



BRIAN LEW



## 11 Metallica

Mustaine and Hetfield at war!

I first came across Metallica quite by accident in autumn 1982. I was in San Francisco checking out glamsters Mötley Crüe when I bumped into a group of rowdy Bay Area 'bangers (aka thrash metal fans) who immediately started slagging off Nikki Sixx and friends and chanting the name Metallica over and over. I was intrigued. What was this new, mysterious beast called Metallica? Then someone shoved a copy of the band's now legendary *No Life Til Leather* demo into my beer-stained hands.

That night in a drunken haze I played the tape over and over again, my Sony Walkman (remember them?) literally shaking with my excitement. My first reaction was total shock – this was new; it was like crossing Ted Nugent with Motörhead and then putting it through a blender at 120mph. Strange as it may seem, Metallica sounded more European than American. This, I was later to discover, was down to the band's Danish skin-pounder, Lars Ulrich, and his European metal influences.

As luck would have it Metallica were headlining at the notorious Old Waldorf, which was situated in the unlikely setting of San Francisco's financial district. Any dull banking dude working nearby was in for a miserable evening as Metallica blew the roof off the Old Waldorf on that hot and sticky night.

On stage Metallica were almost, dare I say it, Spinal Tap-ish in their appearance – a truly horrendous combination of denim and spandex. It was a bit like looking at a Jackson Pollock painting: messy. Ulrich was decked out in black Jane Fonda-style spray-on spandex loons and a totally ridiculous headscarf,

while guitarists James Hetfield and Dave Mustaine favoured a mix of bullet belts and Venom T-shirts.

The similarity between Hetfield and Mustaine was frightening. They were like brothers, banging their heads in unison to the electrifying *Four Horsemen*. But their body language told another story – this was a Battle Royal. They both tried desperately to hog the front of the stage; they would literally push each other out of the way with their duelling axes. The rivalry looked intense, and it just got better and better: *Hit The Lights*, *Jump In The Fire* and *Seek & Destroy* sent the Old Waldorf into meltdown. The speedometer finally broke on the ridiculously fast *Whiplash*. Ulrich's drums were cascading with sweat – we're talkin' Niagara Falls here! Bassist Ron McGovney just kept smiling; he was knew he was part of something special. (But sadly he didn't last the pace and was later replaced by Cliff Burton.)

This version of Metallica was definitely the most energetic. Sure, the band got better as the years rolled by and were the finished article by the time the seminal *Black* album hit the streets in '91. But I much prefer the class of '82 – they were uglier, faster and a lot more fun. And they certainly didn't need the services of a psychiatrist!

I miss those duelling six-string battles between Hetfield and Mustaine. As the lyric from *Whiplash* testifies: *'Here on the stage the Marshall noise is piercing through your ears/it kicks your ass, kicks your face, exploding feeling nears.'*

Sheer Metalli-poetry.  
Xavier Russell