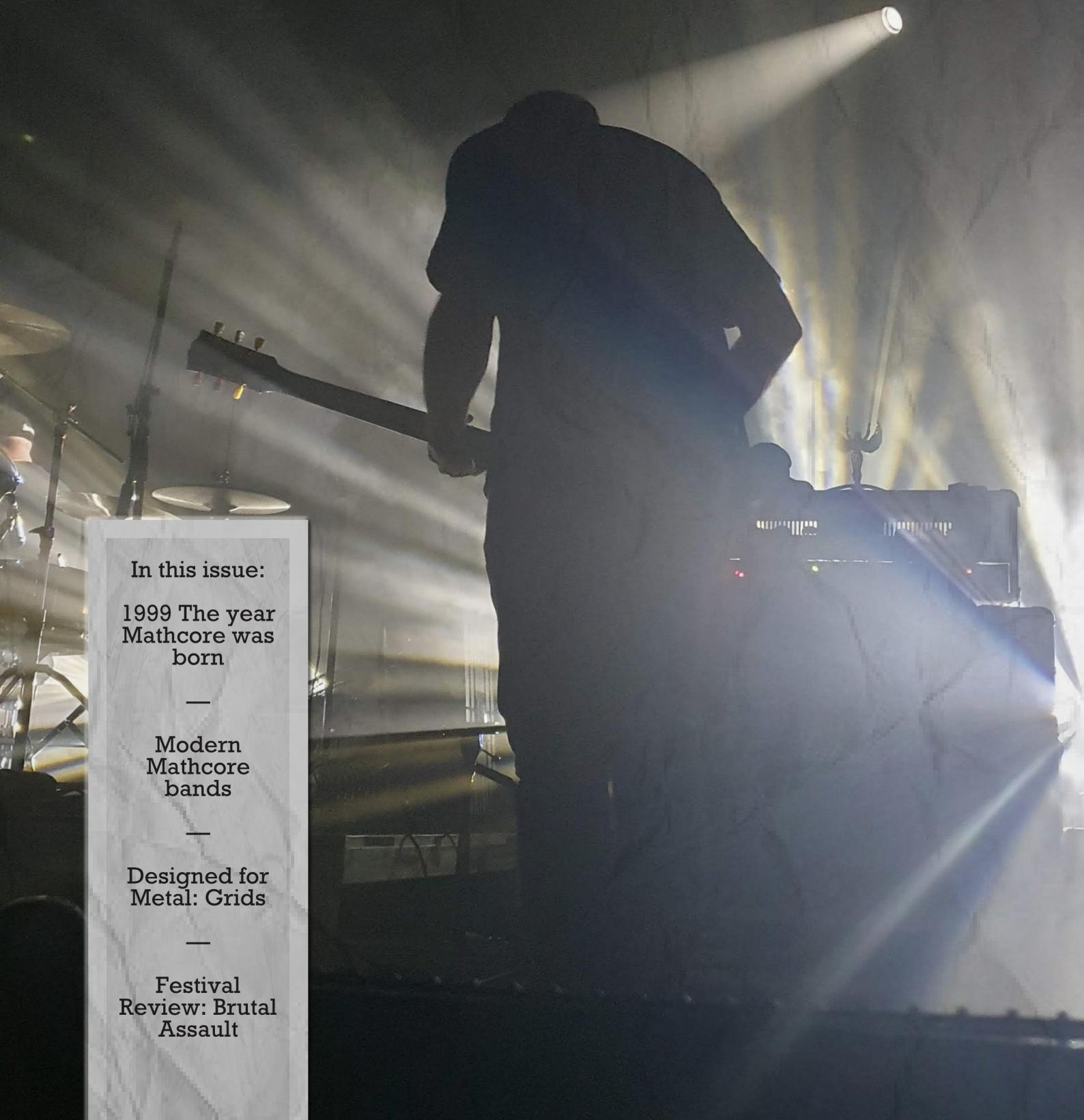


# HARD HIT

VOLUME 3



In this issue:

1999 The year  
Mathcore was  
born

—  
Modern  
Mathcore  
bands

—  
Designed for  
Metal: Grids

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Festival  
Review: Brutal  
Assault

# **COVER STORY**

## ***What Hard Hit means***

Welcome to the third issue of Hard Hit. :)

From now on I am gonna use photos that I took as cover. This particular photo shows David Knudson playing his guitar with Botch in Cologne. It was one of three concerts they played in Europe for their mini not-an-actual-comeback tour. As you will be able to tell after reading this magazine, I am a huge Botch fan and I was extraordinarily hyped for this gig.

However, the day of the concert started with one of the most devastating experiences of my life. Four months ago I started as a junior art director for a design agency. The work started out well but more and more I could tell that something is off. Then on that day they quit my contract without any notice or feedback meeting. My work wasn't meeting their expectations.

So you can imagine my mood on my way to Cologne. But I tried to contain that disappointment and let it all out during the show. Made a failed attempt to crowd-surf. Moshing and jumping close to the stage. And all that worked. That sadness vanished because I was just absorbing the energy of the show. The magic of concerts and music was working. I was so happy that I started crying in relief.

And then during the songs it hit me: This is what hard hit is about.

Be like a musician and follow your creativity. Find a pursuit in playing shows and record albums. For me that is drawing and having my own design projects. Take my creativity and art skills to create something that matters to me and gives me a creative purpose. Something that is 100% me 100% how I want it to look like 100% what I want to write about. And that realization hasn't left me since the show. This desire to follow my creative passion is stronger than ever. And I had some breaks when I wanted to give up. But now I know this desire will never leave me and it will guide me for the rest of my life. And this is the reason why I started this magazine. I wanted to write about something that I love and create something that means the world to me.

I hope my excitement for Metal transpires to you and you enjoy this issue.



*The Dillinger Escape Plan*

*Calculating Infinity*

# 1999

## MATHCORE WAS BORN

### TWO RECORDS IN RETROPECTIVE



*Botch*

*We Are The Romans*

If you'd know me, you'd know that i am completely obsessed with THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN. They are my favourite band and I believe they are very, very underrated. Which lead me to discover even more bands of the Mathcore genre. One of them is BOTCH. Two genre defining bands that released their albums in 1999.

These two records gained the most scene attention and have the typical, refined mathcore sound compared to previous bands like Deadguy, Coalesce, Cave In and Converge. The genre-roots Hardcore Punk and Deathcore are more prominent with these bands.

If there was a Mathcore Trinity, Converge would be definitely the third pillar. Their 2001 record Jane Doe is a classic. You find the cover tattooed on someones skin on almost any Metal show or festival.

And please don't mistake Mathcore for Metalcore. Mathcore is a subgenre of Metalcore. But these two genres are rather different. Mathcore has far more complex song structures. This music is characterized by a very chaotic, noisy sound and

fractured song structures. Atypical rhythms, tempo changes and complex time signatures are a feature. And these change within one song. Some passages are much faster than your average Metal song. It's a back and forth between slower, heavy, parts, uneven rhythms and melodic parts. The vocals also switch between low growls and clean singing.

Let's talk about Dillinger's and Botch's record in more detail.



The Band around 1999

## The Dillinger Escape Plan - Calculating Infinity

The previously released Demo "Under the Running Board" is already astonishing good for a first ever release of a band. It earned them the attention of Relapse Records that offered them a record deal for their full-length debut. Lead guitarist Ben Weinman, Chris Pennie (often described as drummer nerd) and Engineer Steve Evetts produced the record together.

The production of the record was very demanding for Weinman. In hindsight, he wasn't satisfied with the production. Technical limitations of that time made him record everything straight to tape. On top of that he had to record the bass. Because original Bassist Adam doll had a tragic car accident that resulted in a spinal fracture. Later in the recording process Rhythm guitarist Brian Benoit joined the band. He contributed guitar tracks to some songs. This record is the only one with original Singer Dimitri Minakakis.

Calculating Infinity is probably the most raw sounding of Dillinger's discography. The guitar is extremely technical sounding. The strings have this high pitched squeaking sound that cut straight through the mix. And the drumming is all over the place. Chris Pennie is using so many different drum patterns in every track.

The opening track "Sugar Coated Sour" starts like an explosion. To me it is already the essence of what Mathcore is. The rhythm, drumming and riffs switch like every ten seconds. Second track "43 % Burnt" has one of the most iconic and remarkable guitar riffs ever. "Jim Fear" is chaos in perfection. Later the band would get a bit more melodic and try different music directions. "Weekend Sex Change" is a taste of what the band would later experiment with. And in between you hear this soundscape experiments like "\*#.." made out of random samples, riffs and uneven drumming. When I heard this for

*= 250*

Guitar 1- Standard Tuning

Guitar 2- Standard Tuning

first time I was actually really impressed that you could make a song just using that. In some passages of the songs it's like the guitar is a rhythm instrument and the drum is carrying the melody.

Rolling Stone ranked the record the 56th greatest Metal album of all-time.

In an interview reflected on the motivation for the record Ben stated: *"I liked crazy, erratic music that changed a lot and kept you focused on what you were playing, that was meditation for me. I needed all of that to happen in order for me to focus on the moment and not be wandering all over the place."*

In an interview asked about the motivation for We Are The Romans bassist Brian Cook answered: "we wanted to eliminate power chords. We just didn't want to have the standard drop-d, one-finger riff action that was on some of our earlier records."

In the same interview he says: "*Botch songs were really written around the dynamic between Dave Knudson on guitar and Tim Latona on drums.*" In 2000 Botch would tour together with The Dillinger Escape Plan.

## ***Botch - We Are The Romans***

Following their debut American Nervoso this the second and last record by the band from Seattle. Nervoso took two years to write, Romans was written in less than six months. The recording was done in under a weeks time. However, it doesn't sound rushed at all.

It's less technical than Dillinger and a bit more dynamic and fast paced. The vocals already have some clean passages. It has this modern, melodic 2000s Metal sound. Botch's sound would later influence a lot of Metalcore bands. The riffs in "[C. Thomas Howell as the Soul Man](#)" and "[Saint Matthew returns to the wombs](#)" are proof. The record is an back and forth between anger and chaos. With some slower chorus parts that make it easier to grasp. And then there is this fried sounding bass that hits out of nowhere.

Metal Hammer named it one of the 20 best Metal albums of the year 1999.



Botch performing

**"*Botch songs were really written around the dynamic between Dave Knudson on guitar and Tim Latona on drums.*"**

# **MODERN MATHCORE BANDS**

The Dillinger Escape Plan are stated by many bands as influence and a wave of new mathcore-artists followed. Here is an overview of my personal favourites and genre-giants. If you interested in listening I made three criterias: heaviness, fastness and chaoticness. So you have kind of an idea what to expect.

## **Pound**

This band is insane to see live! The drummer has two different drum sets he plays at the same time sometimes!

Heaviness: ● ● ●

Fastness: ● ● ●

Chaoticness: ●



Pound Drummer at Complexity Fest 2023

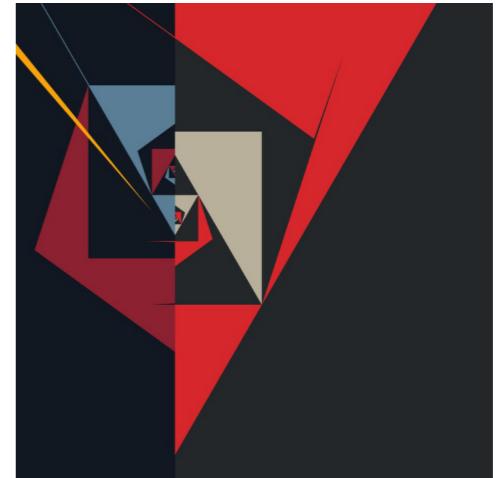
## **Car Bomb**

This is some more technical stuff. Meshuggah mixed with Mathcore.

Heaviness: ● ●

Fastness: ● ●

Chaoticness: ● ●



Car Bomb - Meta

## **KEN Mode**

To me this is the band that gets the closest to the Dillinger Sound.

Heaviness: ●

Fastness: ● ●

Chaoticness: ● ● ●



Ken Mode live

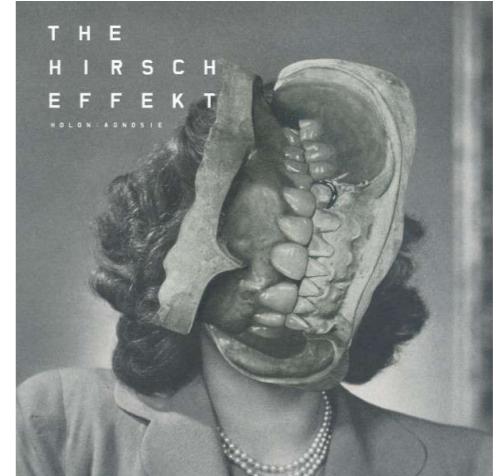
## **The Hirsch Effekt**

One of my favourite German bands. They also sing German, which makes the music stand out even more. Their earlier records are more mathcore-y, newer records are more progressive rock oriented.

Heaviness: ● ●

Fastness: ●

Chaoticness: ● ●



The Hirsch Effekt - Agnosie

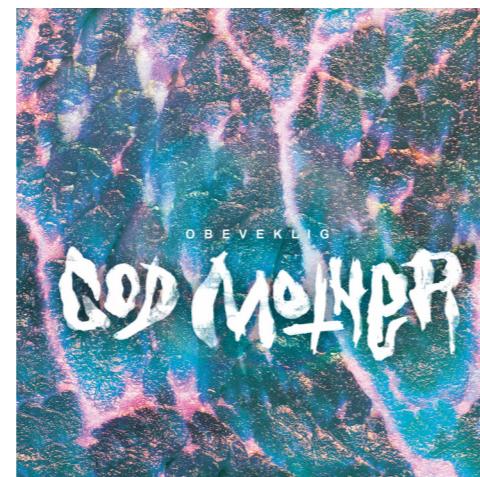
## God Mother

If you like Converge, check this Swedish band out.

Heaviness: ●

Fastness: ● ●

Chaoticness: ● ●



God Mother - Obeveklig

## Rolo Tomassi

If you like a bit more melody this is your band. They expanded their style more into a dream pop direction but still have their heavy mathcore moments.

Heaviness: ●

Fastness: ●

Chaoticness: ● ●



Rolo Tomassi live

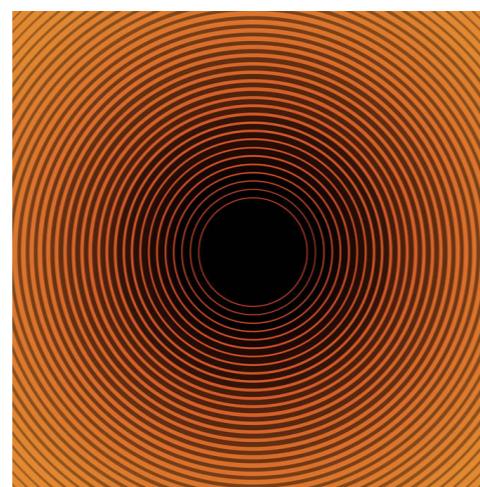
## Frontierer

Pwwwpwww pwww Car Bomb on Steoids ... how is that even possible?

Heaviness: ● ●

Fastness: ● ● ●

Chaoticness: ●



Mathcore bands like geometrical album covers

## Twelve Foot Ninja

The Australian System Of A Down. And it all sounds so happy.

Heaviness: ●

Fastness: ●

Chaoticness: ● ●



Twelve Foot Ninja - Outlier



Cloud Rat Live

## Cloud Rat

A newcomer from the US. I love the female singer. She sounds like having some serious issues that catalyst into the music.

Heaviness: ●

Fastness: ● ●

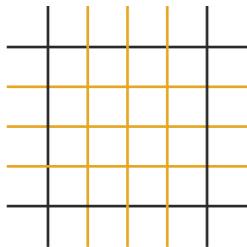
Chaoticness: ● ●

**What are you waiting for? Go Check these bands out! I made a [playlist](#) just for you :3**

# **DESIGNED FOR METAL: GRIDS**

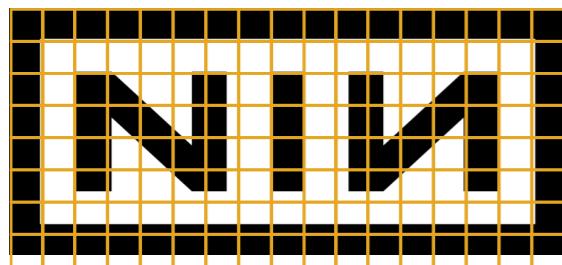
A grid is the secret to make things look structured, well-balanced and geometrical. It's what makes logos look organized, clear and sharp. A good shape design makes the logo immediately recognizable. I will show you some of my favourite designs and analyze their structure.

## **Checkboard grids**

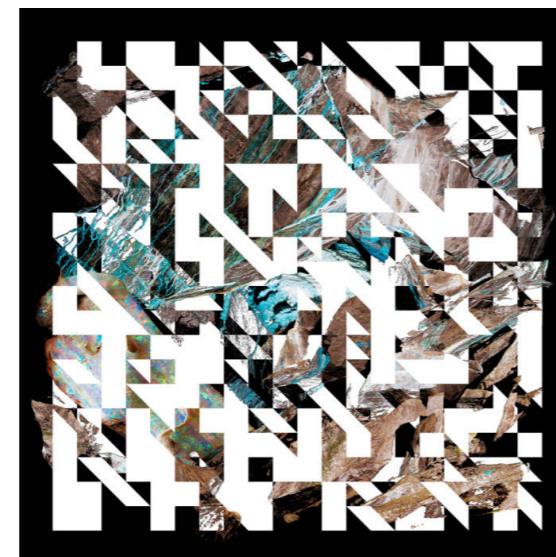


This magazine, as most others, also has an underlining grid. I am using it to align every text block, image, graphic and headline. With that you get this "designed" feeling.

Hard hit's grid is made of a grid with 21 mm space and 4 intersections. I choose 21, because the width of each page is 210 mm. So I divide the page evenly



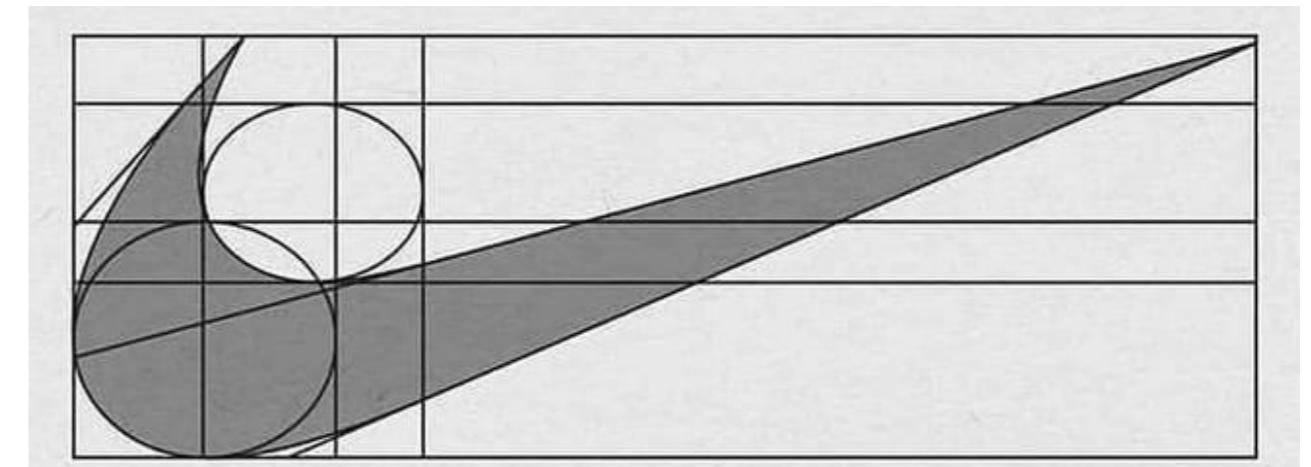
The remarkable Nine Inch Nails logo is made of a check board grid. To make it look less static the designer actually used two grids. One for the upper part and one for the lower part. The grid cubes define the width of the outer contour and the width of the letters. Notice that the "I" and the contour have the same width.



A very good example for a check board layout is the Album cover of Oxidized by Frontierer. The photography has a black background and white rectangles and triangles arranged on top of it. It is as puzzling as the music.

## **Geometrical grids**

A grid doesn't have to be made only of squares. In fact, you can multiply any shape you want. Like the Nike Arrow for instance. It's made out of a  $4 \times 4$  table with varying width of the columns and rows. The round edge is also constructed with two ellipses. The Nike logo was designed by Carolyn Davidson. Using exact measurements makes sure that the logo always looks the same. Most logos consist of an underlying geometric structure.



Nike's Logo and its grid.

## Using a grid for the composition of an albumcover

Grids can also be used as guidelines for the composition of artworks.



This artwork by Keith Draws and Reuben Bhattacharya is also drawn following an underlying grid to structure the elements. Notice how the main character, logo and bandname are in the middle of two rectangle columns. The face of the character is exactly in the middle of the image at the intersection of the top and vertical middle line. The two columns at the side give room for the two flags. The bottom row is filled with peasants and the row above with a mountains-cape. The two top rows are space for these outspreading lines that look like light rays from the old Japanese flag.



These guys are kinda mean to each other. This Artwork by Andreas Marschall is divided into rectangles. The intersection at the bottom right is a vocal point of the image. Some of these rectangles are an image by themselves. Take the four top right rectangle for instance. If you'd crop this you have an image of some angles flying by.

This Kylesa Record illustrated by Shaun Beaudry has a clear geometric structure. The drawing is based around three intersecting circles and a center circle. These three outer circles are the center for each beetle. The center circle is also the origin of three dividing lines that crop the wings of these beetles. These lines follow the intersection of the circles and have an angle of  $120^\circ$  to each other.



The Cover of Paradise Lost's Obsidian is a clear example of the geometrical arrangement of visual elements. Each element is arranged in a pattern to form a geometrical shape. For example the four teeth and nails form a rectangle. The artwork was done by Adrian Baxter.



## Using a grid to create a wordmark

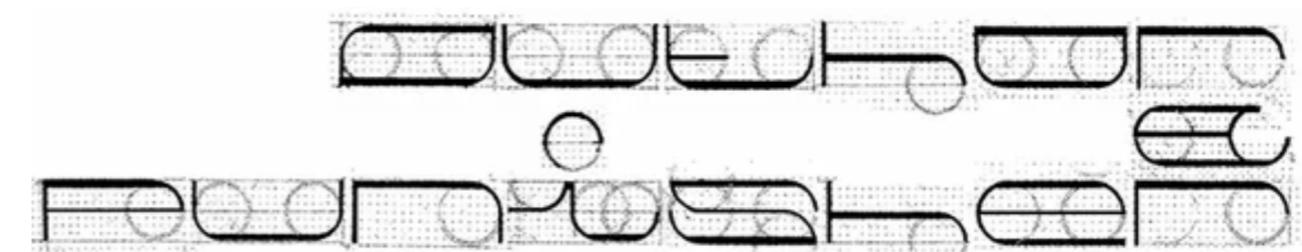
A wordmark gives a distinct typographic feeling to an entity (e.g. a band) similar to a logo but it's made out of letters not shapes. You can use an underlying grid made of geometric elements to create patterns or other design elements, wordmarks for instance.



One of the Baroness wordmarks has an interesting grid for the letters. It's made out of four rectangles that create an outline. In the middle are two crossing rectangles that create the dot in the middle which defines the shape of these letters. The wordmark has a handmade feel like it was written with a calligraphy pen.



The Vader wordmark is made of letters that align to a rhombus shape. As you can see they don't align a hundred percent to the shape, but that's okay. It keeps the organic and dynamic feel of the letters. These grids are more of a guidance than a strict geometrical rule that needs to be obeyed. What's most important is the visual appeal.



This is the wordmark of Author & Punisher. The basic grid is a rectangular shape with rounded edges and circles in the middle. For some letters like the "h" and "s" the grid could be modified into half. But still it fits to the original grid. With this grid and your imagination you could fill in the missing letters to create an alphabet.



The grid layout  
for the letters



My suggestion  
for the letter "C"

... As you can see grids have a variety of use cases, sizes and shapes. If you pay attention you will see a bit of design in every band logo, album cover or merchandise shirt.

# FESTIVAL REVIEW: BRUTAL ASSAULT

9.8.2023

## Fit For An Autopsy

The band plays very modern Metal. They mix Meshuggah with Deathcore which sounds very dynamic on the record. The singer put the fans into the right mood to sing and mosh along. Only annoyance was that the sound was way too bass heavy. I always felt like the guitars lack gain and punch.

## Be'lakor

Be'lakor was a band I was really looking forward to. And it was perfect. The band started the set with "Venetor". Which I was hoping for. This song is just such a perfect start for a show or the record. I guess most people like me hadn't seen the band before and were really enjoying it. They were singing along to the guitar solo of "Abeyance". Never heard a crowd doing that.

## Immolation

A great live band people always freak out to. Guitarist Robert Vega looks like the devil playing guitar. Immolation delivered their heavy, dense sound from the record accordingly to the stage. They broke the sound system twice with their heavy sound.

## I am Morbid

I am Morbid started the Set with the classic song "Immortal Rites", and it was the perfect choice. It gave the audience the necessary energy to completely lose their shit. Alongside more classics they played the record Covenant almost in full. They had perfect sound and their Drummer Pete Sandoval is a beast. He has played the instrument for over 30 years now and mastered it.

## Meshuggah

The light, the lights, the lights! This band is like a piece of art with these strong visuals that illustrate the music.

## Converge

This band has so much energy! I was so tired, but Converge woke me up, and I even managed to kind of jump around for a few songs. They have this Hardcore Rock'n'roll sound live. It all sounded so raw and alive. Especially the Drum sound of Ben Koller. Backing vocals by bassist Nate and guitarist Kurt are a nice live support.

## Russian Circles

One of my Favorite bands had perfect sound, vibe and light. For this performance they focused on their heavier material. No "Mládek", no "Afrika" — instead they played a lot of stuff from their second record Station and the most recent one Gnosis.

This year I went to the Brutal Assault Festival in the Czech Republic for the fifth time. I went to every edition since 2017. I love the setting of the fest in the old Castle of Josefov in Jaroměř. The Line-up is always super diverse and packed with must see bands. I will give a short day by day review with my highlights. Pardon the quality of the photos, I only had my phone with me.



Russian Circles



The devil (left) with his band Immolation

10.8.2023

**Moonspell**

A Doom Metal band that sounds more like a Hardrock band live. I enjoyed the show.

**Dismember**

This band is the definition of **killer chainsaw sound!** This band is rare to see live but you could tell the musicians enjoy playing live. People freaked out and were super hyped.

**Dying Fetus**

... But Dying fetus was a fucking war zone! There was this major mosh pit that spawned some minor mosh pits. At least the first half of the huge audience was always in movement. People were just moshing, jumping, crowd surfing and getting fucked.

The band was so happy to play. They had a blast. Guitarist John Gallagher played tight and didn't miss a hit. Hammering one guitar solo after another riff assault at this insane speed without any exhaustion makes him definitely one of the best Metal guitarists. Drummer Trey Williams and Bass Player Sean Beasley also made a peak performance.

The Sound was perfect. With that skilled musicians I wonder if it even could sound bad when they hit every note. They didn't have this annoying trigger double bass sound a lot of modern bands ruin their mix with. (The sound of Marduk's doublebass will haunt me in my nightmares) And the guitar was crystal clear in the mix.

Reign Supreme seems to be their own favourite record. they played several songs from that it. And everybody was screaming "**FUCK THE BABY!!!**" for the intro of from "Womb to Waste".

**Sepultura**

After so much mosh pit action people seemed exhausted and there was noticeable less action in front of the stage. But people were still clapping along and the place was crowded. I was happy that they didn't just play "Roots" from that record but also "Cut-Throat". Because this is actually a super fun song to watch.

**Enslaved**

Another perfect performance. The Sound was a bit muddy in the beginning but got refined. They played stuff from their two most recent records Heimdal and Utgard, Below the lights, to celebrate its 20th anniversary and the even older song Yggdrasil from 1994.

**In Flames**

This band is kind of a supergroup doing In Flames Classic Covers. They have ex-Megadeth guitarist Chris Broderick. This year they recruited ex-Dillinger Escape Plan Bassist Liam Wilson. And maybe it's just me but the bass sounded far more complex, better and louder due to Liam.

**Watain**

Watain had horrible sound issues that resolved half into the set. And so I could really enjoy the rest of the set. They played a lot of new material that I enjoy soo much.

**Carpenter Brut**

Great live show. He connects with the audience without a mic just with his presence and gestures. His keyboard is moveable. So for solos he could focus the attention of the audience either on the drummer or live guitarist. He had one of the best light shows of the festivals. People were dancing and it was perfect to close the day full of Metal.



Dismember



Enslaved

11.8.2023

**Krisiun**

On fire today. I never realized how Technical their death Metal sounds.

**Nile**

To continue the technical Death Metal we saw Nile. One of the top Bands of the genre. And they manifested that position.

**It was *ass-ripping awesome!***

They had a mosh pit which I thought was impossible given how technical the music is.



The Ocean



Skinless

**Obituary**

With that order in mind it was time for some old school Death Metal. I wasn't that much of a fan of Obituary. But They finally convinced me with their craft. I never noticed the guitarist's perfect, melodic use of the whammy pedal which makes these songs groovy and kick ass.

**Perturbator**

Awesome light show! He has this pentagram shaped construction with LEDs on it that for every single song had a different pattern. It was mesmerizing to watch.

12.8.2023

**Anaal Natarkh**

The band had Horrible sound issues. Guitar and Vocals turned into one inaudible mess during fast parts of the songs. People had fun in the mosh pit though. Singer Dave Hunt was very content, talking nonsense during the songs and not taking himself too seriously. During "Forward!" There was a fan on stage singing with him. Dave concluded: "And after all that he [the fan] tells me we are his second favourite band ... sorry you didn't get to do that with Slayer."

**The Ocean**

Perfect sound. This band was great. They played their most recent stuff. Without the keyboarder the music sounded heavier than usual. Singer Loïc Rossetti chatted with the audience like a stand-up comedian during a break of the set. Later he also Crowd surfed. The more he performs, the more energy he has.

**Napalm Death**

I believe this was the Biggest circle pit in front of the main stage that I saw. Really good sound and diverse setlist with old and new stuff. Singer Barney will never stop expressing his political views and how pissed off he is. But with that British accent it is entertaining nevertheless.

**Benediction**

What a fantastic sounding live band. From the bottom of their hearts they were happy to play. Guitarist Peter Rew was as excited as a golden retriever to play. What a happy Death Metal grandpa. Even giving beer cans to fans to make sure we stay hydrated. For the song "Subconscious Terror" former singer and Anaal Natarkh member Dave Hunt was singing.

**Orbit Culture**

This band had a similar sound to Fit For An Autopsy. But for my taste the sound was too bassy and the guitar lacked punch. But that didn't stop it from being fantastic. They were on fire and really wanted the audience to have a good time.

**Cult Of Luna**

In my opinion this was the best show of the entire festival: The best sound, the best light and the best performance. With a lot of light and smoke the band members turned into silhouettes. That really added to the feeling of the songs.

What I really liked about the sound was the mix. For instance the keyboard wasn't too quiet or overtuned everything else. I listened to many shows where either of these happened. Mixing a keyboard into a Metal performance must be a difficult task.

For the last song "Blood Upon Stone" Singer and guitarist Johannes Persson left the stage and stood on the barrier, looking straight at us, the audience. Knocking on his chest, what a statement to show that it meant the world to him. and I could feel that connection even standing further behind.

I was convinced Russian Circles would be the best gig of the fest, and though it was fucking awesome, Cult of Luna was even better.



Cult of Luna

In conclusion **I had a blast!** I enjoyed every single band I saw. They were all super hyped and the fans were super cool and nice. I felt a strong bond with every other fan that just for the love of Metal went to the festival. The days went by way too fast because every day I had at least five bands that I wanted to check out. I only had short breaks for a snack or drink before I had to rush to the next awesome show. I can only speak positively about the festival, the organisation and the line up. My audiophile ears enjoyed perfect sound for most shows. Also I once again noticed the trend of bigger bands to pay more attention to the lights. More artists have professional light artists that step up the quality of the concert experience. Brutal Assault is one of the best Metal festivals that I know.

Already looking forward to next years edition of the festival.

# **THANKS FOR READING!**

This has to be longest I worked on an issue so far. Some ideas I already had for some time in my head. Like the grids. I had the idea to write about that back in February at Complexity 2023. But that's the thing about self-doubts – they slow me down. The process feels like it will never end, and I am never really happy with the result. But I always had the desire to write about Metal. So I forced myself to continue. And in the end it felt easy. It always does. The hardest part is to start.

I learned that self-doubts are an unavoidable part of the creative process. You will always second guess if you are good enough. But I don't give room to this criticism anymore. I do what I do because I want to share my love for music with you.

I already have lots of ideas for the coming issues. Next up I plan to interview some designers and illustrators of the scene and maybe I will be able to take some nice photos of gigs and festivals I will go to. Stay tuned for that and

**STAY BRUTOOL!**

Follow me on [Instagram](#) if you like.



Me and a werewolf (kind of)

## Photo Credits:

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Notes: [https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQn5I2Z2x9vMhfX4w\\_mhRUyqoW81q38ATO4iA&usqp=CAU](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQn5I2Z2x9vMhfX4w_mhRUyqoW81q38ATO4iA&usqp=CAU)

Dillinger: <https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5282904fe4b06dd1d21607b7/dbba64cd-ef08-41a7-9d0fc75fd3da1df5/4d157ce6c80c4f09b42655d9ac5a4e8a.jpeg>

Read the full interview here: <https://machinemusic.net/2021/04/15/pillars-of-the-90s-an-interview-with-the-dillinger-escape-plan/>

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botch: <https://machinemusic.files.wordpress.com/2020/09/2.jpg?w=1024&h=694>

Botch 2: <https://www.last.fm/music/Botch/+images/575c180dca414e31a8b81d4d97f7c09d>

Read the full interview here: <https://machinemusic.net/2020/09/08/pillars-of-the-90s-brian-cook-talks-botchs-we-are-the-romans/>

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Ken Mode: [\(Nathan Cyprys\)](https://www.cpacanada.ca/en/news/pivot-magazine/2019-01-18-ken-mode-interview)

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Rolo Tomassi: <https://www.stereoboard.com/content/view/192110/9>

Cloud Rat: <https://farrahskeiky.com/shows/tag/cloud+rat>