

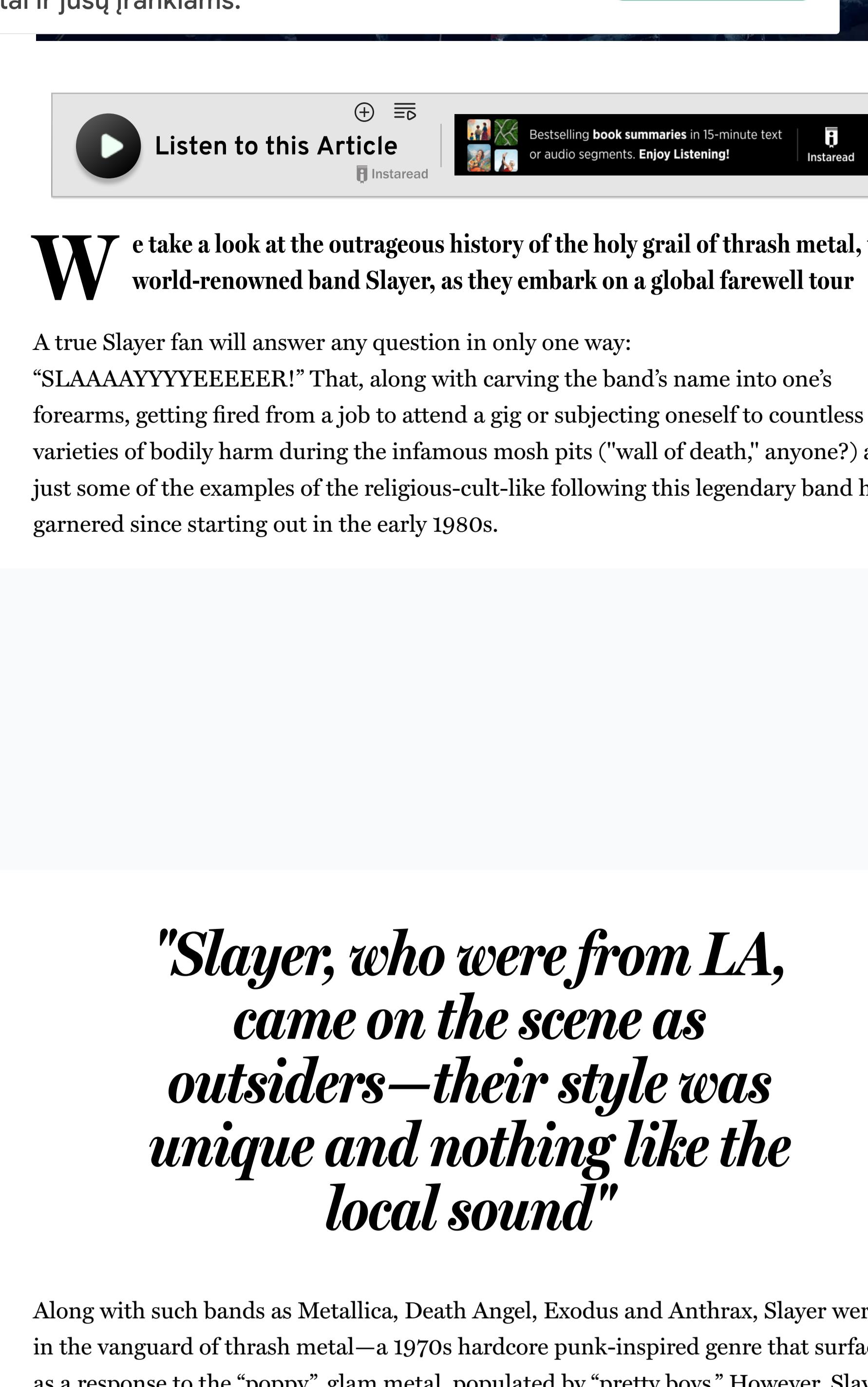
A brief history of Slayer

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We take a look at the outrageous history of the holy grail of thrash metal, the world-renowned band Slayer, as they embark on a global farewell tour

A true Slayer fan will answer any question in only one way:

"SLAAAAYYYYYEEEEEER!" That, along with carving the band's name into one's forearms, getting fired from a job to attend a gig or subjecting oneself to countless varieties of bodily harm during the infamous mosh pits ("wall of death," anyone?) are just some of the examples of the religious-cult-like following this legendary band has garnered since starting out in the early 1980s.



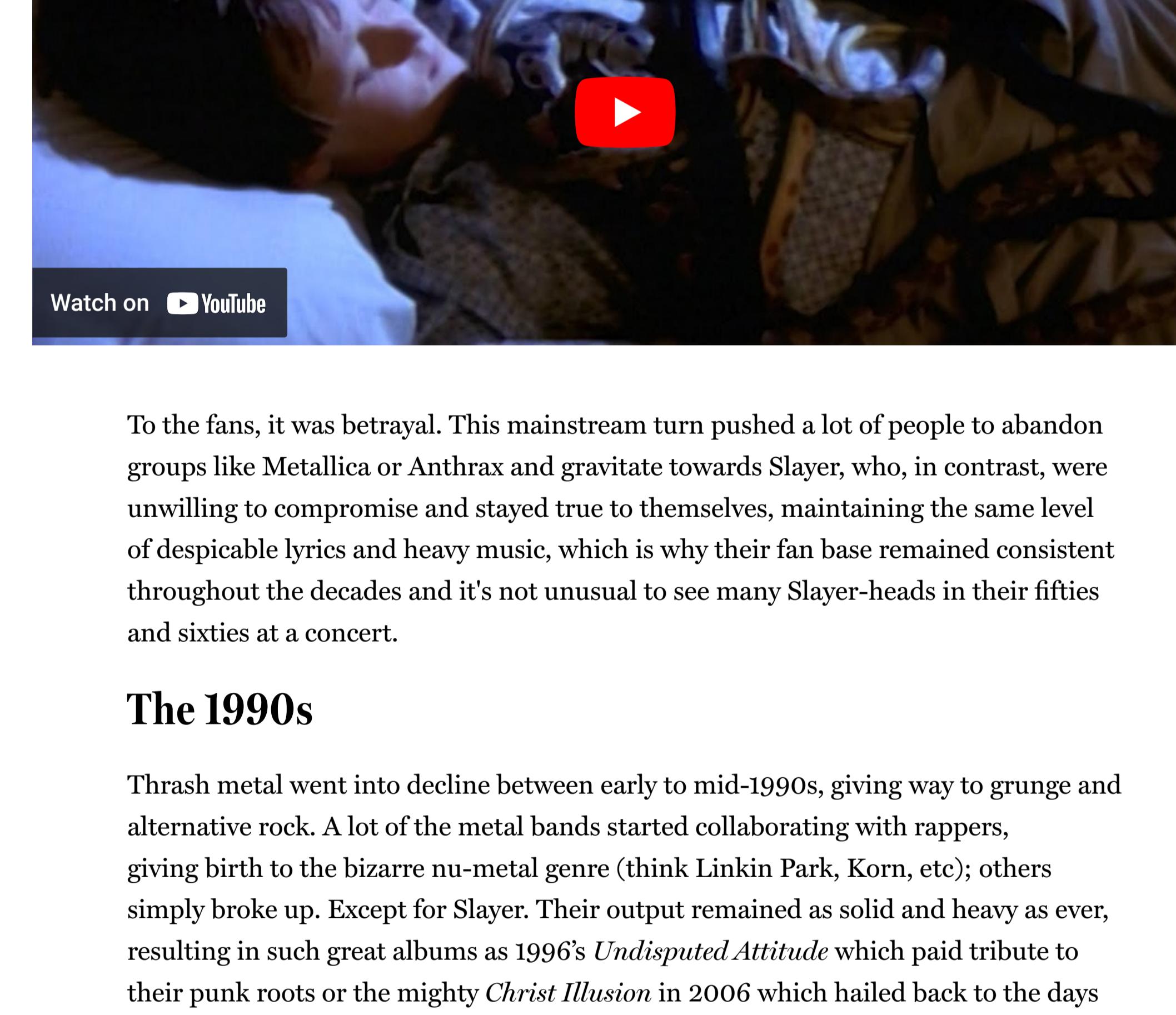
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"Slayer, who were from LA, came on the scene as outsiders—their style was unique and nothing like the local sound"

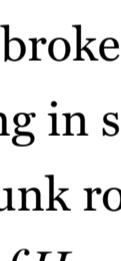
Along with such bands as Metallica, Death Angel, Exodus and Anthrax, Slayer were in the vanguard of thrash metal—a 1970s hardcore punk-inspired genre that surfaced as a response to the "poppier," glam metal, populated by "pretty boys." However, Slayer have always had an edge over their fellow thrashers.

Slayer in the 1980s. Image via Alex Solca

Since many of the aforementioned bands hailed from the San Francisco Bay Area, they also moved in the same circles, frequently sharing the stage as well as band members, which resulted in a uniform, almost incestuous music eco-climate. Slayer, who were from LA, came on the scene as outsiders—their style was unique and nothing like the local sound. Instead, they drew on British heavy metal in the likes of Black Sabbath or Judas Priest and adopted the leather and spike-heavy look as well as a lot of the on-stage choreography.



It wasn't until Slayer's third, seminal record, *Reign in Blood*, that they achieved great success and popularity in their own right and, hence, became confident enough to realise that they didn't need to copy anyone and could just be themselves. With graphically violent lyrics, addictive guitar licks and the relentless bass drum rolls, *Reign in Blood* singlehandedly changed the face of thrash metal.

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It was also the first Slayer record produced by the legendary Rick Rubin. Hailing from New York City, the famous producer lent *Reign in Blood* a strong punk rock edge and went on to produce the rest of Slayer's discography.

Embracing the anger

Music censorship was a hot issue in 1980s America, and daily lawsuits filed against artists and bands for explicit lyrics/behaviour were business as usual. Slayer were a refreshing respite from that stifled, sheltered environment for teenage kids, providing them with an outlet for their anger that they desperately needed in their daily lives. Coming from a punk background, the band really understood anger and knew how to translate that energy into music that was darker, faster and heavier than anything else out there—and that intensity was what brought people to them.

They made their fans feel like they belonged to something bigger within a society they hated, and throughout their entire career, they never really lost that ability. Going to a Slayer gig was catharsis; thrashing in a mosh pit was a release.

The infamous "wall of death"

And while to an outsider it may look like the moshers out there are trying to hurt each other, the truth couldn't be more different. Everyone's there for the sole reason of expressing their aggression but through a medium fuelled by camaraderie and mutual understanding. If you ever fall to the floor in mosh pit at a Slayer gig, someone will immediately help you up—it's a code of conduct propagated by the band's fans on every forum and fan group on the internet.

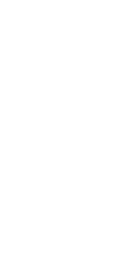
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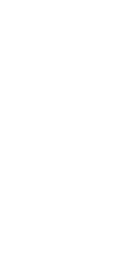
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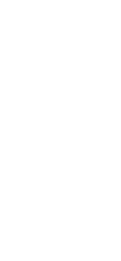
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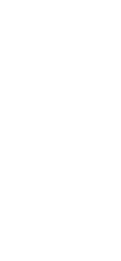
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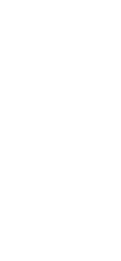
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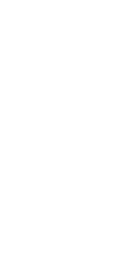
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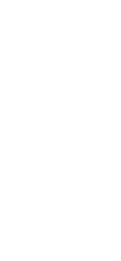
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