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## Metallica and Military History

(Pennsylvania Military Museum, T. Gum, Site Admin)

Music is an integral part of culture and society that reflects the time, and for some musicians, various issues and topics. Such examples can easily be found through military history - where there is an encampment or deployment, there is song and where this military action there is likely to public support or public protest. In contemporary times music genres such as jazz, spirituals, rock, punk, country, and folk have all been avenues of expression. Bands such as Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR) come to mind, as does Jethro Tull, and Jimi Hendrix... all are of course from the Vietnam era. What does the modern era have to offer?

Today's bands and musicians continue writing music about current affairs but they are also writing wicked guitar riffs and drum solos involving military history subject matter - such as the band Metallica. Heavy metal has been a crutch & outlet for those deployed since it exploded with intensified lyrics and beats per minute - a mix of rock and thrash - shortly after Vietnam in the late 70s early 80s.

Upon close listening several of the their (Metallica) songs the themes of history/military and anti war sentiments are easy to find.



The Four Horseman artwork - "War" being one of the horseman.

Examples include the following albums and songs;

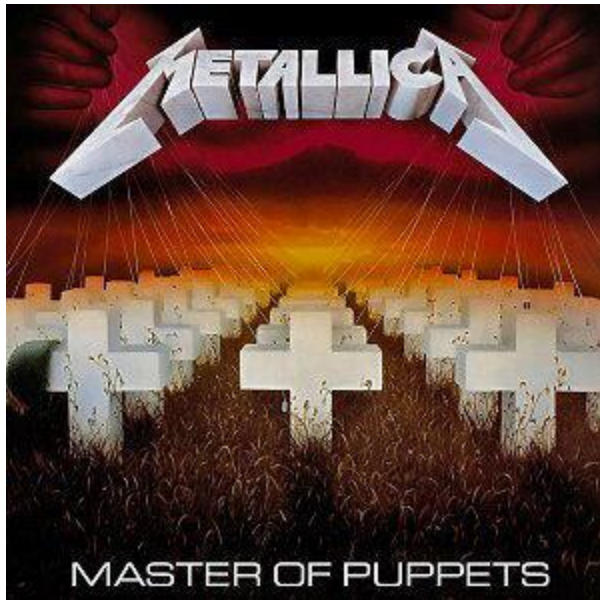
***Kill 'Em All:*** The Four Horsemen, Phantom Lord, No Remorse, Metal Militia

***Ride the Lightning:*** For Whom the Bell Tolls

***Master of Puppets:*** Disposable Heroes

***And Justice for All:*** One

***Metallica ( the Black Album):*** Don't Tread on Me



Master of Puppets cover art - notice the likeness between the artwork and a military cemetery, and helmet on the cross.

On their first album, *Kill 'Em All*, the band dives into the hardships and darkness of not only war itself but its impacts on the human psyche; such as the song, *No Remorse*. Event artwork related to the songs reflect the darkness of themes, and the military undertones. The album is noticeably faster and more intense than later work.

In 2015, the 1986 album *Master of Puppets* was selected as the first metal recording to be preserved by the Library of Congress for preservation in the National Recording Registry. This album is home to *Disposable Heroes*, a song about a young man going to war and carrying out his orders... it is by all arguments an anti-war song, which is easily understood by reading the lyrics and listening to the tone of the song.



James Hetfield singing *One* in concert - notice the doughboys on the screen behind him, and the front end of a WWI tank.

The song *One* in particular from the *And Justice for All* album, along with its music video and stage performance, detail the experience of a World War One soldier that has suffered unimaginable pain and physical loss due to a mine detonating. The young man is left unable to move, see, or communicate with his care takers in the hospital and wishes for the pain to end. It is unfortunately an artistic expression of just how dark World War One, and for that matter, all war really is.

Military history does not intend to glorify war but rather it is the earnest study of a subject so that it's most unfortunate part, combat/war, is avoided at all cost. It may seem paradoxical but through such study and

remembrance, not only are the sacrifices of many honored, but the responsibility of having a civilian lead all-volunteer military force is better understood.

Music is a physical & emotional outlet for those that write it, those that perform it, and for those that listen to it (or crank it up and feel it). Metallica is a band that has embodied this in their lyrics & speed, use of imagery and stage performances for over thirty years.