

A role-playing game of metal and magic
By Tim Kirk

*"THE GODS MADE HEAVY METAL AND THEY SAW THAT IS WAS GOOD
THEY SAID TO PLAY IT LOUDER THAN HELL
WE PROMISED THAT WE WOULD"
—Manowar, The Gods Made Heavy Metal*

INTRO

There is something in the air, on the wind, the smell of sweat. The vision of hand held high in symbolic hooked horn, the rhythmic power of dance flowing out like electricity from the mosh pit. The crowd bleeds out their passions, their hungers, and their power.

We ended to a screaming crowd, panties and other sundry items flung at us like favors to knights in a different age. I made it back stage and paused as I caught sight of figure in the shadows dressed in trench coat, lean and hungry. He glanced my way. His skin almost gray under the flickering lights and dancing shadows he was a shark circling for prey. He was looking for a quick score—sell to the band, to our groupies, feed them drugs, then feed on them like the demon he was. He didn't expect me. I am Voight, lead singer of Black Moon Bleeding. He didn't expect us, because what we were was new.

I could smell the decay about him and I joked with my band members, beckoned to him with a nod, he followed and the bruisers at the door just opened the way. It shut solidly behind him, and I smiled. He tilted up his gaze and caught the flash of power sparking behind my eyes. Too late, he realized, as his infernal power bled out in terrified scream. A primal sound that echoed through the halls.

"Die motherfucker." I said through gritted teeth. He obliged as I lowered my hand the eldritch energies always made my palms itch, especially after I skunked a demon.

My drummer cackled and tossed me a cold one, "Teach him. Hope he gets a ripe ass-rape in Hell."

"Where's the chicks man? Someone needs a good fucking tonight."

I smiled and looked at him. The world was fucked up for sure. Had to take what it offered, and drag it around by the tits or the balls--Time to party, time to refuel the power.

This is Heavy Metal Magic.

Since rock and heavy metal in particular began it has always been linked to the darkest of vices, black magic, and Satan worship, most of it a load of utter shit. The truth, if you only knew, now that would blow your mind farther than L S fucking D.

Somewhere in a garage, some band cranked the watts a little to high, stirred up by hormones, by rage, by all the primal passionate things that fuels heavy metal, and they reached out with a chord so pure it pulled secrets down from the heavens, and up from the hells below. Magic, the arcane art was reborn. It didn't take long to spread; the power itself was a rush greater than any drug, greater than the adulation of millions.

But for every thing, there is a price. And magic, its got one hell of letdown. You fuel it or it consumes you, you use it or it uses you.

It didn't take long for the constant fueling and usage to draw lines in the sand between the various bands. ; Some fighting the good fight, living the hedonism to its fullest, but fighting back at the things, which devour and taint the pure exchange of power, passion, and heavy metal. Some fed without return, those became the first to burn out, they used too much, without sharing, without relenting and it tainted them, some turned to demons to boost their power, the old Satan worship becoming all to real.

Now you're in a band. You have a voice, some talent, and the power. What do you do with it?

CHARACTER CREATION

"WE ARE THE TRUE BELIEVERS
IT'S OUR TURN TO SHOW THE WORLD
IN THE FIRE OF HEAVY METAL WE WERE BURNED
IT'S MORE THAN OUR RELIGION IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE
BUT THE ENEMIES OF METAL WE CAN'T FORGIVE"
—Manowar, The Gods Made Heavy Metal

The first step to playing the game is creating a band, all the players involved in the game should work together to create a name for the band, and choose the roles they wish to have in it—from manager, to stage hand, to lead singer, drummer, bass guitarist. There is more to every band than the front man, and all of them are a part of Heavy Metal Magic's wars—you're either in it, or you're a target.

Metal Bands tend to have names take from myth, legend, and darker play on words: *Black Moon Bleeding, Dogs of the Abyss, Shadowmancer, Charon's Ferry etc.*

Then fill out the individual elements of a character.

- 1) *Give him or her a name.*
- 2) *Describe how he looks dresses,*
- 3) *Assign the three Primary Attributes.*

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES

PERFORM
POWER
PHYSIQUE

You simply assign + symbol for your favored attribute, a Neutral (N) symbol for your next attribute of interest and – symbol to your least favored attribute.

TAG TRAITS

Now each attribute gets “tags” little areas of expertise for the metal head in question. One thing to note is abilities except the – (least favored) are enhanced in some way, better than your average human being, a normal non-heavy metal magician gets a – single trait for each attribute.

Rank + (Highest) receives 5 Tag traits beneath it
Rank 0 (Neutral) Receives 3 Tag Traits beneath it and
Rank - (Lowest) receives only a single Tag Trait.

Example Tags:

Perform Tags: Sing, Play Instrument, Showmanship, Draw Power, Influence, Setup, Confront, Lyric Writing, Contracts, Interview, Entourage, Sex Appeal, Crowd Control, Sympathetic Sorcery, Deceive

Power Tags: Store Power, Focus, Quell, Channel, Purify, Overload, Borrow, Displace, Disrupt, Sense, Subdue, Charge, Wizardry, Enhance, Obliterate

Physique Tags: Stamina, Strength, Toughness, Contagion Alchemy, Consummation, Appearance, Stage Maneuvering, Instrument Manhandling, Voice Versatility, Agility, Brawl, Melee, Run, Dance, Swim

Traits are self-explanatory for the most part; A Stage Manager (our fancy name for the guy who sets everything up and runs the game) can add new tag traits or allow players to add their own. Some have a bit more detail below:

- **Draw Power:** Literally drawing power out of fans to use for magic.
- **Setup:** Preparing Rituals, Electronic Instruments etc.
- **Crowd Control:** Similar to Influence but on much broader scale and simpler motivational changes.
- **Sympathetic Sorcery:** The ability to use music to create a sympathetic magical reaction—song lyrics become incantations, chords become spell keys, movement becomes ritualistic effects.
- **Store Power:** The ability to hold power in reserve.
- **Focus:** Ability to control the use of power.
- **Quell:** Calming wild magic bleeds
- **Channel:** Similar to draw power but used immediately to transfer power from one person to another outside of oneself.
- **Purify:** Removing tainted elements from magic
- **Overload:** Putting too much power into something so it is overwhelmed.
- **Borrow:** Using another mages power to cast a spell (must be a consenting ally)
- **Displace:** Trading power with another, used literally to make someone else seem to be you “magically”
- **Disrupt:** Attempt to cancel channeling, draw power, or other power transfers
- **Sense:** Sixth Sense used to locate and perceive magic
- **Subdue:** Diminishing outward signs of power level “shedding” power temporarily.
- **Charge:** imbuing and object with power
- **Wizardry:** The raw use of magical energy, the bolts of power, walls of force, general glitzy energy things.
- **Enhance:** uses power to boost other trait
- **Obliterate:** destroying power in object, creature, or person.
- **Contagion Alchemy:** The ability change things with magic by physical contact on some intervening object or person.
- **Consummation:** The art of sexual prowess.

For even more detail, see “**Magic and Music**” Section.

In addition to each of the abilities, all Heavy Metal musicians have three sub-abilities

HEALTH MANA FAME

Health: Equal to Physique

Mana: Equal to Power

Fame: Equal to Perform

All that is left is to fill out the character sheet, make some more descriptive notes and your metal musician is ready to rock and roll!

HEAVY METAL MAGIC

**BAND
ROLE
NAME**

	PERFORM		POWER		PHYSIQUE
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG

**HEALTH
MANA
FAME**

PERFORMING TASKS

Any challenged action a Metal head, musician, or magician attempts they must roll dice to attempt to succeed.

The player can choose to play a Low Chord or a High Chord (rolling low or high respectively) the dice used are always d6 thus a low chord is anything 3 and less, and a high chord is anything 4 or higher). The number of dice rolled is based on difficulty of a task as follows:

Challenging	2d6
Moderate	4d6
Easy	6d6

The dice rolled are modified by the favor level of a trait a positive mark gets one additional die, while a negative mark loses a die. In order to succeed at a task they must dice that matches their chosen chord. Each die that does so is a note they may use to complete tasks. (Most task require 2 notes to complete)

If the dice come up as doubles (or triples etc) they have hit a riff, a riff allows them to re-roll all dice that matched and keep all results that match chord as notes for tasks.

A Stage Manager (SM) may also assign a difficulty based on weather they have an advantage in the scene +, or are disadvantaged at the scene – (this subtracts or adds an additional die just like an attribute)

All dice in every action are rolled entirely by the players. The SM simply sets the stage.

In opposed actions (combat, magical duels) the opposite chords earned by a player in a roll may be taken as notes by the SM to use against the player.

EXAMPLE

Voight sees the demon and lures him into his dressing room; in this case, he has the jump on the demon so the SM says that he can act before the Demon. He has Power+ and Perform N and Physique -, the demon is an overall N challenge the SM rates him as a Moderate challenge to destroy. Voight decides to use obliterate (one of his tags) and goes for a high chord! He roll 5d6 and gets 2, 1, 4,3, 5 the 4 and 5 are each notes in the chord and so he's enough to destroy the poor demon with one action.

MAGIC AND MAGIC

"BESTOW UPON ME KNOWLEDGE WIZARD ~ ALL KNOWING ALL WISE
I WANT TO RULE THIS KINGDOM MAKE SWEET THE BREEZE NOW DEFILED
DETHRONE THE EVIL PRINCE'S IRON FIST IN VELVET GLOVES OF SIN
PARADE THE GREY ROBED MONKS THE VESTAL VIRGINS, WHEEL THE WYVERN'S IN
LET THE CEREMONY CONSECRATE THE MARRIAGE LET ME BE THE PROTÉGÉ
OF FIVE MAGICS GIVE ME ALCHEMY WIZARDRY SORCERY THERMATOLOGY
ELECTRICITY MAGIC IF YOU PLEASE MASTER ALL OF THESE
BRING HIM TO HIS KNEES I MASTER FIVE MAGICS"
—Megadeth, Five Magics

Magic in Heavy Metal Magic, is tied very closely to music, and its passionate play. It is easy to see why so few reach its power though they lose the passion for the music before reaching its crescendo that triumphs over reality, selling out, failing to keep it pure.

All of a character's traits that are neutral or positive are enhanced by magic, better than normal humans, but that is a side effect of power, there are five magics, three are covered here the others are the province of other magicians with other paths.

SYMPATHETIC SORCERY

An art tied most closely to performance it requires a performance challenge to be used. It relies on music, words, incantations, dance and other performance actions to create a spell-like sympathetic effect. There are two rules to Sympathetic Sorcery—you must repeat the performance element three times. "Thrice Spoken Once Fulfilled", and "Like Produces Like" the latter principle requires that a physical effect requires a physical action, a mental effect requires a mental action, as well as any effect must be similar to work. A Spell to warp space must rely on music and dance repeated three times, and invoke some songlike words meaning: warp, teleport, gate, or similar synonym like effects.

WIZARDRY

Power and its raw application in the world is this art's demesne, it is a powerful visual and visceral effect, it is perhaps the most dramatic magic there is in terms of displays of power, but also because of that the shortest lived, and least broad of capability. Wizardry is the art of conquest—you either conquer or are defeated, its nature is energy, the flame of life. You burn, or are burned. Wizardry creates all the bolts, bleeds, shields, etc of classic power battles. It is invoked by will and one of the easier arts to use because all it takes is knowledge of power and shaping that power in brutal ways to use it. Wizardry requires a Power challenge to utilize its abilities.

CONTAGION ALCHEMY

Alchemy was once the power of mixing elixirs of using contagions to transmute objects, to some degree that remains in its newer form. Yet contagion alchemy is more—it is an infection, the ability to use the natural laws of six degrees to link spells from you to your target. You want to weaken an opponent, use Contagion alchemy on a groupie and six people later the spell will trigger on the right target guaranteed. This can work on people, as well as object, making a change to trigger later within some contact factor of six. The only way to fool or avoid the spell is someone using the Power trait of Displace, for the contagion tracks the native energies of a target in subtle cross-planar ways. Alchemy is a subtle transmutation, you can weaken, or strengthen, change, or metamorphose something by its power, but it is a slower, long building power and takes planning to enact. Contagion requires a Physique challenge because it requires physical contact with the object to be changed, or acting as a vector, and utilizes.

MANA

Not just bread from heaven, mana is the coin of magic, the energy that powers it, it may be spirit, it may be soul, it might just be the good intentions your paving yourself to hell with, but whatever the hell it is, its your ticket to the big time. Whenever a spell effect is triggered through, any of the three magic styles above, or any use of a trait to perform non-normal actions (Performing before a crowd trying to force them to believe what you want when they didn't begin that way.) requires you make a Mana roll, this is always a Moderate action, each note you earn beyond the first reduces the time you must wait in rounds before you can enact another power driven effect. The standard amount of time between power uses is 6 rounds

A magician can draw power from a crowd, he is performing too, or a single individual he has close contact with in order to recharge (a crowd generates more extra energy) this allows him on a Mana roll to store up to 6 spells worth of power if succeeds at getting enough notes on a Draw Power or similar challenge roll. Each note earned up to six is stored energy for a spell they can use as they see fit for up one full day afterwards.

KICKING IN TEETH AND GRINDING THE AXE IN THEIR SKULLS

"ASSASSIN IN STEALTH
ASSAILANT FROM HELL
IMPREVIOUS TO DAMAGE
COMPUTER ON~BOARD
ENGAGED IN A WAR
NON~STOP COMBATANT"
—Megadeth, Psychotron

Combat isn't exactly what Heavy Metal rockers are built for, but kicking asses occasionally may be required. After all an axe isn't just for sweet permanent lullabies, it's for rock and roll baby!

The Combat system works exactly as the general task system with regards to most challenges.

You simply roll a challenge based on difficulty, attribute favor, and enemy favor, and try to earn notes. Each note beyond the first is a penalty that can be applied to your opponent—disarm, injury, parry their attack, dodge their attack, throw them into something, and so on.

Typical battles require 6 notes spent against an opponents health to end an opponent's ability to battle--Injuring them or killing them or driving them off depending on the winning combatants intent.

HEALTH

PC's must make a challenge roll using health versus the number of notes spent against them as injury or impediment.

Up to 3 Notes: Easy

4 or more Notes: Moderate

6 or more Notes: Challenging

Each note earned by a player negates a note spent against them, if there are 6 notes left against them at the end of any round they are taken out of the fight, and may be dying, per the Stage Managers discretion. If they have less than 6 notes against them at the end of a fight, they are considered wounded.

Weapons may add a favor (+) if the weapon user has an appropriate trait.

DEALS WITH THE DEVIL

"IN OUR LIFE THERE'S IF
IN OUR BELIEFS THERE'S LIE
IN OUR BUSINESS THERE'S SIN
IN OUR BONES THERE'S DIE"
--Megadeth, This was my life

For all bands there comes a time to sign with a label, or keep eking out a meager living doing over-the-road touring, and putting out demos and singles on their own.

These are sometimes called "Deals with the Devil" not to be confused with pacts, record labels may or may not be demonically owned, but their normal contracts just cost you money not your soul.

Contracts require a manager and/or an agent make a deal for you with the label. Some musicians take this upon themselves, and usually are screwed but with the right traits, they might finagle themselves a better deal. Earning a contract, renegotiating a contract, can be run exactly like combat, except it uses Perform trait rather than Physique, and notes earned against you don't become wounds, they just become bad deals that cost you money. (And a 6-note hit may leave you bankrupt as your manager, agent, or label makes off with all your money to Jamaica.)

FAME

Just as Mana, Fame is the coin of performance, you spend it to get more, your influence is stronger, your legend greater. However it's a double-edged sword, you get to the right height and make a wrong move and it crashes down around you. Fame does work a bit differently. You use it automatically whenever you use performance, whenever you go out on the town it's a constant reminder that you are whom you are. In all situations from stealth, to deception, to negotiations anything you do where being noticed is a factor it adds its favor. In some instances, (sneaking out past paparazzi) the favor is added to your opponents! In other cases it is added to your own dice roll Fame can go to a musicians head, whenever they need to deal with things needing empathy, sympathy or general normal human interactions that aren't ego driven, fame acts again against them adding its favor to their opposition (or acting as a negative favor rather than a positive and vice versa)

"YOU TAKE A MORTAL MAN.
AND PUT HIM IN CONTROL
WATCH HIM BECOME A GOD
WATCH PEOPLES HEADS
A'ROLL".
—Megadeth, *Symphony
of destruction*

PACTS

Pacts are a dangerous thing, you make a deal with a demon and your going to be burned. Pacts vary a lot, most of them involve gaining fame faster--- essentially you get a + favor as fame, for the price of course of your soul. If you have fame already this simply means you can't go anywhere without being noticed, harassed, stalked, etc.

THE RABBLE

“DREAMS OF WAR, DREAMS OF LIARS
DREAMS OF DRAGON'S FIRE
AND OF THINGS THAT WILL BITE”
-- Metallica, Enter Sandman

Ducks, Duckies

Short for Demon suckers, or Demon /cock/ suckers

Ducks are metal bands that've gone over to the satanic side of things for power. They should be treated pretty much as opponents with a net neutral effect.

Demons

The real deal supernatural predators that vary from little chirpy imps with a mean streak, to hell on wheels big d's with horns tails, wings and who know how to make a entrance through big ass pentacles. Challenge varies.

Nags

Nickname for New Age Gaea shite—basically your turn of the mill pseudo peace loves and magic chicks, though a few guys goes this route too. Best solution is just to flip em off and be delighted in your self so much they'll usually get the hint and leave. Positive Challenge.

Lawyers

Generally speaking the scariest opponents a band has to deal with from time to time, they're stick in the mud soul-less creeps out for a buck—lawyers sometimes come with names like managers, producers, or other shit-titles, best just to recognize the difference between lawyers and the real working stiff. Neutral Challenge

Stalkers

They might be groupies if they were sane, but in general they aren't they are so whacked out, round the bend sorts that they can be dangerous, for sheer tenacity. Kick them hard and run. Magic tends to just feed the fire of their worship. Net Negative challenge.

HEAVY METAL MAGIC

BAND
ROLE
NAME

	PERFORM		POWER		PHYSIQUE
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG
	TAG		TAG		TAG

HEALTH
MANA
FAME