

THE ART OF THE METAL LOGO

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HEAVY METAL MUSIC, now hitting its thirties, has seen many bands and styles come and go. Its longevity no doubt has root in its slowly evolving form, but also in its visual branding, as metal bands have developed an amazing visual vocabulary in their logos. Logos play such an integral part of the modern day metal band, that most bands seem to spend as much time crafting a name (see Matt Cowbell's "Country vs. Death Metal" in *Zeen* #14) and a logo than they do making music.

Metal logos are important as hell too. Any kid growing up in the '80s coveted older kids' bitchin T-shirts from the last Ozzy, Maiden, Priest, or Leppard concert. Fuck the music—the hardass logos printed in 12 colors on a black T-shirt was where it was at. Screaming out with sharp, metal edges and wicked typography, the metal logo evolved into an art in itself, often surpassing the artistry of the bands they served.

Few other genres of music can claim such a saavy for visual representation. Punk has a few recognizable logos, but they're often considered anti-logos, slapped together urgently for the whole 'No Future' effect. Hip-hop employs some pretty amazing and diverse graphic talent, but the artists rarely stick with the same look or logo for long. Country music? Don't get me started. I mean, can they even read? Perhaps rock, the commodified curmudgeon it is, could lay claim to having more official logos per genre capita, but the quality is exceptionally low and disconnected from the actual bands. LA's full of graphic design hacks toiling away for major label dollar, cranking out crap that serves their wafty portfolios more than the bands or music that's paying their lavish tabs.

The metal logo presents an interesting study in visual communication in the 21st century and anyone who tells you different is a dumbfuck. Completely isolated from the yawning world of highbrow design, these artists have crafted an aesthetic all their own. Especially with the rise and fall of heavy metal within mainstream Western culture, pure visionaries have flourished in the underground metal scene, pushing the artform to deeper, subterranean extremes. Looking past some of the more recognizable names, one is offered an ever-evolving showcase of ritualized graphic representation of metal culture.

What follows are a sampling of these logos as a survey of the international metal logo phenomenon, each highlighting or expanding upon these requisite themes:

Evilocity - Refers to the overall "look" or "feel" of evil within the logo's design. Common devices employed to increase a metal logo's evilocity include inverted crosses, pentagrams, pitchforks, fire, and the numerals '666.' Often, the methods artists use to incorporate these symbols are exceptionally creative and one of the most enjoyable for viewers.

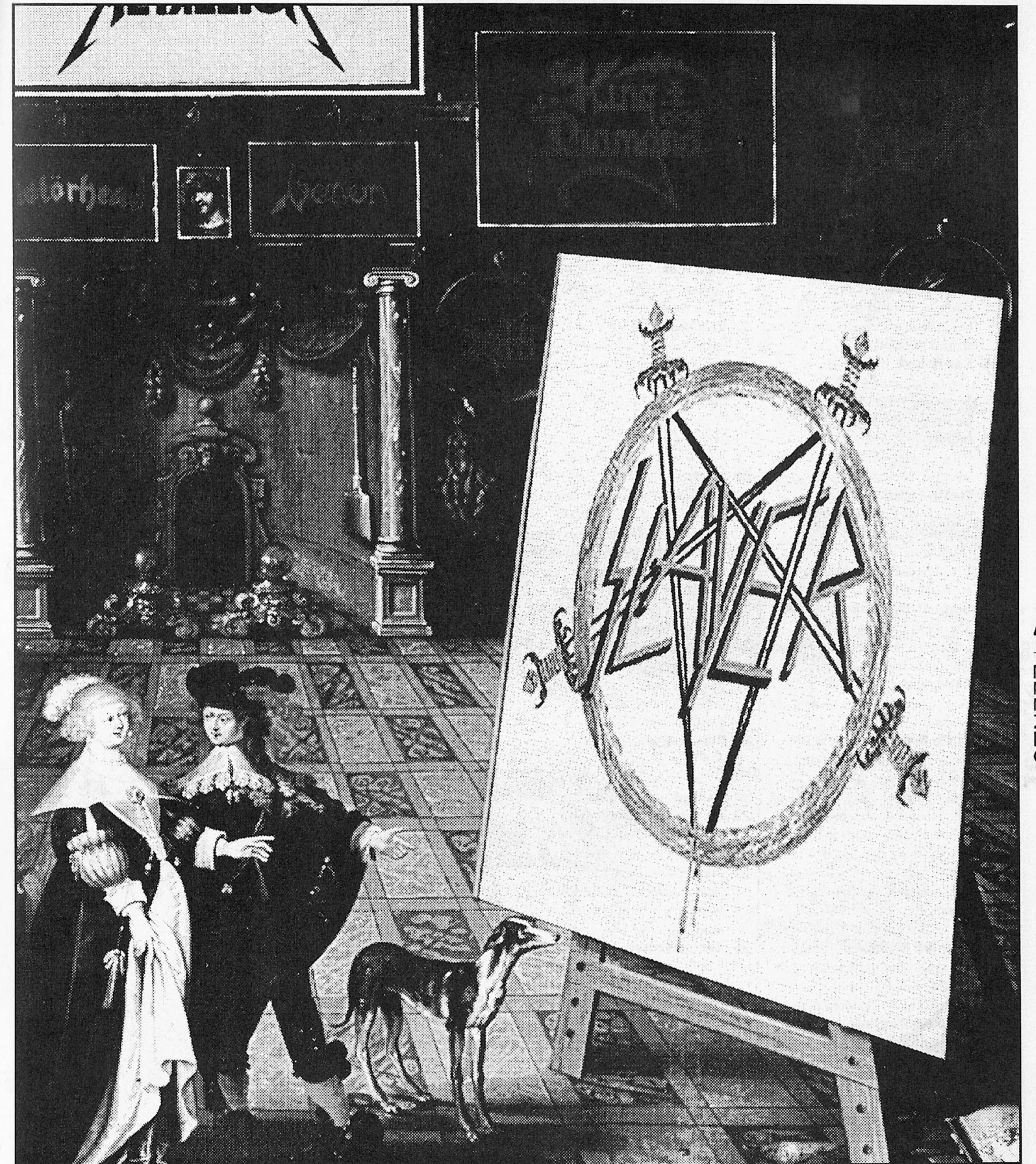
Heavocity - Refers to the overall "look" or "feel" of heaviness, weightiness, and bulk. In an effort to communicate the "heavy" sounds of metal music, artists use heavy, bold lettering forms. Interestingly, in newer forms of metal music, especially within the black metal scene, there has been a bucking of this metal mainstay where much lighter, vein-like lettering is used.

Organic - This sprawling letter form is related to the lighter lettering mentioned above. These logos usually reflect heathen earth worship, with natural, branch-like or vein-like letters which reject the commonly used futuristic metallic form. [Fig. 6, 11, 19, 20]

Sharpness - One of the most utilized techniques for metal logo creation is sharpness. Simply adding pointed edges or hard angles to letter forms instantly create a metal look.

Splattergore - As speed metal morphed into the bloodier territory of death metal, metal bands logos became more like horror movie posters, with dripping blood and splattering letter forms. Some groups have mixed this aesthetic with organic themes to create some rather remarkable (and disgusting) logos that are as repulsive as a festering bag of medical waste. [Fig. 18, 30]

Symmetry - Perhaps most popularized by the phenomenally successful speed metal outfit Metallica, symmetrical logos are the biggest signatures of metal logos. Liberal amounts of letter distortion are allowed in order to give the illusion of complete symmetry. This fascinating standard has resulted in some of the most cryptic logo forms anywhere. Readability is often secondary to symmetry, as symmetry will often give the logos an effect of monstrous teeth or webbed batwings—all adding to the evilocity of a metal logo.



MARKS OF THE BEAST

- 1 Enslaved** (Norway)
Note the cleverly hidden battle axes and melding of Celtic-style weaving with pointed letterforms.
- 2 Merciless** (Sweden)
A schlocky approach to a horrific logo, complete with cartoonish skulls and thorny biomass.
- 3 Abominator** (Australia)
Ouch! Don't touch! This logo displays perfectly prickly type... and an inverted cross to boot!
- 4 Angelcorpse** (Florida)
Severely distorted letters elude to near symmetry, focusing on a centralized pitchfork.
- 5 Bewitched** (Sweden)
The bloody ax forms and script letterforms seem to echo Germanic eagle forms.
- 6 Imperial** (France)
Unique, wafty letters form around a perfect, centralized circle.
- 7 Tsathoggua** (Germany)
An impossibly cryptic moniker!
- 8 Sadistik Exekution** (Australia)
Barbs excessively underscore the pointed forms of the letters.
- 9 Serpent Obscene** (Unknown)
The slight wavering and interlocking letters of this logo almost give it a Grateful Dead look.
- 10 Abruptum** (Norway)
Complex and cryptic. Completely disregards legibility.
- 11 Cirith Gorgor** (Netherlands)
Organically-inspired branches stem from classic pointed letters.
- 12 Triumphator** (Sweden)
The 'T' and 'R' are liberally adorned and distorted to create a circular frame and design.
- 13 Absu** (Texas)
Incorporating many classic metal themes, this elaborate logo stands out with an asymmetrical balance.
- 14 Impaled Nazarene** (Belgium)
Good use of script type and overt Satanic symbols: the goathead, pentagram, and inverted cross.
- 15 Mayhem** (Norway)
Distinct batwings and inverted crosses make this notorious band's logo scream with evilocity.
- 16 Maze of Torment** (Sweden)
An interesting reinterpretation of double inverted crosses that contrasts line weight.

- 17 Sword Master** (Sweden)
Possibly the doofiest logo collected here, it definitely reflects the band's moniker.
- 18 Exhumed** (California)
Excessively blood-soaked letters evoke images of the bloodiest slasher films.
- 19 Incantation** (Ohio)
A perfect example of a veiny, organic style.
- 20 Deprecated** (California)
Features a boogery, slime sheen and a subtle inverted cross.
- 21 Voivod** (Canada)
Reflecting the band's sci-fi and cyberpunk inspired noise, this detailed logo was done by the band's drummer, Away. Recently Away did album artwork for Matador record's release of hip-hop group Non-Phixion.
- 22 Noctuary** (Massachusetts)
Unlike the Dungeons & Dragons look to Sword Master's blade-inspired logo, Noctuary has created a truly threatening and cryptic logo with a metallic glare.
- 23 Mystifier** (Brazil)
A squigling mass for letters offers visions of graveyard worms.
- 24 Marduk** (Sweden)
Impressively collects the unholy trinity of metal logos: inverted cross, batwings, and overt Satanism with '666.'
- 25 Bork Nagar** (Norway)
The light weight of these interwoven lines give this logo an elegant appeal.
- 26 Insataniy** (New Jersey)
The 'I' and 'Y' claw around to frame the inverted cross.
- 27 Mortician** (New York)
Heavy, scalpel-like letterforms reflect the guttural gore the band's sound is known for.
- 28 Sacramentum** (Sweden)
Another logo that teeters towards a Grateful Dead style.
- 29 Dark Throne** (Norway)
An excellent logo that forgoes crisp, hard lines for an equally powerful bolt-of-lightening look.
- 30 Vile** (California)
A playful melding of sharp, metallic letters forged into a naturalistic and splattery mess.



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