

Raise the Horns

This One Goes to Twelve.



A Slapdash RPGnet Challenge
METAL Roleplaying Game by DeeCee

Introduction

Raise the Horns is not a band simulator. This must be understood, lest people be upset with the work before they even get to read it in full. It is a roleplaying game inspired and in loving parody of METAL, and one possible world near to an apocalypse.

In this game, players take on the role of inspired neo-bards, musicians either talented or delusional. These musicians walk the now mythical lands of the Earth, 'going from place to place, getting in adventures' as it were. They have access to supernatural powers based on their ego-inspired views of their role in both life and the band, and use these abilities to reap glory for themselves.

Though roles are in part defined by the role one would play in a band, these positions have moved beyond simply the instruments one might play. The roles have become metaphysical, legendary. You might play the drums, but it is something else entirely if you're a Drummer.

Play is rules-light, meaning that there aren't a lot of things to rote memorize, and much of the narrative is given over to player and Gm fiat. There is a system of task resolution though, with an element of random determination based on character skill, which is what makes RTH a roleplaying GAME rather than a storytelling session.

Raise the Horns uses twelve-sided dice to resolve actions. Most often a player will roll one of these dice and compare the result to a difficulty set by the GM. Depending on the situation, one or two more dice may be rolled as well. The maximum number of dice that a player will ever have to roll at one time is three.

This game was created as part of a challenge on RPGnet's forum, and was brainstormed and fleshed out over the course of approximately five days. Surely any aspect of the game which is found to be lacking is merely a factor of time constraint, and not the fault of the designer. Also, your favourite game sucks, and RTH is the best rpg ever to have been invented, in perpetuity, objectively.

Now that we have those disclaimers out of the way, game on!

For RPGnet Judge Eyes only: Ingredients = "A game mechanic that is specifically tied to the setting. An example of this is CoC sanity mechanic", "Events revolving around a contested succession, royal, political or corporate.", "Unrest", "Perpetuity".

Section One: Setting and Background

CAVEAT:

If you're looking for a supreme analysis and simulation of statistics, this game probably isn't for you. If the notion that technically within the rules, being good at kung fu can help you drive better, or that memorizing your chemistry valences can make you a better singer, the game definitely isn't for you.

The goal of this game's mechanics is to distill all of the various and sundry modifiers of play into a simple roll, so that actions are resolved quickly and narrative play is not hindered.

DAMAGE:

Damage in the system is very abstract. It can be either physical or spiritual. It's tracked on an equalizer-style bar by the relevant stat. It's healed by anything that would conceivably rejuvenate such a stat (being bandaged for wounds, listening to a killer song to rally willpower, etc). Usually only one dot of damage is healed in this fashion per day, unless the circumstances/rejuvenators are remarkable.

THE UPSET

If you ask a person today what caused the Upset, you're likely to get twenty different answers from twenty different folks. Sadly, a lot of these answers will be variations on the theme of "God did it". This is a shame, as the real truth is far more bizarre and doesn't sell short mankind's achievements and capacity for chaos.

It is perhaps understandable though, that when the inexplicable shit hit the cosmos-spanning fan, a lot of believers hit their knees in fear of God's judgement. Others hit their feet running. You will play one of the latter.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED:

In 2017, mankind launched its first full-scale experiment in faster-than-light (FTL) technology, by attempting to open a subspace gate. This was either a colossal blunder or a miraculous success, depending to whom you speak. The experiment did create an opening to subspace. However, subspace turned out to be filled with a particular energy that is very responsive to psychic impressions of living beings. All it took was one person to think, upon seeing the blue-white rift in space, "wow, that's impressive – I hope it doesn't spill out and engulf us!" which caused a pressure wave to spill out and kill a few scientists, before engulfing the world and thence washing out through the galaxy.

See, subspace is a dimension of raw possibility. It's a peek into the foundations of the universe. In subspace, anything is possible. Since nothing lives there, anything from the material universe whose brainwaves hit that raw possibility causes, to put it mildly, things to go wonky.

Having access to a realm where your merest thought can become physical reality is a beautiful thing in concept, but given man's lack of control over its thought processes, it's also horrendously dangerous. Luckily, one of the first reactions of people, upon seeing the pulse wave spill out of the rift, was "oh shit! Shut it off!" And thus the rift was closed.

Science and the common man, should they have had the opportunity to think about what happened that fateful day, might now completely understand what happened. They haven't had the chance to stop and ponder that however, for the wave that washed over the world caused a few changes.

WHAT THE PULSE WAVE DID:

Subspace has properties that basically turn thoughts into reality. Pondering over whether this is how God created the universe is futile, as God may never have existed at all. In any case, the pulse wave has (had?) the properties of subspace too, but to a slightly diminished degree.

Some people did die when the wave hit Earth, mostly the ones who could see it coming and had their monkey hindbrains rebel and act with fear – which of course the wave made manifest when it hit them. For everyone else, the wave made real aspects of their most powerful (mostly rational) thoughts and emotions.

MUSIC AND THE WAVE:

Music, being the purest expression of the soul, caused a lot of changes as the wave swept past. The most visceral music caused the most profound changes. Thus, modern teen sensations caused little change at all, being as most of it was completely devoid of a soul or emotion.

The rest of the music gestalt created some lasting effects on our world. Mythical creatures sprang to life. Environment changed to have wondrous properties. Dogs and cats lived together. A lot of these were fleeting, such as the various stairways to heaven, which collapsed under their own weight and disappeared shortly after forming, but some had enough integrity to stay together of their own accord.

RELIGION:

The wave was of course affected by religion. A lot of the believers at the forefront of the wave were whisked away immediately to Heavens and Hells of their own making. Those whose faith was nebulous, or who were thinking other things at the time the wave passed over, created a lot of weirdly half-formed phenomenon. For instance, there are now 14,000 living Jesuses running around; some of these guys can create miracles, some are just trying to come to terms over which one of them is "real". A few folks sport multiple arms and third eyes. Some unlucky bastards think they've died, and were transformed into other creatures. It's a scene, man.

THE RISE OF THE METAL SATANS:

With religion came the various iconic beings. Thankfully, some of them left just as quickly as they appeared. Some have stuck around.

One of the iconic beings in Western society is the devil, and there were a number of sightings post-wave. The strict Christian versions were mostly confined to a subterranean place of fire, with weeping and gnashing of teeth. Those ones aren't a problem, unless of course you were a Christian who believed you were going to Hell, in which case you screwed yourself over.

The Christian Satan is trapped in this place. The most powerful version of Him tolerates no pretenders to his throne, and has subjugated or slain all lesser devils trapped with him.

Meanwhile, above Hell, there exist a few demonic beings who were not so confined as their brethren. These creatures were formed in some cases by those who had faith but little religious background, and in others by those who weren't entirely faithful but remained very imaginative and influenced by their society. One (or possibly more) of these beings has become known as Metal Satan.

He's (they're?) not such a bad guy. Oh sure, he *looks* badass, but he comes from the modern, more liberal view of the devil as a gentleman rebel. He's got power and a wicked streak, to be sure, but he's not entirely an abomination. He's arguably the most powerful of these wave-born entities that roam the world today, if only because real movers and shakers are confined to their own new ethereal realms.

"Metal" is a prefix that has come into common usage when confronted by a being of obvious theological or mythological origin, yet who acts as one might expect a cultural icon to act, instead of how a "real" entity might act. Basically, if you could imagine seeing a being painted on the side of a van, it's fodder for the prefix "metal". For instance, if you saw a hammer-wielding, lightning-throwing flying Viking dude, you'd be likely to refer to him as "Metal Thor". The "real" Thors were mostly confined to the distant ethereal notion (now actual dimension) of Valhalla that sprung into existence during the wave.

Most incarnations of Metal Satan are more interested in creating decadent empires than the whole business of buying souls, but some do dabble. Crossroads Devils, born of blues legend, are quite prone to offering deals for peoples' souls.

WHY METAL?:

So why the fixation on Metal?

Well, soon after the wave it became clear that peoples' beliefs and imaginations had played a big part in what became of the world. Music, as the outlet and expression for most folks, had been key in the propagation of wonders. Whether the majority of religious types see this as a judgement of God, manifest through our own "false idols" is of little consequence.

Other forms of music played their parts, but only Metal combined mythology, legendary themes, and the supernatural with a common touch. The seriousness of the imagery made Metal manifestations a lot more prone to staying coherent than many other strains.

Emo adherents caused a lot of misfortune and sadness, or blipped themselves out of existence in a fit of wave-empowered depression. Dance music had people dancing as always, but had no underlying mythical threads or iconography. It was this way with a lot of music, which were just background noise or dancing beats. Those types of music might inspire emotions, but lack imagery to manifest. While you might be swayed by that music, you likely weren't thinking of anything storylike or mythological while you were. Appearances of Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds have been sporadic at best.

Most pop music had nothing to say and inspired no imagination. Thus it had little to no

effect other than creating a bunch of lookalike pop icons which have had a tough time surviving in the new order.

Metal, on the other hand, is all myth and guts. It used images old and new from all religions and legends, and created a fair bit of others, to move the souls of its listeners. It told stories like sagas, and those have always had power even before the subspace wave.

When the pulse hit, a lot of this raw imaginative power caused a lot of changes. Now, when people see things in the world that are clearly more visceral or legendary than average, Metal is the word on their lips. To some the word is also a curse, as they view the turmoil as being caused by corruption of minds caused by the music.

To sum it up, it's best to imagine Metal as being larger than life. It's the descendant of sagas. It's the driving beat of those who sought to escape the banality of the modern world. It is raw, and primal. It is simultaneously celestial and infernal. Metal is big – the only music big enough to have inspired some of the changes of the wave, and tell the tales of the new world.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD:

Earth has been remade in the collective imagination of its inhabitants.

All people have ideas about the spirit of their country of origin, what defines their land. Outsiders have their own views of the lands of those people, and so on. When the wave hit, a lot of the Earth was remodeled into a place of stereotypes. In addition, new areas sprang up that were the products of imagination or fear.

Example:

Canada suffers under a blanket of ice and snow, for the most part. Only those areas with enough population to enforce their own worldview were spared the change of the world's collective idea of what Canada really was. The west coast has truly staggering forests. The mountains are insurmountable in some regions. The plains are bigger than ever, though that could be from everyone always imagining that they were so large. Also, the outer areas of the plains are buried under snow. Mythical creatures from Sasquatch to wendigo roam free.

To understand the world post-wave, to conjure an image of any corner of the globe, one must combine the stereotypes of foreigners with the knowledge of the local people. The stronger the IDEA of what a place was, the more drastic the changes have been. Everything now is larger, more extreme, more storylike. One only has to see the enveloping sprawl that has become New York, or the endless bleaching expanses of the Sahara to know that. One is advised to avoid the terrors of the rainforest, and the things which now stalk there.

THE FUTURE:

The wave did not stop at Earth. In fact, it carried the psychic impressions of the people of Earth along with it. The moon has had some changes for instance, but few can reach it in this day and age to see all of what has happened.

Mars has been hardest hit, so far. It now supports life, thanks to earthling imagination, and a lot of that life is hostile. There's a Warlord Chief on the red planet gathering forces to take over the little blue & green orb.

People are adapting, as they always have. Some have developed powers thanks to the passing of the wave. Some are building new empires out of the ashes. Some live in empires that sprang full-formed from the ether.

It is a time of legend, and of possibilities unimagined a mere few years ago.

THE BANDS:

With the pulse wave of possibility, and the resulting time of unrest known as The Upset, a lot of folks are trying to make sense of it all. Philosophers philosophize, politicians try to regain a stranglehold on countries that are changed and chaotic, and militaries maintain a certain level of discipline, even if unsure about the chain of command. Artists do what they've always done – Create.

Because metal has such a hold on the metaphysical aspects of the new world, the artists of metal have been elevated slightly higher than they were held in the previous society. This isn't to say that they're worshiped, only that as artists who can manifest minor powers since the wave, combined with the ego it takes to be in a productive band, most metal band members now see themselves as bards reborn.

It goes back to before the wave. In order to become good at an instrument, you had to have a certain amount of dedication. It took over a good chunk of your time, and the more effort you put into learning, the more you would identify yourself as "a guitarist" or "a bassist". Enough people did this over time that these roles became established and even cliched. There've been a lot of bassist jokes over the years, surpassed perhaps only by drummer cliches.

During the Upset these mental images of band members became solidified and enhanced. Suddenly a lead singer, who might have seen himself as the leader of the band, actually *became* a leader in a band. The drummer kept everyone on track. The bassist wove rhythm in the background that tied everyone together. These became sacred roles for a lot of people. The kind of people you'll likely be playing. A breakdown of each type of metal band member follows.

Section Two: Rules

The rule system and action resolution for Raise the Horns is very simple, and that is intentional. The game was designed to be fast-paced and free-flowing, without a lot of math to get in the way.

In order to resolve an action, you will roll one to three twelve-sided dice (d12) against a difficulty set by the GM. Your goal is to meet or exceed the difficulty the GM has set. The only special considerations in this process are when multiple dice come into play. Doubles or Triples (the same number showing on two or more dice) are strokes of luck and are boons to the character.

GMs: Standard procedure for setting difficulty is to subtract the character's Flesh or Spirit score from 12. The end result is what they need to meet or exceed to succeed in that action. In particularly adverse conditions, you may add a few points to that number. For instance, if someone were trying to climb a ladder, their difficulty would be 12-Flesh Score. If that same character were trying to climb a ladder in a hailstorm, while carrying a baby, and being shot at by two mercenary God adherents, you're encouraged to make that difficulty a few points higher. Say 12-Flesh as a base, +3 points for bad conditions. Thus, if the guy had a Flesh score of 9, the result would be a difficulty of 6. He'd need to roll that or higher on 1d12 to succeed.

The above applies to situations where the character attempting an action is unopposed. If they are being resisted by another living being (or reasonable facsimile, like a robot), the difficulty becomes 12 minus the opposing character's score. For example, two characters, one with a Flesh score of 5, and one with a score of 8, square off in an armwrestling contest. The first guy's difficulty is 7 (12 minus opposing score), and the other has a difficulty of 4. You can use their results to gauge just how badly one beats the other. If there's a tie, simply reroll in the next round to see if the stalemate is broken.

Multiple Dice: In the character section, Traits and Equipment will be discussed. They add a slight complication to the dice system, in that they can add one or two dice to a player's roll, if applicable. These dice results *are not added together*. They simply give a player a second or third chance to meet the difficulty number (and that number does not change because of equipment or the like).

Specials: Rolling double or triple results on a roll for resolution means that something special happens. If you roll two dice and they come up doubles, you add 6 points to your roll. This is usually enough to make the roll a success against most difficulties. This is the equivalent of a "critical hit" or the like in some other games.

Triple dice that come up with the same result are known as a **Triumph**. Regardless of your difficulty number, such a roll is a success. The whims of fate and luck are on your side for a moment, and your success should have an epic consequence in the game. Triumphs are instant-kills, once-in-a-lifetime performances, and acrobatic maneuvers that would shame Jackie Chan. Since they are rare, they should be rewarded.

No provisions have been made in Raise the Horns for critical failures, or "botches". Though these can be amusing to people around you at the table, they are not within the theme of newly-empowered modern day bards and singers of sagas. Critical failures happen to other people, not the very embodiments of metal!

COMBAT

We had to come to it sometime.

So many RPGs revolve around combat, because it is the most dramatic of conflicts that can usually be portrayed. It is included here because the post-Upset world is not an entirely safe place, and through adversity one finds glory.

The order of combat is determined with an initiative/round system. A d12 should be rolled for both sides in a conflict. Whomever rolls higher acts first. Usually this is done once at the beginning of the combat, but GMs can feel free to do it every round if they please.

To attack someone physically, you must succeed on a roll as normal. The difficulty is 12 minus your Flesh score. Tactics and surprise are best portrayed by the GM adding or subtracting from this Difficulty.

Curling into a ball and whimpering: If a defender wants to forego his attack that round and simply go for all-out defense, his Flesh score is added to the attacker's difficulty. Yes, this means that if a defender is really intent on avoiding or absorbing your attacks, it can become very difficult to damage them.

So how do you stop fights from becoming turtling matches? Well, you add in the factor of other people helping to attack. A bandmate or two can really turn the tide. For every other person attacking a person who is actively defending in a round, 6 points are subtracted from the difficulty to hit. This can represent either holding someone down to make beating them easier, to a sheer number of incoming attacks.

DAMAGE

On the character sheet, you'll notice two damage bars. These are divided into 12 sections, or checkboxes. The effect that damage has on rolls is simple: you subtract your Damage from your score while determining difficulties. For example, if someone had a Spirit score of 9, but had sustained 4 points of spiritual damage from a previous attack (perhaps a really bad song attack from an avatar of Glam), they would have an effective score of 5 when figuring difficulties for Spirit-related rolls.

The other thing which damage does is that when your Damage meter is at 10 or higher, you may only use one d12 in any roll that you make, regardless of traits or equipment. At that level of damage, it's all you can do to hold yourself together.

Reaching 12 damage in either score puts you out of commission. If the GM is playing a brutal game, this means that they're either dead from bodily injury, or their mind is so traumatized that they're permanent vegetables, and thus unfit for play.

If the GM wishes to provide a cushion and thus a less brutal game, 12 Damage can instead mean that the character has fallen unconscious, and will die if not helped within one hour of game time.

Healing usually takes place at the rate of one checkbox/dot of Damage per day. This can be accelerated if medical help is sought, meditation is performed, etc. heightened healing should be tightly controlled and adjudicated by the GM.

Section Three: Character Creation

There are three things which are of note when considering characters in Raise the Horns. These are your Stats, your Traits, and your Role.

Stats – Flesh and Spirit

On the character sheet, there are two dials. One is for Flesh, one is for Spirit. These are the overriding stats in the game, the ones used to determine difficulties when rolling dice. They aren't the only aspects of your character, but simply a shorthand notation of all the facets that go into making your character effective or ineffective.

The twin stats represent a perhaps false dichotomy in mankind, the division between the body and the spirit. Each of these aspects can be further considered to be broken down into two more, such as Yin/Yang, Offense/Defense, Power/Speed, etc. You can continue dividing the stats down like this almost endlessly, and indeed some games have tried to do just that. There are probably games out there where you can find out how many pounds per square inch of pressure that a character can exert with his left index finger, modified by variations for astrological sign, blood pressure, and finger puppetry aptitude. This game is not one of those.

In fact, the only reason one might divide the two prime stats at all is if one wishes to get a better grasp on what sort of a character they play. Maybe they're the slight and wiry guy who strikes fast at crucial pressure points. Maybe they're giant bruisers who use haymakers to clobber their opponents into submission.

In Raise the Horns, that stuff doesn't really matter. At least mechanically. Whether you're a ninja or a bruiser, if the characters are adept at sticking pointy things into people and making them fall down, the end result when it comes to rolling dice isn't going to matter.

Flesh and Spirit are "derived" stats, which are found by adding up the number of points one places into Traits.

TRAITS

The character sheet has no place for these, unless you count the reverse side. I would recommend placing masking tape on there to make your trait lists look like playlists, for that extra bit of authenticity. It's up to you.

Traits are the second-most freeform aspect of characters. Essentially, what you do is divide up a pool of points at character creation and assign them to either Flesh Traits or Spirit Traits.

Traits can be anything you want. They represent aspects of your character, inborn skills, talents, gifts of birth, training, whatever. You get one trait per point. You can call it whatever you like, based on what sort of character you want to play. If you want to have 'professional getaway driver' as one of your physical traits, go right ahead. You can list a

martial art if you like. It's up to you and your division of points.

Mechanically, what Traits do is allow you to add one die to a roll in a situation that applies. For instance, if your character has a history of professional car driving, and is in a situation where driving is relevant, the die is added.

The one important thing to think about when assigning Traits is whether they will apply physically (thus eventually to your Flesh score), or mentally (your Spirit score). You might, for example, take "Kung Fu Training" as either a Flesh or Spirit Trait. Both, if that was your desire. The former would indicate that your martial art training has made you more physically adept, while the latter might show that you've learned a greater spiritual balance.

So how many points does one get to spend? Well, that's up to your GM. The power scale is as follows:

Low-Powered Game: 6-7 Trait points to allocate
Mid-Powered Game: 8-9 points to allocate
High-Powered Game: 10-11 points to allocate
Epic Game: 12+ points to allocate

Just where you spend those points is up to you. You might have the majority in Flesh traits, or you might have them in Spirit. You might decide to create a balanced character with equal points in both. The only restriction is that you have to have at least one trait in both categories, or else your score would be zero – making you either braindead or vegetative.

ROLE

Your character's Role is inspired by the place they might find in a band. Roles are sweeping, stereotypical generalizations, and are in no way meant to reflect the role of the players of certain instruments in our real world. The world of Raise the Horns is fantastical, mythic, and thanks to the pulse wave has recently given certain people a heightened idea of what they mean to a band.

On the surface, Role can represent the instrument that you play. In a lot of cases, this is certainly true. Drummers play the drums, etc. But Role also represents a metaphysical connection to your place within a band. Your brethren count on you to fulfill a certain place in your travels, and that's not just constrained to concerts.

Before anyone asks, no you don't have to have a member from each Role in your band. Hell, you don't even have to have a Band per se – you might play a solo adventurer blazing a path to legend through the modern world. You might have a band made entirely of Bassists.

Originally, Roles were meant to govern both Harmony and Power Chords (detailed later). This struck the designer as a bit too anal for this style of freeform game however, and it was also undesirable to add a few pages of Role-specific powers to this document. Certainly, GMs and players can expand upon this notion if they so desire, and create all kinds of weird powers that are inspired by what a mythological Lead Singer might do.

Instead, Roles are now constrained to rough guidelines which help the GM parcel out Harmony. To put it simply, if you engage in an act which is in line with your Role (and that includes doing a kickass performance of that instrument), you get twice as much Harmony as you might otherwise be entitled to receive.

A competing stat, Dissonance, was also originally slated to be in the game, but was cut for brevity and because it was seen to be too restricting on character action. Raise the Horns seeks to praise and reward COOL stuff, not to punish people for slight breaks in character.

The Roles are:

Drummer: Aside from playing the drums of course, drummers are the ones who keep the beat and rally the band if things go astray. Thus, they receive double Harmony if they manage to rally the spirits of the band, stop conflicts within the band, or inspire the band to endure in the face of adversity.

Bassist: Despite the terrible deprecation of character that bassists receive, they are a necessary and integral part of a metal band. In terms of Harmony, they are the ones who see the underlying rhythm in life. They get double Harmony in any case where they aid their bandmates by finding the path, by coming up with a needed solution to a problem, or by healing the bandmates mentally or physically.

Lead Guitar: The innovators. Surpassed in glory-hounding by Lead Singers, but not by much. It's the Lead Guitarist's job to come up with novel and righteous riffs. Their music drives, at least on the surface, the path of the song. Double Harmony awards are theirs when innovation and solo endeavours reap great rewards for the entire band.

Lead Singer: The face of the band. Also, the easiest Role to understand in terms of where they fit for Harmony. Their double rewards come when they lead the band to glory, they pursue actions that rely on their looks and personality instead of equipment, and when they speechify to good effect. A lot of their Harmony is Spirit-based.

EQUIPMENT

This will probably be the shortest section of the rules, since RTH does not put a lot of stock in things like encumbrance and availability. Characters are assumed to have the basics they need to survive, or will be getting them shortly. They can carry about as much as you'd expect from a normal person, and in some cases more if their stats and traits are high enough.

All equipment does Mechanically is to add one die on rolls in which equipment would be a factor. Hitting someone would require rolling one die. Hitting someone with an axe (assuming you had an axe to call your own) would let you roll two dice. The trifecta would be hitting someone with an axe, having an axe as equipment for your attack, and having a Flesh Trait like "Ex-Lumberjack".

HARMONY

Harmony makes a band a band, instead of a cacophony. Harmony is what binds a

group together and gives them the power to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

In Raise the Horns, Harmony is a mechanic used to keep bands working together, but also to allow characters to advance. At the most basic level, one can understand Harmony as being points awarded when someone takes extraordinary action that *aids another person(s) in the band*. The last bit is important. You don't get Harmony by being selfish, just like you don't write a killer song made up entirely of one instrument's solos. Unless you're playing a solo game, you can only get Harmony by aiding someone else.

Most Harmony rewards will be one or two points. They are given out when the GM feels that a member of the band has pulled off some stunt or undertaken some action that goes beyond the norm and has a beneficial effect for the band. A Lead Singer type who talks a town out of lynching the group has points coming. Actually, anyone in the band who does that has points coming, but a Lead Singer would have double. Thus, Roles play an integral part in creating Harmony.

Harmony can be used in three ways.

The first way is for advancement of your character's stats. If you have 12 points in your Harmony bar, you can cash them all in so to speak to buy one new Trait related to the stat for that bar. For instance, if you had 12 Harmony built up in deeds of the Flesh, you could trade them all in for one new Flesh-related Trait. That would also raise your overall Flesh score by one point by extension.

The second thing for which harmony can be used is to add point-for-point to rolls. Simply announce how many points you're spending from your bar before you roll, and they get added to the d12 result. NOTE: In order to take advantage of this, you must declare that you're doing something differently or in a more extraordinary manner than normal. Harmony is fuelling your action, so make it memorable. The more points you spend, the bigger the effect should be. Adding 12 points of Harmony to a physical attack should warrant at least a good description of what you're about to do.

Lastly, Harmony can be spent on special powers, called...

Power Chords

Power chords were originally going to be parceled out specifically to Roles, which meant creating list upon list of kewl powerz that would have been fairly confining and limiting in scope for the spirit of this game. So, they've been changed considerably.

Now, Power Chords can be anything supernatural that a character wishes to perform. They are very narrative and free-for-all in scope. They can be performed by any Role, and the results are based solely on how many points of Harmony that you wish to invest.

Want to temporarily manifest a horrorpunk facade, letting your pale skin and Deadlock intimidate the locals? Cool. Want to come up with an inspiring set of lyrics for the concert you're currently playing? Go for it. Want to sprout bat wings and breathe fire? That's going to

take more points, but it's possible. Power Chords are open, but should be metal-inspired for their greatest effect.

With Power Chords, just about anything is possible. After all, this is the post-pulse wave world. Supernatural is a way of life now.

The GM should use his judgement in these matters. 1 or 2 points of Harmony spent will not be enough to manifest grand physical changes in a character for instance. 12 Harmony is miraculous or catastrophic.

One more thing: bands can come together and pool their resources, chipping in all of their Harmony at once to create some huge effect. This should not be campaign-ending, but should allow them to pull off some end-of-the-story dramatic effects. Maybe just a concert to let their names live forever.

Section Four: What's it all About Then?

So far these rules have tried to explain the world in which Raise the Horns is played, and the mechanical aspects of the game, but not much has been mentioned about what can be done with the resultant system.

RTH was meant to be played as a near-apocalyptic game where supernaturally-gifted individuals come together as a band and make their mark in the world, a world which is now more touched by myth and legend than ever. It's about taking the airbrush art from the side of a van and living in it. It's about the power of inspiring music and deeds.

In these ways, RTH is about heroes. Metal has often been mistaken as satanic or evil, by those who only see the surface. In fact, metal is *Mythic*, in scope and themes. It borrows from legends and lore of any number of civilizations, and makes up a fair bit of its own, just to make the listener feel deeply. It touches the primal side of the listener. In Metal, it's not enough to have a catchy riff – you have to back it up with things that MATTER.

The world of RTH was designed so that any of these themes, or even the surface stuff like creatures or items can be thrown in and have a logical reason for being there. Not everything in the world was created by Metal, but Metal is the only music which has touched upon the manifestations seen so completely. Religious inspiration and iconography? Metal's got it in spades. Legendary heroes traversing environments both harsh and breathtaking? Yep that too.

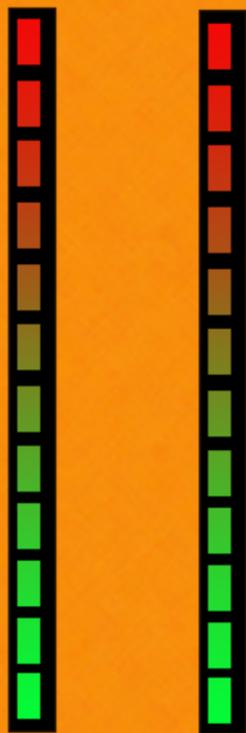
And let's not forget the characters that have manifest as a direct result of ideas half-formed by Metal. Dudes like Metal Satan for one. Angels and Devils are now a physical reality on Earth. Monsters creep in the shadows. It's a time for heroes...a time for glory.

Games set in this world should play upon all of these things. While you could play it as a band playing gigs to make money to eat, that's not very awe-inspiring. RTH should be played on an epic scale, with all of the primal things in life thrown in. Screw turning it up to 11 – turn it to 12 and don't ever look back. You want to have the characters encountering legends and gods. You want the environment to be a character in itself. You want your characters doing epically cool things on their way to virtual godhood as the most nut-stomping, hair-whipping, guitar-shredding, comely-lass-bedding, sons of bitches this side of Valhalla.

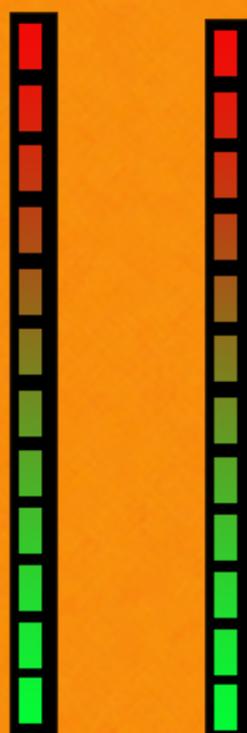
That said, there are some events around which you might centre a campaign. Metal Satan is always looking to expand his (their) empire. Religious groups eke out a living and cause or forbear their own share of troubles. Martians may be here already, and some are certainly thinking of coming to visit shortly. Who will rule the world when the dust settles? Who can live forever in both deed and song?

The band, that's who.

Raise the Horns Character Sheet



Harmony Damage



Harmony Damage

