



Station 1: Videos of Heavy Metal's Early Influences – Hard Rock

There are many elements of Hard Rock in Heavy Metal music. The videos in Station 1 highlight some examples of Hard Rock bands that influenced early Heavy Metal, including Link Wray, The Kinks, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and Cream.

Many musicians feel the guitar sound that would go on to be characteristic of Hard Rock, and later Heavy Metal, can first be attributed to Link Wray, a Native American musician from Dunn, North Carolina. In January, 1958, Link and his brothers Doug and Ray were performing for a record hop in Virginia. While they were performing, a member of the audience requested the band play "The Stroll," a song made popular by the vocal group the Diamonds. Link, who spent the previous months in the hospital being treated for tuberculosis, didn't know the song, and instead improvised a tune based on three "power chords," groupings of notes that would later be commonly used in Hard Rock, Heavy Metal, and Punk. Meanwhile, Link's brother Ray placed a microphone next to Link's small amplifier, creating a distorted sound that reverberated throughout the hall.

The song was a hit, and throughout the night, the audience continued to request it. Sensing its popularity, Milt Grant, the host of the record hop, arranged for Link and his brothers to record the song in a studio. To achieve the same distorted sound he got at the live performance, Link poked holes in his guitar amplifier. The song was titled "Rumble," and would become known throughout the country. With its distorted sound and references to gang activity, "Rumble" was one of the few purely instrumental songs to be banned by radio stations in America.

Musical Definitions

Distortion – an electro-acoustic effect used in music where a musical instrument's sound wave is changed, resulting in a sound that is "dirty," "raspy," or "fuzzy." This was originally achieved by intentionally damaging an amplifier but is now done with pedals and pre-amps

Riff – a short repeated musical phrase

Tone – the character or quality of a particular instrument's sound. For example, clean or dirty, thin or fat, bright, warm, or cool

Virtuosity – extreme or highly developed technical skill