics to disrupt matter. Zeppelin and Hendrix's ear smashing volume and brutally blunt lyrics that confront the ugly truths in society made them the founders of heavy metal (more like the metal we know today).

More European bands like Black Sabbath and Deep Purple also shaped the rock and roll genre to lean to more hardcore, metal like tendencies. Both of these acts used the tritone—called the tritone because it's made of three whole steps—better known as The Devil's Interval. This Devil's Interval was dubbed as such because it was said the devil existed in the sound it makes. The Devil's interval was ideal for music that wanted to express tension, rebellion and defiance.

To go perfectly with the tension, rebellion and defiance was the band Judas Priest's signature look of leather and studs adopted quite aptly from London's Soho gay club scene. The fact that Judas Priest used the clothing adorned by the disenfranchised gay community speaks further volume to metal's support and voicing for those who the world tries to keep down but they always get up and fight back. This rough and tough look gave metal the image that matched the power and intensity of its sound.

Following Judas Priest came what is known as The New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM). 80s bands like Iron Maiden, Motorhead, and Saxon developed a distinctly new brand of heavy metal. The music of these bands effectively eliminated influence of the blues, instead incorporating elements of late 1970s British punk—faster, aggressively bombastic sounds with lyrics that explored realms of fantasy and mythology while still holding onto the social outrage of those bands that came before them. By the mid-1980s heavy metal was more widely accepted and gained great popularity in mainland Europe, North America and South America. Metal's new popularity gave way for some new deviations—enter Hair and Thrash metal.

Hair metal groups like Poison, RATT, and the well-known Motley Crüe had a streamlined approach with a neutral simplified sound. Hair metal bands were—as the name suggests—more focused on the looks (hair, makeup, and outfits), theatrics, and showmanship. While the outlandish image and insane stage shows did give Hair metal a huge following, Thrash metal had them beat. Thrash metal—Metallica, Exodus, Testament, Megadeth, and Slayer—were the polar opposite of Hair metal and detested Hair metal practices of puffery and simplistic sound. Thrash draws inspiration from the original metal bands and the increased intensity of the NWOBHM.

The 90s saw an explosion of hardcore, truly awesome metal bands. Pantera, a thrash-hardcore hybrid, took the traditional conventions of metal to every conceivable extreme: severely detuned guitars, guttural vocals, unimaginably fast tempos, and radically taboo lyrical content. Some more commonly known groups like Grunge metal bands Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Alice in Chains that coincided with the global recession of 1990–1993 preached a message of resigned despair that resonated with the masses. Heavy metal survived through the decades and still thrives today despite virtually no mainstream support—forever the loud barking underdog that’s ripped its chain from the earth and said “I have no master.”

Metal is a heartbeat that fuels revolutions and social change. The fury and power of metal inspires generation after generation to question authority and fight for the just causes with the full volume and strength of their voice and the full force of their fury. Like many others, I would not be who I am today without Metal. Metal reminds me that there is power within us all to be unique and creative in ways that uplift our spirits and share our individuality with others who understand the struggle of being “the other.”