



SOUTH AFRICAN METAL MUSIC AWARDS

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SAMMA OPERATIONS MANUAL (updated 2017)

PURPOSE:

The document serves to detail the operations of each year's selections [for award candidates] process since the inception of the 'SAMMA Memorandum Of Procedures' in 2016.

CONTENTS:

- | | | |
|----|---|------------|
| 1. | SAMMA Background 2014-2016 | Page 2 |
| 2. | SAMMA Structure Summarized | Page 3-4 |
| 3. | SAMMA Processes Explained | Page 5-10 |
| 4. | SAMMA Category Criteria, Eligibility and Conventions. | Page 11-18 |

BACKGROUND:

The SAMMA and public opinion

Established since 2014, the SAMMA first appeared amidst varying degrees of acceptance by the South African metal-loving public. Although we at M4A and some other media elected to reserve comment in the earliest stages, our curiosity has been held and we've watched with interest as the second year unravelled itself in 2015 with some refinements in method and approach. We've paid even closer attention since, and after reporting on the 2015 ceremony with an opinion piece, we were invited to participate in a newly-formed panel consisting of various players in the underground music scene to submit nominations for 2016.

The SAMMA and measures to improve credibility:

Owing to our own belief that the awards had not yet reached a level of integrity that we felt fully satisfied with in 2015, we declined this invitation for 2016 – but we had not dismissed it. Instead, we offered to serve as an Independent Observer for the SAMMA as well as to be an advisory body to assist in opening up greater transparency for the awards processes. The SAMMA Organizers welcomed this suggestion with enthusiasm and have since implemented it.

The implementation of a third party Independent Observer and its duties:

A part of the agreement between M4A serving as the Independent Observer for SAMMA and The SAMMA Organizers is that, as an unattached third party, The SAMMA Organizers reserve the right to dismiss M4A from this role if they are dissatisfied with our methods of promoting full transparency; whereas the M4A role is to help establish and ensure that firm sets of rules are implemented which all bodies attached to the concept must abide by, and these offered up as public knowledge on this media platform.

In other words, M4A does not represent the SAMMA interest, but rather the public interest in SAMMA. However, in spite of any previous misgivings, we have taken on this role with the full commitment towards seeing the SAMMA grow into something which can ultimately become more credible and largely accepted by the national and international public. Our philosophy is that: as long as somebody is committed to making this happen, we as a community can do our part to ensure that it happens in a more widely satisfactory way.

Therefore, we have made a great deal of recommendations to The SAMMA Organizers which we believe should increase the integrity of the awards, and we will work to assist them in further refining these methods for as long as they accept the terms of agreement to which we have committed ourselves.

The remainder of this document will outline the processes, rules and methods implemented since M4A entered into this agreement with The SAMMA Organizers.

SAMMA STRUCTURE SUMMARIZED:

Three bodies have been established to ensure, within reason, that the SAMMA remains unbiased and maintains an open/exposed agenda. Namely:

1. The SAMMA Organizers

This body consists of Sashqita Northey of the Emlayth event promotions brand, in association with founders Musa Mntambo and Brandon Bernardo. Emlayth's responsibility is in hosting and maintaining the annual awards ceremony and processes which build up to it, and all attached duties. These parties collectively can claim credit to "owning" the SAMMA concept; a claim which neither members of **The SAMMA Panel** or M4A as **Independent Observer** will make. The success or failure, and the acceptance or dismissal of the outcome by the greater public opinion, remains entirely their prerogative.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Sashqita is manager for local band Boargazm and manages the annual event Emlayth Arts Expo. Brandon and Musa are both former members of South African band 11th Hour, and are known as partners in the organizing of a number of live entertainment event concepts.

As such, they are forbidden from submitting any nominations for as long as the SAMMA responsibility remains in their hands, as these would be seen as a conflict of interest. Activities which they are attached to are allowed for consideration by members of The SAMMA Panel, but only along the lines of strict adherence to the same rules and processes of any other nominations.

2. The SAMMA Panel

This body aims to consist of seven (7) voluntary panel members, each invited as a guest and otherwise formally unattached to either a) **The SAMMA Organizers**, or b) the **Independent Observer**.

Panel members are invited on account of their merit for work done in the scene and the ongoing exposure they have to regular activities relevant to the awards. **The SAMMA Panel** requires a quorum of four (4) members' submissions in order to be authenticated. A quorum can be declared in the event of the greater number missing date deadlines, without which the processes of the awards cannot be achieved. Additional members when numbering more than four (4) can be disqualified if nomination submissions are not received on time or within reasonable grace periods thereafter. Notwithstanding, without the minimum of four (4) submissions from panel members, the processes cannot go forward until a fourth is received, regardless of deadlines. In such cases, the entire process will rather be placed on hold until the minimum is met so as to safeguard the integrity of the awards.

3. Independent Observer.

This body needs to be comprised of a minimum of one (1) member, not attached to **The Organizer** or **The SAMMA Panel**.

The responsibility attached to this role is to serve as a surveyor who must gather and organize as much information possible which pertains to the awards; to observe the rules; to within reasonable measures make sure that all bodies and individuals attached to those bodies understand and abide by the rules, and; to within reasonable measures provide to the public a full working knowledge of the processes behind the awards.

Appointed to this role in 2016 was Patrick Davidson, the head writer at M4A (www.metal4africa.com news website).

SAMMA PROCESSES EXPLAINED:***The SAMMA in context:***

The unfortunate by-product of any awards ceremony is that there will be only one prize-winner per category, and the achievements of other nominees are likely to be perceived as simply 'dismissed'. However, among the South African public and artists alike, it is each individual's own prerogative to recognize or deny the authenticity/authority of these or any other awards.

Only if a process is firmly understood and remains publicly transparent can any awards hope to gain greater trust and credibility, and thus increase its own authenticity. At this years (2016) SAMMA, we at M4A have faith that sufficient improvements have been made to the processes to indicate an unbiased and agenda-free allocation of awards.

Step 1 Preliminary Preparations:

The SAMMA Organizers assemble volunteers to join **The SAMMA Panel**. For this, they approach people who are known for their credentials, and as the panel grows, so does the genealogy of further panel member suggestions as they become more diverse. The approach here, as is understood by **The SAMMA Organizers** is that in order to gain maximum public credibility, this cannot be an assemblage of their closest friends and allies. The more panel members, the greater the authenticity of the *Primary Nominations* (Step 2). Especially when multiple non-connected members submit similar nomination lists, as such indicates a stronger sense of a feasible public opinion.

Step 2 Primary Nominations:

The SAMMA Panel members are invited to nominate – in each category – five nominees only, choosing from among their own knowledge base of bands/items grown from years of experience and exposure to the relevant scene.

This means that the potential for number of nominations could hypothetically result in as many as twenty (35) unique nominations or more per category, given the rule of a four (4) member panel as minimum and the assumption that each member might choose completely unique nominations. In reality, this is not likely the case, as many nominations will actually overlap between panel members. This is not considered a bad thing, since seeking out a prize-winner in any endeavour takes on the natural character of being a process of elimination rather than a process of accumulation. Therefore, the more panel members who offer up the same nominees in certain categories, the more strength is given over to their individual opinions as being more widely relevant.

F.Y.I, in the public interest: There are some rules which members of **The SAMMA Panel** have to abide by, enforced within reason by the **Independent Observer** and listed as follows:

I. In good faith, each panel member's nominations need to represent the utmost of personal integrity. I.e: a nomination for a certain band/item must only be offered up if the panel member truly believes it to be the absolute best within their knowledge-base for that category.

II. In good faith, panel members may not nominate in any category a band/item to which they are somehow attached (ie: band member, manager, creative input, etc), as this would result in discrediting themselves, the awards, and even the band/item being nominated. Each panel member should commence in the full trust that if their somehow attached band/item is indeed worthy of consideration, then the likelihood that another panel member will submit the nomination supersedes their own need to submit it themselves.

III. To the best of their knowledge, any nomination offered by a panel member must fit within the criteria set out for each category. As far as is possible, the **Independent Observer** will seek to root out and disqualify any irregular nominations.

IV. In as far as is possible, within each panel member's knowledge-base, they must fill in a full five nominations in each category.

Step 3 *Submission, Disqualifications, Feedback and Disputes*

Submissions. Each member of **The SAMMA Panel** emails their nominations in discretion directly to the **Independent Observer**. Lists are then drawn up by the **Independent Observer** and elimination begins with disqualifying any nominations which do not comply with the rules or the appropriate criteria.

Disqualification. A nominee can be disqualified where criteria dictates certain date-ranges (such as an example using the category of "Best Newcomer" where a band can only be eligible if proof exists that they became active on the live circuit only between 01 January 2014 and 31 December 2015) or other points (such as an example using "Best Live Act" where a band can only be eligible if proof exists that they performed at least seven (7) live shows within the date range of 01 January 2015 and 31 December 2015) lend credence to this action. The duty of the **Independent Observer** is to attempt to identify, verify, and also to disqualify if/when proof can be found that warrants such action.

Feedback. Feedback is a vital step for transparency to protect the awards from tampering by the **Independent Observer**. Once processed, the final lists – identifying qualified and disqualified nominations – are supplied back to **The SAMMA Panel** in a single document to verify that no illegal tampering has occurred with their original submission, and that any disqualifications made are accompanied by a valid reason and accepted by the panel member concerned. In this step, the full panel stands witness to each other. This is also the first time that **The SAMMA Panel** members see each others' nominations. Each member then signs the *Primary Nominations* off as legitimate, or raises a dispute.

Disputes. Any disagreements or oversights which are identified at this stage are resolved democratically among members of **The SAMMA Panel** and **The SAMMA Organizer**. The **Independent Observer** has no sway in matters of resolving disputes, except to mediate between differing opinions of panel members and to facilitate that they are resolved democratically.

Step 4 *Secondary Nominations, Feedback and Disputes*

After the initial round of disqualifications, it may be evident that some members of **The SAMMA Panel** may not have fully understood the criteria, were misinformed on what qualifies a nomination, or any other number of variables that resulted in their list of five (5) nominations per category not being fulfilled. They are given an opportunity to then re-submit, filling any open positions if they see fit to do so.

In this step of *Secondary Nominations*, completing a full list of five (5) remains optional for each panel member. Nobody is obligated to fill in all five (5) openings if they are not truly convinced that there are as many as five (5) worthy of an award in the given category. There is a rule, however, that since all other members nominations are also revealed at this point, a member may not change a previous nomination which was accepted as qualified since the *Primary Nominations*. This opportunity to re-submit exists only to fill in open gaps left behind by *disqualification* or other irregularities approved of by the **Independent Observer**.

Feedback and disputes follow exactly as in the first round described above. Once all members have signed off that they are satisfied that no tampering has occurred by the **Independent Observer**, only then is **The SAMMA Organizer** invited to take the result of nominations to the next step of *Public Participation*.

Step 5 *Public Scrutiny, Polls and Public Participation*

The SAMMA in context, continued...

Another by-product of a prize-giving ceremony is that there will always be members of the public who will disagree with the results. Again, an awards concept is a process of elimination. Also, what is important to note is that the SAMMA for any given year is not seeking to recognize a universal accomplishment; it seeks to recognize accomplishments which had manifest only within a very limited date range, typically of one (1) year. It is not only possible – but even likely – that bands of huge stature who enjoy wide respect may not even be nominated for a specific year in which they remained largely idle to the public eye. The absence of a band in a nominations submitted by four (4) or more panel members should be regarded rather as a sign that those bands had not done enough during that date range to attract the same attention which others had done.

However, a nomination in its own right should be seen as a wonderful acknowledgement. There can be only one prize-winner in each category, and the task is to gradually eliminate items on a list until only one remains. **The SAMMA Organizers, The SAMMA Panel**, and the **Independent Observer** have all agreed that a public component is vital in assisting with this endeavour.

Therefore, once the *Primary Nominations* are signed off as authentic by **The SAMMA Panel** and overseen by the **Independent Observer**, the results are thrown open to *Public Scrutiny*. Furthermore, the public are invited to participate in the process by assisting in the elimination of nominees.

This step is designed to ensure that neither **The SAMMA Panel**, nor any other body, may hold absolute control over the process, and careless nominations can be overridden. This step is facilitated by *Public Polls*.

VERY IMPORTANT: Public Polls do NOT determine a winner! They only serve to validate that **The SAMMA Panel** has nominated appropriately.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Important consideration factors during the public participation phase which have helped to shape the methods now being used in the process:

I. Popularity. **The SAMMA Organizers** do not wish for the SAMMA to boil down purely to a public popularity or friendship circle contest, as it has been accused of in the past. Although, in any reasonable definition of the entertainment industry, popularity is also an important factor. Therefore, it will likewise be a contributing factor to the final outcome.

II. Elimination. Each member of **The SAMMA Panel** submitted – in most cases – five nominations per category. The result thereof is that each category contains more than five nominations at the time of going to the *Public Polls*. The objective of the *Public Polls* is to narrow down the full set of nominations in each category to end with five only, as determined by the public.

III. Category irregularities. In some cases, there might have been disagreement among **The SAMMA Panel** members over genre definitions or other criteria. As a result, some bands might appear as a nominee in more than one category; in particular, the “Best Of Genre” categories. In the final nominations list, there can be no such irregularities. In order to stand eligible for a SAMMA, a band must be defined within SAMMA strictures. In this regard, a band whose name occurs in more than one list will only appear in the final nominations lists under one category, and this will be determined by the results of the *Public Poll*. In whichever category a band attains its highest votes; that will be the category under which they will be validated for moving on to the final list, if at all. Even if a band scores the highest votes out of all nominations in more than one category, they will only move forward on the list in which they specifically scored the highest points of their own collective votes. This additional measure is in place to ensure that bands with obvious popularity, or who can afford a budget to sponsor “call to action” social media campaigns cannot dominate multiple genre categories unfairly.

IV. Public Polls. The *Public Polls* are hosted and administrated by **The SAMMA Organizer**, and overseen by the **Independent Observer**. Once the polls are closed, the results are again supplied to the **Independent Observer** to compile a final nominations list which goes back to **The SAMMA Panel** for the final round of elimination.

Step 6. *The Final Nominations, and Point System*

Once the *Public Polls* are closed and results supplied to **The SAMMA Panel** members, they begin their most rigorous task of the whole process. In most cases, it is likely that each person will sit with a list that is not the same as their own original nominations, as some of their own choices will have been eliminated during disqualification rounds or via public participation. As to the five names which remain in each category, panel members must then take what has been presented to them and rearrange them according to their own opinion of priority – from most deserving of the award at the top, down to least deserving at the bottom. The same rules apply where **The SAMMA Panel** members may not communicate between each other and may only submit their final results to the **Independent Observer**.

F.Y.I, in the public interest: the Point System explained:

Once all *Final Nominations* have been received by the **Independent Observer**, scoring begins. In each category, a band/item stands the chance to score between an absolute minimum of four (4) points, and an absolute maximum of thirty-five (35) points. For each category, the highest scoring nomination will be awarded the prize and title.

The points will be determined by the order of priority in which each member of the panel submitted their final lists. For example, one panel member (of a 4 member quorum) might nominate XYZ as 1st priority in their list for a category, and perhaps another did the same. But what if the third panel member only ranked XYZ as 3rd priority, and the fourth member ranked them as 5th (lowest) priority? The points will be tallied up as $5/5 + 5/5 + 3/5 + 1/5 = 14/20$. Still an extremely good score, despite that one panel member even strongly disregarded XYZ. Plus, even though two panel members strongly regarded them, XYZ still did not attain a clean dominating victory.

Does this mean that if a band is favoured unfairly by two panel members that they might automatically win? Well, unfortunately, it would be more probable that with that kind of support that they will, which is why multiple steps are in place to prevent the likelihood of such a debacle; but it is not at all guaranteed or automatic. In another example using the Point System, let's look at ABC who perhaps scored lower priority by the first two panel members, and even failed to impress the other two enough to meet their highest priority. Perhaps ABC's score was $4/5 + 3/5 + 4/5 + 4/5 = 15/20$. What would happen here would be a result unexpected by any of the panel members where ABC would actually win over all! Unexpected, because nobody ranked them as their 5/5 choice and because no other remaining combination of points can defeat a score of 15/20, but their Point System average defied any possibility of unfair bias.

Step 7 *Final Adjudication.*

Whilst the Point System will help greatly in the process of elimination, it is possible that it might deliver some tied results. There are two measures in place to be followed by **The SAMMA Panel** in the event of this unlikely outcome:

I. Determine the prize-winner by a democratic process. The **Independent Observer** will facilitate a vote to be undertaken by members of **The SAMMA Panel**. Should members fail to reach a conclusive outcome through voting (ie: another tied result), the **Independent Observer** will facilitate the second measure.

II. In the highly unlikely case of the matter remaining unresolved by **The SAMMA Panel** at this stage, the fate of a perfect tie will be handed over to the **Independent Observer** to be dealt with via **www.random.org** as follows: In alphabetical order, each of the two remaining nominees will be allocated a number range – odd numbers 1-3-5-7-9 for the first in order, and 2-4-6-8-10 for the second in order. The final victor will be determined by a draw using the numbers 1-10 at the website **www.random.org**, and members of **The SAMMA Panel** and **The SAMMA Organizers** will be invited to witness the draw over a live skype session to validate it.

SAMMA CATEGORY CRITERIA ELIGIBILITY AND CONVENTIONS:

Of all the gains made by the SAMMA since its inception in 2014, and particularly with its methods implemented in 2016, there still remains much work to do in not only refining its own interpretations of *Category Criteria* and *Eligibility*; but also in setting out *Conventions* and effective communication to the public (for interest of the bands who might wish to be nominated).

Ultimately, it is impossible for the SAMMA or any other entities “eyes and ears” to be everywhere and this will always remain an opening for public criticism. However, an ongoing effort will continue to plug up the gaps in the years ahead and to build upon the foundation already laid by the SAMMA. The following paragraphs and section seek to inform the public as to what criteria definitions have been developed in this latest round of the awards and will remain in place to be built upon in the future.

1. Categories and Criteria.

Please bear in mind that this is an area which is open to further refinement and in future years may increase or decrease in the number of points observed, as well as may differ in context. As much as possible, a broader public opinion will be held in consideration in such matters.

I. Best Music Video. In the South African context, a good music video is one of the most challenging hurdles for musicians to leap if trying to compete with international standards. However, the SAMMA seeks not only to reward those who have had access to large budgets or other fortunate means with recognition, but to also recognize creativity and ‘out of the box’ thinking.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

In order to be eligible the videos need to include some component of videographic / cinematographic creativity. A mere edit of stock live footage captured at a single or a collection live shows is not regarded as ‘creative’ and will not likely be considered seriously as eligible. Proof should also be available that the video was launched/first appeared to the public within the required date range – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is the ‘Published’ date, readily displayed on Youtube pages for such videos.

II. Best Single. This is a brand new category suggested only recently by a member of the panel and was taken up enthusiastically by all. In the South African context, the SAMMA recognizes that many bands struggle between finances and other challenges related to our presently underdeveloped industry that may result in huge gaps in time between releases of albums or EPs, and thus would like to create the opportunity for acknowledgement of high quality single releases. However, as an award category, the Best Single is not about the song only, but about the release as a whole package.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the individual song was launched/first appeared to the public within the required date range – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is the ‘release date’ which appears with songs published via bandcamp, ‘published’ date which appears on a youtube page, or if sufficient evidence can be traced via a bands facebook page that the song appeared for public listening only within the defined date range. Further observations will be made on matters attached to single releases, such as accompanying artworks (if any), music videos (if any), press recognition (if any), etc.

III. Best EP. This was introduced as a new category as a means to settle dispute between members of **The SAMMA Panel** as to the matter of recognizing an EP versus an album as the same thing. A democratic decision recognized that the SAMMA does not acknowledge an EP as being the same calibre accomplishment as an album, considering the differences in effort and resources typically involved in the production of one versus the other.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the EP was launched/first appeared to the public within the required date range – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is the ‘release date’ which appears with songs published via bandcamp, ‘published’ date which appears on a youtube page, or if sufficient evidence can be traced via a bands facebook page that the song appeared for public listening only within the defined date range. An EP can further be defined as a release which comprises of a collection of songs formally released as such, numbering no fewer than two songs.

IV. Best Album. This category is to acknowledge the extraordinary effort required in creating and releasing a high quality collection of recorded songs. The accomplishment is rare, with most bands in the South African context only managing a few in their whole careers. Often, with several years passing between releases.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the album was launched/first appeared to the public within the required date range – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is the ‘release date’ which appears with songs published via bandcamp, ‘published’ date which appears on a youtube page, or if sufficient evidence can be traced via a bands facebook page that the song appeared for public listening only within the defined date range. An album can further be defined as a release which comprises of a collection of songs formally released as such, numbering no fewer than seven songs, or, offering a ‘needle time’ of no less than thirty (30) minutes of music.

V. Best Newcomer. In any scene/industry, it is always important to introduce fresh stimulus which ensures growth and longevity. The SAMMA wishes to recognize the contributions of noteworthy newcomers into the fold.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

this category pertains to live activity in particular. Proof should be available that the band first appeared to a public audience within the required date range – in this instance, a band which has been performing live for longer than two years is no longer considered a ‘newcomer’, with the date range being any time between 01 January of the previous year and 31 December of the year after (two year date range). Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band’s facebook page of a ‘first gig’ listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

VI. Best Live Act. South Africa’s industry thrives particularly in the realm of live performance/live entertainment. The SAMMA wishes to recognize extraordinary effort and creativity in this area. This is also an opportunity to recognize consistency in those qualities; something often overlooked by performers, hence the criteria including a minimum number of performances required within the date range.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered.. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band’s facebook page of performances listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

VII. Best Metal Event. The SAMMA wishes to recognize extraordinary effort and creativity in the realm of live entertainment events. There is no restriction to annual events only, and nominations can include memorable experiences which were once-off. This is also a category which has been subject to some debate and will be further refined in the future.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the event has taken place within the required date range – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered.. A ‘new years’ event will be regarded as taking place inside the year in which the greater part of the live entertainment took place. Suitable/acceptable proof is the existence of a facebook event page, maintaining as much information/detail of the past event as possible. In the case of recurring annual events, a member of The SAMMA Panel must specify that they are nominating the event of the relevant year in order to avoid disqualification by the Independent Observer.

Best Of Genre categories

These categories share the unfortunate situation of being a) often rather ambiguous, and b) subject to widely varied public interpretation/opinion. Yet, the greatest challenges for panel members is to ensure that nominations which make it through to the final selections process are a) widely regarded as appropriate, and b) largely relevant for the date range in question. Therefore, there are many bands who, in any particular year, may be overlooked by members of **The SAMMA Panel**. It must be understood that the SAMMA is awarding accomplishments within a limited date range each year – that of the preceding year only. Bands who have remained largely inactive – or proportionately less active – will likely not have gained much public attention during that year. Not receiving a nomination should not be regarded as the band being simply dismissed by the SAMMA processes in a universal sense, as **The SAMMA Panel** will be very likely to include such a band in the future (or would have in the past) when a nomination for the band is/was warranted.

Furthermore, at this stage in time, categories are defined in terms of what is largely accepted by the public and follows (yes, we know this is blasphemous in the context of heavy metal) the greater public ‘trend’ towards categorization of genre. In this regard, even panel members may differ in opinion, yet the SAMMA prerogative is not to dictate these categorizations to the South African public. Therefore, in some cases where the panel found itself in disagreement, some bands may be found nominated under two categories. In such cases, as allowed by the **Independent Observer**, public opinion will be enlisted via the polls to determine which category should be most appropriate for bands with multiple-category nominations (explained under: SAMMA Processes – Step 5. Public Scrutiny, Polls and Public Participation)

VIII. Best Death Metal. South Africa enjoys a strong extreme metal culture, under which Death Metal can describe a fairly diverse range of sounds. In today’s metal music, so many bands can integrate influences of multiple sub-genres into their sounds... and do! So much so that interpretations can often become blurred to the ear of the beholder. The SAMMA wishes to seek out and recognize extraordinary efforts within the date range for bands who fit closest within this fairly broad category. Emphasis is placed on actively performing bands, so as to correlate more closely with the year in question; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times, or that the band has released an album/EP – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band’s facebook page of performances or releases listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by **The SAMMA Panel** or the **Independent Observer** on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

IX. Best Black Metal. South Africa enjoys a strong extreme metal culture, under which Black Metal can describe a fairly diverse range of sounds, although somewhat more concentrated in overall style and influences. In today's metal music, so many bands can integrate influences of multiple sub-genres into their sounds... and do! So much so that interpretations can often become blurred to the ear of the beholder. The SAMMA wishes to seek out and recognize extraordinary efforts within the date range for bands who fit closest within this ever broadening category. Emphasis is placed on actively performing bands, so as to correlate more closely with the year in question; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times, or that the band has released an album/EP – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band's facebook page of performances or releases listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

X. Best Thrash Metal. South Africa enjoys a strong extreme metal culture, under which Thrash Metal can often describe a more traditional/old-school focus in overall musical style and influences. In today's metal music, so many bands can integrate influences of multiple sub-genres into their sounds... and do! So much so that interpretations can often become blurred to the ear of the beholder. The SAMMA wishes to seek out and recognize extraordinary efforts within the date range for bands who fit closest within this category. Emphasis is placed on actively performing bands, so as to correlate more closely with the year in question.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times, or that the band has released an album/EP - any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band's facebook page of performances or releases listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

XI. Best Core Metal. South Africa enjoys a strong extreme metal culture, under which “Core” Metal and its variables can often describe a more modern/contemporary focus in overall style and influences. In today’s metal music, so many bands can integrate influences of multiple sub-genres into their sounds... and do! So much so that interpretations can often become blurred to the ear of the beholder. The SAMMA wishes to seek out and recognize extraordinary efforts within the date range for bands who fit closest within this category. Emphasis is placed on actively performing bands, so as to correlate more closely with the year in question.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times, or that the band has released an album/EP – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band’s facebook page of performances or releases listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

XII. Best Alternative Metal. Owing to South Africa’s current/recent trends in metal music largely favouring more extreme styles, the current ‘Best Alternative Metal’ category serves as an umbrella for sounds and styles which are currently regarded more as ‘fringe’ genres within Metal. Let it be known that in the future, all categories are subject to re-evaluation and it might be that should sufficient numbers of active bands emerge which represent a sub-genre currently included within the ‘Alternative’ umbrella, a new Best Of Genre category may emerge. The current ‘Alternative’ umbrella includes various hybrids, industrial, nu-metal, or any other ‘fringe’ styles.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times, or that the band has released an album/EP – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band’s facebook page of performances or releases listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

XII. Best Progressive Metal. Owing to South Africa's current/recent trends in metal music largely including some more diverse styles, the current 'Best Progressive Metal' category serves as an umbrella for sounds and styles which are currently regarded more progressive in nature within Metal. Let it be known that in the future, all categories are subject to re-evaluation and it might be that should sufficient numbers of active bands emerge which represent a sub-genre currently included within the 'Alternative' umbrella, a new Best Of Genre category may emerge. The current 'Alternative' umbrella includes various hybrids, industrial, nu-metal, or any other 'fringe' styles.

F.Y.I, in the public interest:

Proof should be available that the band has appeared before a public audience within the required date range no less than seven times, or that the band has released an album/EP – any time between 01 January and 31 December of the year for which awards are being considered. Suitable/acceptable proof is any mention on a band's facebook page of performances or releases listed within the appropriate date range. Evidence to the contrary may be far more diverse, and any evidence discovered by The SAMMA Panel or the Independent Observer on any platform which suggests the contrary and can be verified, has resulted in a disqualification; or may still if uncovered during public participation.

2. Conventions for future eligibility

As this awards concept grows in scale, participation, and it's own experience, it will continue to evolve and pursue greater recognition and authenticity. As more creative people seek to be recognized in this way, the more pertinent it becomes that certain conventions are set into place and demand to be met. Whilst the idea of setting conventions may be very unattractive to the ideology of freedom typically attached to the genre of Metal, there are limits to what can be expected from the people who are entrusted to seek out and validate information pertaining to the awards; such as qualifying nominations.

It would therefore be strongly recommended that any creative persons in bands who might aspire towards recognition in future awards must give careful consideration to what conventions are described below.

1. Release Platforms. To be recognized by members of **The SAMMA Panel**, and to be qualified by the **Independent Observer**, some serious consideration should be given to the release platform/s chosen by the bands releasing the material. Video content is best presented on Youtube because it offers ease of accessibility, suitable broadcast quality, and includes a date stamp. Musical content is best presented on a bandcamp profile because it offers ease of accessibility, suitable broadcast quality, and includes a date stamp. A date stamp is particularly important for easily qualifying the release as falling within the required date range, and lends a sense of formality to the release. This is where, for example, soundcloud or reverbnation prove less viable platforms for a formal release –

although it is not suggested that these should not be used at all, but rather to include the aforementioned bandcamp or youtube as primary platform/s for formal release.

II. Press. Often, bands put a lot of effort into creating a high quality release (single, EP, or album), but fall horribly short in distribution of it and thus it suffers from low visibility/circulation. A member of **The SAMMA Panel** cannot nominate something which they have not heard about or experienced first-hand in some way, and nor are members of the public likely to vote on things which remain unfamiliar. It would be strongly encouraged that bands approach press platforms to further validate their releases. The likes of www.themetalista.co.za are always eager to do reviews on EPs or albums, and www.metal4africa.com or www.audioinferno.com are always ready to share news on any releases, including singles, from African based bands. There are plenty of more internationally-oriented press outlets as well who are interested in publishing about metal releases from strange and exotic places. Some bands are already making excellent use of these readily available press platforms, locally and internationally; but most bands are not.

III. Graphics. A powerful statement of release is to accompany it with a strong graphic presence. Very often, a band will use a low quality live performance photo or other weak graphic representation. This creates a poor impression for somebody hoping to win a “best” anything. Give a little attention to the presentation of releases. Take time – don’t rush, or release “today” just for the sake of getting material out – release it when it’s ready to be presented with pride, and looks as good as it sounds for maximum impact.

IV. Additional conventions specific to Best Video to be recognized as eligible: a) a video shouldn’t simply be an amateur edit of amateur stock live footage, or any other stock footage. However, if used in a particularly creative or extraordinary way, it might be considered. b) If the video is only a montage of professionally shot live footage from one or more live shows, it still requires a creative element, such as perhaps clever/creative post-production grading, the inclusion of quality graphic effects/components, or an accompanying story-line, etc. c) Above all, the video and the song needs to be of sufficient production quality that it is not regarded as a demo or sub-par. In the South African context, more than ever, out-of-the-box thinking is highly encouraged. Definitely publish via youtube as primary release platform, as this is date-stamped and is easily found using search engines.

V. Additional conventions specific to Best Single to be recognized as eligible it would be best to think of it rather as a release package than just a song, therefore : a) in order for it to be considered a formal release, a single will absolutely require an artwork/graphic – which will make up a part of the determining of the overall quality and validity of the release as a prospective “best”; b) it will require at least one item of press coverage at the time of release; c) it will need to be identified somewhere (typically a facebook status update from the band page is acceptable) that the track has been released as a single. d) Above all, the song needs to be of sufficient production quality that it is not regarded as a demo or sub-par. Definitely publish via Youtube or bandcamp as primary release platform/s, as these are date-stamped and are easily found using search engines.

The contents of this page will be modified in future editions of the SAMMA as the concept develops and evolves