

# Barq's Root Beer To Back Heavy Metal Convention

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By SUSAN WETZEL

The fourth annual Foundations Forum, the only hard rock/heavy metal convention of its kind, will take place in Los Angeles, Oct. 3-5.

The convention has been moved to a venue twice the size of last year's, and is expected to have the largest turnout ever.

The Foundations Forum is sponsored this year by Barq's Inc., manufacturer of Barq's Root Beer; the deal was arranged by Rick Hill, vice president of marketing for the company.

"We think it's vital," Hill said of Barq's involvement with heavy metal. "You can talk about target marketing, or you can do it. Our target market is 12 to 24, what better way is there to reach them other than heavy metal?"

The growing success of the con-

vention shows the popularity, and power, of the music form. This year the conference has not only grown, but expanded to feature the first Concrete Foundations Awards, with categories for Reader's Choice, Chart Performance and Editor's Choice. The ceremony also will feature live performances by Megadeth and Temple of the Dog.

Hill, who will be on the sponsorship panel, said that heavy metal is an area largely overlooked by corporate America. "Heavy metal's almost an untouchable thing," he said. "But it's no fad, it's here to stay."

The sponsorship panel will be headed by Tom Hulett of Concerts West. Hulett admits that many corporations are not willing to

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sponsor heavy metal events. "They have to take a risk, and heavy metal is scary to them," Hulett said.

Barq's became involved in heavy metal sponsorship through MTV's Headbangers' Ball. That association led to a relationship with the Foundations Forum, and the eventual sponsorship deal.

Barq's will be the official soft drink of the conference; the company's name will be on the programs and signage. Barq's is also sponsoring the unsigned band room and a seminar on developing acts.

Hill is comfortable with the decision to focus on developing talent. "We prefer to sponsor those up-and-coming bands that have not yet made it to the big time as opposed to trying to tie in with those acts which are already established. That's the easy way, and many look at that type of sponsorship as a sellout."

Barq's is not looking to sponsor any one fledgling band. "We prefer to support the industry as a whole rather than single out any one favorite," Hill said. "When you sponsor a band, the consumers are going to have a given opinion about that band."

"I look at this sponsorship as a present and future opportunity," Hill said. "It is our hope that this will lead to undiscovered opportunities, it's sort of like prospecting."

Hill also sees the sponsorship as a way of keeping abreast of current trends. "It's a way of keeping on the inside track. We're not just out there for the commercial value, but rather as truly supporting and sponsoring this event, making it better and more meaningful. That way it can give us an opportunity to learn more about the industry. It's a way for corporate America to interface with the industry in general."