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TITLE PAGE

CHILDREN OF THE GRAVE: THE RISE, FALL, AND EXPERIENCE OF HEAVY METAL
MUSIC DURING THE THE LATTER COLD WAR FROM 1969-1991

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Shelby Sibert
May 2024

Accepted by:
Dr. Rebecca Shimoni Stoil, Committee Chair
Dr. Rod Andrew Jr.
Prof. Hamilton Altstatt

ABSTRACT

The Cold War era saw the emergence of many different pop culture phenomena. Some were political, such as the Punk Rock and Hippie movements. Others were fashionable trends like Disco. However, Heavy Metal music is unique due to its opaque origins, skyrocketing popularity, and final disappearance after the end of the Cold War. Heavy Metal had a direct relationship with reflecting the fears and anxieties of the late Cold War period. It was a direct response to the Hippie activist counterculture rock n' roll of the 1960s, and it charts a new path of rock n' roll in the process. However, Heavy Metal's content and moral reputation grew darker, so it lost much of its widespread appeal in the post-Cold War world. The emergence of Grunge and Hip-Hop in the 1990s dethroned Heavy Metal from its seat atop the pop-culture throne. This paper tracks the evolution and downfall of Heavy Metal from the 1970s through the 1990s. The findings are that Heavy Metal music was unique to the Cold War and could not exist without this conflict's geopolitical and social climate. However, Heavy Metal has managed to survive in the world's developing regions throughout the ongoing decolonization process. These individuals use Heavy Metal as an active and passive means of resistance against repressive and oppressive societies.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis, first and foremost, to my parents, Jaime and Paula Sibert. Thank you both for your unyielding love and support and for always ensuring my success in everything. I also want to dedicate this thesis to all the individuals throughout my life who claimed that rock music was a laughable waste of time that would only ever hinder my success and respectability in life.

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I want to thank my Committee Chair, Dr. Rebecca Stoil, for her inexhaustible support and guidance despite her exceptionally strenuous schedule. I am indebted to the unfathomable help given to me by both Dr. Rod Andrew and Prof. Hamilton Altstatt. Thank you to my graduate cohort for encouraging me in feedback and workplace atmosphere. I also want to thank my partner, Kathryn Bukacek, for her immutable support and reassurance. I could not have done this without you. Finally, I would like to thank all my family and friends who always believed in me to accomplish this. I hope that I made you all proud.

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INTRODUCTION

The Cold War was a time of great change, not only geopolitically, but culturally. Nowhere was this occurrence especially prevalent than in the realm of music. A culture's music can reveal quite a bit about its realities. Elvis Presley sang about teenage heartbreak and the joys of youth, a commonplace theme in 1950s post-war America. The arrival of the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show on February 19th, 1964, marked a departure from the conservative views of prior establishment music, giving voice to a new generation that would swell into the Hippie and anti-war beatnik inspired generation. And of course, in 1984, Madonna sang about a material girl living in a material world - underlining how, in the west's pursuit of defeating the east, the accumulation of commodities was the way to not only happiness, but a display of power over the repressed nature of Marxist Communism.¹ All of these proffered positive and idealistic imaginings of the Cold War world through song. But what of some of the darker reflections? Rock and pop music was no stranger to controversy, even with Elvis or Jerry Lee Lewis. However, there is one genre that sprang seemingly out of the nether of hell to hold a sobering and frightening mirror to the world about the realities the Cold War had unleashed. Some say it sounds like an angel singing to others a demon screaming, or perhaps even the pounding of creation's hammer upon the anvil of time. It's called Heavy Metal.²

This thesis infers forthrightly that the Heavy Metal subgenre of rock n' roll would not exist without the Cold War acting as a geopolitical and cultural backdrop. Its obscuration after the conflict's conclusion reinforces that fact. Heavy Metal is unique solely to the Cold War due to the constricting Western conservative push for conservative hegemony, with Heavy Metal

¹ "'The Luckiest Generation': LIFE With Teenagers in 1950s America," *LIFE* (blog), November 29, 2014, <https://www.life.com/history/the-luckiest-generation-life-with-teenagers-in-1950s-america/>.

² *Brutal Legend - Bang Your Head HD*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNsqeB5CIAQ>.

being a direct cultural response to that pseudo, status-quo oppression by multiple Western political administrations. Heavy Metal is a passive form of resistance to these strictures, though they are not limited to the West, but inarguably the Cold War. The increase in television culture and consumerism throughout the Cold War contributed to Heavy Metal's jettison to pop music's success. Heavy Metal responded directly to the increase in the threat of global nuclear conflict that was at its highest point throughout the latter Cold War. Finally, the increased public shift of values during this period in both the youth of the world involved in this conflict found a unique and distinct voice in Heavy Metal, unlike any other music form of this period. As quickly as it arose as a titan of the music industry, it seemingly disappeared after the final stage of the Cold War era.

Heavy Metal is a musical genre that is notorious as it is mysterious. It is a music form that spawned from the post-war era of rock n' roll and an evolution of the hippie counterculture of the 1960s. This genre of music skyrocketed in popularity from the 1970s to the 1980s, particularly with the introduction of the MTV television channel. Its popularity and influence were so exceptional during this period that it expanded beyond the realm of music and into the mediums of art, film, fashion, and, in some cases, video game entertainment. The question then stands: why did Heavy Metal gain so much popularity during this latter second stage of the Cold War? What about the Cold War era that made Heavy Metal so popular? In turn, it also accumulated a fair share of controversy and condemnation. Heavy Metal is a unique musical phenomenon in the sense that it is music with a clearly defined ideology and identity, going as far as to be almost uniform in its presentation with various variations, subgenres, and factions. These ideological intricacies for Heavy Metal were shaped and defined (albeit loosely) during this period. How much impact the Cold War, particularly in the United States, had as a unique

temporal and spatial setting for Heavy Metal to gain the traction it did demands further exploration. Was Heavy Metals' dramatic acceleration to stardom a fluke, angst regarding conservative, Reagan-era politics and values, or a response to Soviet isolating tyrannical rule? Perhaps it was more of a resonating response to transnational geopolitical realities of oppression and feelings of doom in the face of a very tangible reality of nuclear war. In any event, Heavy Metal saw an almost instantaneous drop in commercial and public popularity after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent official ending of the Cold War in the early 1990s. While its decline closely tracked with the trajectory of cold War tensions, there are indications that Heavy Metal was not merely of its time but spoke to a much larger picture of aggression, oppression, and depression that yearns for an outlet that goes beyond the Cold War world into more recent modernity.

How does one describe the music itself? Heavy Metal varies wildly from band to band and era to era. Typically, Heavy Metal musicians create intense, intricate, and elaborate music that harkens back to its classical music roots. In that same turn, much like Punk music, it is not necessarily attempting to be the most auditorily pleasing, technically perfect, or commercially viable music. It is an emotionally charged sound that resonates with emotions of anger, love, loss, lust, and depression.³ Black Sabbath's music revolves around feelings of doom and anxiety while coping with a loss of agency within their music, touching on various religious themes. Their hit song "Iron Man," the lyrics describe a pseudo-messianic figure who possesses both an apathetic unwillingness and crippling inability to save the world from an apocalyptic nightmare.⁴ Their instrumentals are downbeat and directly methodical, making riffs that are

³ Ian Christe, *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (HarperCollins e-books, 2010), 66.

⁴ *Black Sabbath - Iron Man (1970)*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRcYjJQ0JHg>.

crushing to hear. They are coupled with Metal's lyrical and poetic content that directly connects back to classical, operatic music, and slave and blues music. Motorhead infuses blues with Punk Rock to create a savage and rapacious tempo that blasts the listener with a cacophony of sound, contrasting starkly with that of a band such as Black Sabbath.⁵ Heavy Metal is also socially conscious in its lyrics, sometimes sincerely. It primarily deals with themes that empower the powerless, often through the expression of ideas of rage, hate, and hopelessness. Death, sex, drugs, religion, and politics are juxtaposed against themes of rebellion, hedonism, and overcoming struggle; fervent pronouncements of dark and cynical observations abound in Metal's lyrical content.⁶

Performance and dress are integral to Heavy Metal as much as the music. The color black, which in Western culture is associated with death, mystery, danger, and malevolence, is pervasive in Heavy Metal culture.⁷ Black shirts, pants, and art covers are plastered throughout the Heavy Metal scene. In addition, black leather is also embraced to appear eviler. This may reflect a relationship between Heavy Metal, biker culture, and sexual deviancy. A familiar visage is the adorning of spikes and nickel studs as mock-battle armor, reflecting fantasy folklore or a medieval tale designed to frighten or intimidate those outside of the realm of Heavy Metal.⁸ This is intended to offend or discomfort those around as perhaps even a warning sign stating, "Hey, don't mess with me; I am into Heavy Metal." Long hair is almost required to be considered a part of the Heavy Metal culture, with beards and black makeup also being commonplace. Images of death, such as skulls, mutilated corpses, or even demonic imagery, are

⁵ *Motörhead – Ace Of Spades (Official Video)*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mbvWn1EY6g>.

⁶ *BLACK SABBATH - "Paranoid" (Official Video)*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qanF-91aJo>.

⁷ Andrew O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, Reprint edition (Headline, 2018), 81.

⁸ *Metal: Headbanger's Journey (Subtitles PT-BR)*, 2005, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chIeyxbVf_4.

commonplace as well, doubling down on this outsider or subversive culture.⁹

Metal has always appealed to those who felt outside or misunderstood by mainstream culture. The hard-hitting sounds and intense live performances resonated with those who did not identify with the tranquil nature of soft rock or the vapidness of disco. Heavy Metal is a unique instance of ideology influencing music instead of past cases (like the Hippie protest generation) where it would have been the opposite case.¹⁰ Fans of Metal are themselves different from other music's as they share a great deal of unique loyalty. Typically, when an individual becomes a fan of a band, they buy their merchandise, praise them consistently, and object to other forms of music. It is almost familial in their relationship with not only the bands but also fellow fans. Heavy Metal fans greatly value perceiving their sordid bands as "authentic," a value which can be hard to clearly define. Mostly, it means that the bands in question do not change their music style or aesthetic for the sake of profit or commercial success.¹¹ Heavy Metal is not inherently interested in success, which seems contradictory for starting a music group that will (hopefully) be in the public eye. All the while, they must also maintain a reputation of honesty and credibility. It is a balancing act to establish a well-developed career in the realm of music publishing while not hindering or diminishing one's artistic integrity.¹²

There is minimal academic scholarship relating to Heavy Metal. A handful of master's theses have revolved around the genre with varying concentrations. Emilio Rizzi, a student of Music Production, wrote on the intricacies of Heavy Metal sonically and thematically in his

⁹ Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music And Its Culture, Revised Edition*, Revised edition (Da Capo Press, 2000), 274.

¹⁰ Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman, *Louder Than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: It Books, 2014), 201, 204.

¹¹ *Motorhead - Lemmy Explains Rock and Roll*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEDECrpK1IE>.

¹² Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 204, 207.

piece “Heaviness in Contemporary Music” (2016).¹³ Pranav Rajiv’s illumination upon the anthropologic nature of the Heavy Metal genre with their work in “Metal- A Culture of Outsiders” (2014)¹⁴ could be considered a cultural history, albeit one that does not quite hit that mark with its sourcing and presentation. Dr. Chelsea Anne Watt’s dissertation, “Nothin’ but a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s”¹⁵ delves into the purely philosophical and political relationship Reagan era conservatism had with Heavy Metal in the waning years of the Cold War which is the closest interlocutor to this work. Penn State University graduate Caitlin McAlister’s “Heavy Metal Historiography: Historical Subject Matter in the Music of Iron Maiden.”¹⁶ This art history examines and elucidates the historical content and meaning of a particular band’s discography, the English NWOBHM band Iron Maiden. Nothing yet has been produced making the connections between the broader trajectory of the Cold War and Heavy Metal. Limitations within these various disciplines can blind scholars to some of the more substantially significant historical implications of the relationship between the Cold War and the growth, nature, and decline of Heavy Metal. This paper will correct that deficit while utilizing the standards and practices common to academia if not always to popular texts about the genre. This more popular secondary literature varies in utility and limitations concerning historiography, much like the genres of Metal itself.

Heavy Metal was a direct response to the hippie counterculture of the 1960s. It developed out of either a distaste or, at the very least, dissatisfaction with the peace and love anti-war music

¹³ Emilio M. Rizzi, “Heaviness in Contemporary Metal Music,” accessed May 3, 2023, https://www.academia.edu/23318413/Heaviness_in_Contemporary_Metal_Music.

¹⁴ Rajiv Pranav, “Metal – A Culture of Outsiders” (July 22, 2014), <https://sjccwrites.wordpress.com/2014/07/23/metal-a-culture-for-by-of-the-outsiders/>.

¹⁵ Chelsea Anne Watts, “Nothin’ But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s,” n.d.

¹⁶ Caitlin McAlister, “Historical Subject Matter in the Music of Iron Maiden,” Penn State University Libraries, March 30, 2020, https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/21421.

movement. So, it forthrightly is to be considered a musical, artistic movement striking back not just against the conservative, popular status quo but also setting itself apart from all other musical and social subcultures. Its heavy, dark sound and morbidly explicit lyrical subject matter set it so vastly apart. Where hippie music boasted peace, love, and hope, heavy Metal instead prophesied visions of death, destruction, and despair. These themes permeated through the culture by the sense of impending doom that could be felt throughout the Cold War as the threat of nuclear warfare and imperialist expansionism was a common occurrence and anxiety.

The Vietnam War was one of the hottest points of the Cold War. The music of the Vietnam era was as diverse as the men who fought in it. The memory of the Vietnam War and its music is a key to unlocking an understanding of what followed in the form of Heavy Metal. The music of the Vietnam War influenced the darker reflections found in Heavy Metal, such as those of Black Sabbath. Black Sabbath's music could be heard on the rotation of G.I. radio and records as the war progressed unfavorably for the United States.¹⁷ The war also prompted a tidal wave of activism that, like the war itself, brought it new music that reflected or spoke about feelings of anti-war sentiment. This anti-war movement was a force for change—the yearning for peace and love over imperialist conflict. Scholars have provided sparing context to these music movements, and nothing about Heavy Metal's aspect within these activist movements.¹⁸ Post-World War II America during that period undertook a massive shift culturally speaking. Some scholarship attempts to characterize this change, albeit often with limited scope. Philp Gentry and Stephen Whitfield describe how American identity and values underwent a more extensive examination

¹⁷ Doug Bradley and Craig Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War*, First edition (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016).

¹⁸ Suzanne Labin, *Hippies, Drugs and Promiscuity*, trans. Stephanie Winston, First Edition (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1972).

after the war than ever before.¹⁹

Musical trends also began to change form together with the culture. A plethora of works waded through Rock N' Roll, RNB, Doo Wop, and musicals to understand the connection between music and identity in this post-war United States.²⁰ While as a whole, these narratives describe how music gestates identity in much of the world, and the evolution of this precursor identity as the Cold War progressed into what would eventually become the counterculture movement, which in turn would evolve into the topic of this work, Heavy Metal.²¹ Themes such as Red-Scare McCarthyism and the looming dread of nuclear war protrude from this genre of Post-War Culture genre.²² In a broader sense, the Cold War was central to Western identity, especially in the United States, from civil rights to international intelligence communities. While some books touch on the Cold War context, anxieties about a post-Cold War world are largely beyond the purview of these books. Fears about aimlessness, progressivism, and a lack of unifying effort would eventually become symptomatic of Heavy Metal during and after the Cold War.²³

Cold War Counterculture and Pop Culture literature contextualize the world in which a desire and necessity for Heavy Metal arose to differentiate a generation attempting to break away from previous modes of music production and artistic expression. The Vietnam War and the Hippie movement both played a major role in shaping what would eventually become Heavy

¹⁹ Philip M. Gentry, *What Will I Be: American Music and Cold War Identity*, Illustrated edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

²⁰ B. Lee Cooper and Frank W. Hoffmann, *The Doo-Wop Decades, 1945-1965: A Resource Guide To Vocal Groups and Their Recordings* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 35, 54.

²¹ Anthony Gribin and Matthew M. Schiff, *The Complete Book of Doo-Wop*, 2nd edition (Iola, WI: Krause Pubns Inc, 2000), 49, 96.

²² Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2nd edition (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

²³ Ewa Mazierska, ed., *Popular Music in Eastern Europe: Breaking the Cold War Paradigm*, Softcover reprint of the original 1st ed. 2016 edition (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

Metal. So, works revolving around this period, while not explicitly mentioning or referencing Heavy Metal, explain the cultural climate for its creation. For example, the representational “death” of the Woodstock Generation could be at the disastrous Altamont Concert of 1969.²⁴ These works revolving around these issues do not consider the geopolitical conversation about Heavy Metal.²⁵ This shortcoming is partly due to the genre not being produced yet. Nevertheless, there is a blind spot to the potential eventuality that some other, darker form of music would come along to replace the musical zeitgeist that previous rock forms once held.²⁶

Along with the Cold War culture, Metal itself is indeed its own culture. However, cultural history needs additional examination in this area, an issue this work will alleviate. Heavy Metal’s popularity is as reactionary as it is organic. That is the case that Deena Weinstein embraces as one explanation for Heavy Metal’s cultural impact.²⁷ The culture of Heavy Metal is often either ignored, parodied, or even chastised by mainstream society. Weinstein’s cultural history *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture* (2000) looks inward toward some of the mannerisms, slang, dress, and symbolism found within the Heavy Metal community. Weinstein suggests that Heavy Metal has been observed as a negative feature of youth culture. Weinstein attributes this reputation to a severe misunderstanding of the energy and intention behind most Heavy Metal bands and fans. Furthermore, it will be advantageous to build on her interpretation of Heavy Metal to explain what some of these terms or cultural norms mean for nonaffiliated laymen. Weinstein focuses entirely on the culture of Metal itself; this paper will contextualize

²⁴ Joel Selvin, *Altamont: The Rolling Stones, the Hells Angels, and the Inside Story of Rock’s Darkest Day*, Reprint edition (Dey Street Books, 2017).

²⁵ Saul Austerlitz, *Just a Shot Away: Peace, Love, and Tragedy with the Rolling Stones at Altamont* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2018).

²⁶ Saul Austerlitz, *Just a Shot Away: Peace, Love, and Tragedy with the Rolling Stones at Altamont* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2018).

²⁷ Deena Weinstein, *Heavy Metal: The Music And Its Culture, Revised Edition*, Revised edition (Da Capo Press, 2000), 2, 20.

this culture within the framework of the Cold War.

Another theme that emerges within this Heavy Metal culture field elaborates on the hostility towards and exclusion of music which will be explored throughout his work being touched on in each chapter by tracking Heavy Metal's evolving infamy. Controversy is, for better or worse, an integral part of Heavy Metal and in fact the genre may have merely been a footnote of music history without controversy.²⁸ Yet, it is important to distinguish between the all too real dangers surrounding the music and the innocent artistic expressions of the ever-evolving Cold War moment. Controversy has almost always surrounded Heavy Metal music with the levels of controversy differing within each subgenre.²⁹ Issues such as racism, occultism, and hazardous hedonism emerge surrounding Heavy Metal and breaking down the genres on an individual level.³⁰

There are also books regarding Heavy Metal genres that do not add much to relating each intricate musical subgenre to the overall Cold War era but can be used to help explain the progression of the war and Heavy Metal. The Cold War was an evolving conflict and a time of social change. So, too, did Heavy Metal evolve alongside it, branching off and splintering into various factions and subgenres.³¹ Many of the books' publications elaborate upon these technical intricacies by examining and dissecting these seemingly countless genres. While not terribly useful on their own for the purposes of this paper, combining them with a narrative centered on the Cold War will help explain their role in the Heavy Metal world and how it

²⁸ Titus Hjelm, Keith Kahn-Harris, and Mark LeVine, *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Counterculture*, Illustrated edition (Sheffield, UK Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2013).

²⁹ Kirsten Dyck, *Reichsrock: The International Web of White-Power and Neo-Nazi Hate Music* (New Brunswick New Jersey London: Rutgers University Press, 2016).

³⁰ Robert McParland, *Myth and Magic in Heavy Metal Music* (McFarland, 2018).

³¹ Michael Hann, *DENIM AND LEATHER: The Rise and Fall of the New Wave of British Heavy Metal*, U.S (Bazillion Points, 2022).

shaped the culture.³²

Amateur public history and fan literature is one of the more popular modes of writing about this genre. While well-intentioned, it is limited in its scope for a historically accurate schema. These authors have a background strictly in journalism, and their work reflects that in their style and content. Their sources are entirely from the mouths of those who either create or enjoy Heavy Metal. While these firsthand accounts are invaluable, they are limited in scope on a macro level.³³ They lack an oppositional view of Heavy Metal or, in some cases, purport a bias exclusively in favor of Heavy Metal. Andrew O’Neil’s comical take on the Metal music industry can help clarify cavalier escapades of Heavy Metal, emphasizing their reputation of never bending to fit the needs or wants of corporate music but instead preserving their integrity and standards. *A History of Metal* (2018) describes the business aspects of Metal music and argues that greed, corruption, and ignorance of music companies were essential in forming the culture and popular misunderstandings of Heavy Metal. O’Neil also dissects the genre into different decades and subgenres throughout the work. The relationship of facilitating the delivery of music from musicians to fans by the corporations is another topic of discussion for O’Neil. Throughout the book, O’Neil makes multiple claims about what is “true” Heavy Metal. Similarities between O’Neil’s work and others could offer at least some foundational commonalities about the music and culture. Chapters two and three of this work benefit the most from this interpretation. Yet O’Neil only views this relationship from the eyes of Heavy Metal itself, giving no context to the background influences of the Cold War that help explain these circumstances.

Heavy Metal: The Story in Pictures (2018) is an illustrated chronicle of photographers

³² David Konow, *Bang Your Head: The Rise and Fall of Heavy Metal*, 1st edition (New York: Crown, 2002).

³³ Dayal Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, Illustrated edition (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2014).

and memoirs by Michael Heatley that goes over the Heavy Metal genre since its inception in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Heatley explains the influences on Heavy Metal, ranging from the blues to classical to psychedelic hippie rock. Heatley's narrative notes the ironic reality of the criticism Heavy Metal receives despite being ultimately a combination of more popular genres that do not generate the same hostility. He says that the changes or innovations made by Heavy Metal put it at odds with conventional music listeners. This conclusion is debatable; however, a deep dive into the origins of this music is of utmost importance.³⁴

Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman collected interviews for the past 25 years with hundreds of various Heavy Metal artists and bands. It culminates in their project, *Louder Than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal* (2014). These interviews unveil the images of the musicians themselves and their music. *Louder Than Hell* (2014) touches on all roles in this cultural phenomenon, including but not limited to groupies, fans, producers, and, of course, musicians. Wiederhorn and Turman speculate that despite the multitudes of those who misunderstand Metal, a mystique fascinates and captivates the listeners' minds, which has prolonged its longevity. *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Metal* (2010) by Ian Christie encompasses the first three decades of heavy Metal. Christie argues that Metal music has always been popular since its inception and will never disappear from the public eye due to controversy or consumption. Further still, was Heavy Metal's knack for creating shock value controversy or its galvanizing musical merit that established such a long enduring albeit muddled legacy? A unified conclusion should be that it would indeed be an amount of both as that point is lacking in these fan-made and amateur monographs.

³⁴ Martin Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal: The Illustrated Oral History of Heavy Metal's Debauched Decade* (Voyageur Press, 2014).

Biographies are crucial in the realm of Heavy Metal. However, these band profiles offer little explanation or argument for their subject matter, nor do they add a definable or debatable position on the genre or its role in its broader historical context.³⁵ Nevertheless, a world-famous rock n' roll biographer named Mick Wall has written many valuable biographies about some of the most prominent names in Heavy Metal. Where biographies truly fall short is offering any narrative to the conversation about Heavy Metal. They give straight facts (or what the reader believes as fact, assuming there is no ulterior bias or motive) and not much else.³⁶ The information they contain, however, can be used to contextualize and ground this work accurately according to the research done by others to offer some answers to the questions asked for the sake of this paper.³⁷

There were several contributing factors to the genre's downfall. Heavy Metal's competitive nature, both between bands of the genre and within the music industry itself, created an exclusively Cold War air of excessive greed mixed with the dissolution of artistic integrity that caused the eventual rejection of both the commercial success and artistic enjoyment of the music. Its devolutionary decline into darker subject matter and sound created a plethora of controversies, themes of murder, occultism, sexual harassment, and racism, led to Heavy Metal during the Cold War to garner an overwhelmingly negative reputation with both critics and the public that resulted in its gradual decline in acclaim, listener enthusiasm, and financial prosperity. After the Cold War, the post-Cold War world's disillusion with war and morally dark artistic expression hindered Heavy Metal's retention as a popular music genre. This occurrence led audiences to seek a new form of rock n' roll in the post-Cold War world, moving on from

³⁵ Mick Wall, *Black Sabbath: Symptom of the Universe: Symptom of the Universe*, First Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015).

³⁶ Mick Wall, *Enter Night: A Biography of Metallica*, First Edition (St. Martin's Griffin, 2012).

³⁷ Mick Wall, *Lemmy: The Definitive Biography*, Illustrated edition (Orion, 2016).

Heavy Metal and leaving it behind cemented as an artistic marvel stuck in the time that it was most popular, only to reemerge later in Third World developing regions yet again as a form of passive resistance despite its waned popularity in the West.

There has been a small selection of post-Cold War literature expanding upon the development and reception of Heavy Metal. While the primary focus of this study is indeed within the bounds of the Cold War era, it is vital to decipher these works in hopes of concluding the war going forward in a historical sense. The aftermath of the Cold War conflict had a dire impact on the culture and practices surrounding Heavy Metal. The collapse of Heavy Metal in the post-Cold War 1990s is an insightful symptom of the overall experience of the Cold War. Heavy Metal did not disappear entirely, however, in places outside of the Western World. Heavy Metal historically has been predominantly produced, bought, and enjoyed by the Caucasian Western world.³⁸ Edward Banchs set out to find instances of Metal evidencing itself in the once colonized world. His book, *Heavy Metal Africa: Life, Passion, and Heavy Metal in the Forgotten Continent* (2016) explores Heavy Metal's renaissance in the developing Third World. What he found was that developing region's artists have struggled against poverty through passion through music as a way of peaceful but active resistance. Banchs' work is instrumental in understanding post-colonialism throughout the Cold War and how it shaped after the conflict's conclusion. However, while he succeeds in this, speculation could be offered to better fit this issue within the confines of the Cold War.³⁹

³⁸ Edward Banchs, *Heavy Metal Africa: Life, Passion, and Heavy Metal in the Forgotten Continent*, 1st edition (Word Association Publishers, 2016).

³⁹ Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2000), https://www.perlego.com/book/550842/jazz-rock-and-rebels-pdf?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&campaignid=15825112969&adgroupid=132780905515&gclid=Cj0KCQjwmICoBhDxARIsABXkXILGVL6W1U-tga5ZAPeSIIbgqcmbz0pvWTMvIZ9Ap3PeUZ1hn7h5pQaAmp8EALw_wcB.

The Cold War possessed several factors that created a specifically fertile ground for the genre of Heavy Metal to blossom into what it became. The unbearable weight of post-war supposed progress juxtaposed with the reality of a potential nuclear Armageddon seemed to create a vacuum that created an art form such as Heavy Metal. It resonated with a new generation of youth who had seen the flaws and shortcomings of the drug counterculture and yearned for something that reflected a perhaps not subdued but certainly more sober understanding of the geopolitical climate. Heavy Metal has seen popular and underground favor commercially since its creation with the working and lower middle classes. It is not exclusive to these classes, as it has, more times than not, evolved into an escape from the unbearable mundanity of easy and privileged living.

The importance of recognizing Heavy Metal's significance during the Cold War goes beyond revealing the nature of its music and artists. It also reveals excellent insight into the anxieties, aspirations, and allures of the world in which it was conceived. Heavy Metal's impact and influence on and from the Cold War manifests in its need to rebel. It appeals to a sense of group belonging mentality not unlike previous movements such as the Vietnam War protest collective or a push to return traditional values. However, the primary appeal of it rests in this faux "us against the world" characterization in Heavy Metal. The illusion is that despite being perceived as an underdog or social outlier, there is an "army" of Heavy Metal enthusiasts that share similar views and struggles. Heavy Metal is a provocation that incites and invites criticism as it tangles and parodies taboo social and political subjects. Metal deserves to be included more elaborately in the scholarship of music history. Its influence on pop culture, striving for social change, and testimony of the disaffected from generation to generation must not be overlooked. The sound of Metal is not only heavy but its subject matter as well. This situation has allowed it

to receive a great deal of criticism. Views on Metal have often given it the reputation as low-brow, unsophisticated, and at times dangerous. It is a subculture that has arisen not only on a do-it-yourself ethic but despite capitalist and commercial restraints and obstacles, but also by maintaining creative integrity while achieving widespread popularity at certain temporal intervals. The sense of identity, culture, and community begs to be recognized by the academic community despite its underground and outlier nature.

This thesis also points out that there is a silence about the fact that the Heavy Metal genre would not exist without the Cold War, particularly in Europe and the United States. This correlation has never been made in previous academic scholarship. Its spawning is a response to dissatisfaction with not only the hippie and counterculture movements of the 60s but also an outlook upon the state of the Cold War world that those who progenerated the movement felt were not receiving proper representation. It evolved transnationally with the Cold War, with the economic, social, and political changes that ensued with the war's progression. The arrival of various popular forms throughout the Cold War may have strained artists and fans to feel the need to resist art; they felt disingenuous or misrepresentation as to what they perceived the realities of Cold War life to be. Furthermore, the materialism associated with the West, especially in the 1980s portion of the conflict, was directly responsible for more nihilistic and hedonistic forms of music such as Heavy Metal. Then, there is the backlash to conservatism. This backlash goes beyond just the political status quo and social norms. A paradox is Heavy Metal's presentation between libertarian desires for unrestricted creative freedom and contrarian ideations of eliciting subversive, sensational controversy for its own sake. The Cold War is also responsible for how this music spread in such an oppressive and polarized time. Furthermore, Heavy Metal retained utility in a post-Cold War setting with oppressed groups globally as an

outlet and a voice for those who perhaps may not have another vehicle to channel their neglect, outrage, and pride. This attraction of the potential aggressive release has always been Heavy Metal's lasting appeal despite it uniquely being a Cold War pop-culture phenomenon.



Figure 1. Peter Troest's photo of Heavy Metal fans at Copenhell Festival, Copenhagen, 2014. Troest, Peter. Copenhell 2014 – Day 2. June 16, 2014. <http://troest.nu/copenhell-2014-day2/>.

CHAPTER 1: THE 70s

The late 1960s and early 1970s was when Heavy Metal first emerged as a new rock n' roll subgenre. It was a massive departure from the lighthearted, teenage drama-filled songs of the 1950s. Heavy Metal, moreover, was a stark contrasting break away from the peace and love music of the Woodstock and Hippie generation.⁴⁰ Heavy Metal directly resulted from rock musicians and rock fans' discontent with said Hippie music for its bloated naivety and hypocritical musical activism. Heavy Metal was an attempt to renounce Hippies' drug-induced existentialism and infantile political motivations. Instead, Heavy Metal was a return to blues-oriented, apolitical music with an emphasis on hedonism without justification, explanation, or excuse, backed by an outcry through songs of rebellion against any social or political norms imposing influence on its listener for the pure and straightforward sake of resisting said influence.⁴¹ However, the road of Heavy Metal's inception and ascension as the definitive rock subgenre of the Cold War 1970s was long and arduous, beset with rivals and predecessors competing for that same title of dominant rock n' roll.

After World War II, there was a great deal of social and economic change that the world had never seen. The Cold War between the democratic Western powers and the communist Eastern bloc was in full swing by the end of the 1940s. Despite this looming threat, there was a feeling of optimism or at least Western superiority felt by the United States. After the conclusion of World War II, the United States saw a great deal of prosperity, which allowed the nation to flourish fiscally with many Americans' ability to purchase a home and an even more significant number of people attending universities more easily.⁴² With this surge in wealth came a great

⁴⁰ Andrew O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, Reprint edition (Headline, 2018), 18–20.

⁴¹ *Metal: Headbanger's Journey (Subtitles PT-BR)*, 2005, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chIeyxbVf_4.

⁴² Gentry, *What Will I Be*, 18.

deal of social change. The war sowed the seeds of the Civil Rights movement, and women were beginning to actualize their agency in the United States fully. Art and music also represented this new generation and all its aspirations. This new hip, youthful, and rebellious music style would come to be known as rock n' roll.⁴³

Rock N' Roll is a distinctly postwar style of music. After its inception by combining blues, jazz, gospel, and country, it quickly became a symbol of freedom and rebellion for youth culture during this time. While figures such as Bill Haley and Elvis Presley are often credited with creating it (while, other music historians have argued that it was African American pianist "Little" Richard Penniman), others replicated, improved, and advanced it throughout the 50s and 60s, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, leading to the emergence of one of the most significant rock groups commercially and critically, the Beatles.⁴⁴ Rock n' roll would realize a carpe diem ideology that had seemed to take hold of the Baby Boomer generation, with even an emphasis on indulgence at times. However, this music would also grow the self-consciousness of this post-war generation through a mode of music that initialized a conception of counterculture living that was underrepresented publicly prior. Presley, the Beatles, and other music groups would use the music as a platform to speak about social and political issues they witnessed worldwide, such as civil rights, democracy, war, and corporate/colonial expansion.⁴⁵

There was a shift in lyrical content of rock n' roll from the good times and newly labeled "teenage" culture that was on the rise throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. The music matched the culture by moving into a more transcendental and psychedelic mode of thought that moved away from the youth-in-revolt themes of rock n' roll prior. This shift began to take place

⁴³ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 96.

⁴⁴ Whitfield, 25.

⁴⁵ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 30.

roughly around 1962 to 1965 with groups like the Tornadoes, the Byrds, and the Yardbirds pushing rock into a more self-conscious, mature style. The Cold War was also shifting just as much as Western youth culture, transitioning into something much more tumultuous, precipitating potential conflict. It was not a secret that the Cold War had devastating potential to affect the Baby Boomers. As the Cold War drove on, many of this generation became disillusioned with the values and principles that their parents of the “Greatest Generation” had held.⁴⁶ This attitude was more than the angsty adolescent rebellion of privileged life; this was an awakening of sorts to have their voices heard that were seemingly in unison actively resisting the push to open war with not only the Soviet Union but the very idea of war itself.⁴⁷ This counterculture had evolved from simply a subunit of American life and now had taken the form of something attempting to be separate from any style of nationality moniker. A primary vehicle for this new counterculture would indeed be music, as it provided not only a creative outlet for aspirations and frustrations but also could be widely shared and enjoyed by a young and enthusiastic audience.⁴⁸

The Beat Generation, or “Beatniks,” was an early example of these new musically centered but ideologically driven countercultures. This group had begun to gain traction after World War II and gained a following during the oppressive conservatism of the McCarthy/Red Scare 1950s. Its followers become disillusioned with what they perceived as the excesses of the West’s post-war prosperity. Beatniks were anti-materialists who rejected consumerism while placing a spiritual emphasis on their art and music. Their core belief was that spiritual

⁴⁶ Tom Engelhardt, *The End Of Victory Culture: Cold War America And The Disillusioning Of A Generation*, First Edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995), 103.

⁴⁷ Gentry, *What Will I Be*, 20–22.

⁴⁸ Austerlitz, *Just a Shot Away*, 17.

enlightenment might be achievable through sex, art, music, and introspection.⁴⁹ However, they had garnered a reputation for being dissentious and borderline criminals with their rejection of many of the social norms that made up Western society. This philosophy manifested in their music with themes about returning to a more agrarian, folkish, peasant society by rejecting modernity and its machines of industry that they felt led to war, death, and pollution.⁵⁰ The Beatniks were the foundation or forebearers for the subsequent counterculture that would make itself a force deserving of reckoning. However, a plague of unflattering parody and stereotypical failure would fall upon them.⁵¹

The rumblings of discontent were sown in the Cold War. The following counterculture movements would unknowingly sow the seeds of Heavy Metal, which would culminate during and in the aftermath of America's involvement in Southeast Asia. As the Vietnam War unfolded over the 1960s, many of this same generation saw that the horrors of war were too much for what they felt any moral human being should tolerate. They took to protest, earning themselves the self-proclaimed title of Hippies with their music being the central medium for expressing their ideology, philosophy, and practice. The Beatnik and Hippie movements developing during the 60s would latch onto Rock music as a form of identity through protest music against the Vietnam War, the overriding Cold War, and non-progressive modes of thought.⁵² It evolved from the teen-targeted ideas of freedom and escapade and turned towards more severe issues more aggressively than the posing or platforms witnessed during the first wave of 1950s rock n' roll. Songs about peace and love were the primary subject matter of these acts as a form of rejecting

⁴⁹ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 16, 30.

⁵⁰ Labin, *Hippies, Drugs and Promiscuity*, 72.

⁵¹ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 20–23.

⁵² Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 6, 16.

the ever-increasing pull of the world toward further war.⁵³ Hippie and other forms of protest music advocated an entire rejection of the status quo previously held by conservative 1950s America in more ways than just being against the Cold War, however. They also preached very different morals and social values that would perhaps be its downfall.⁵⁴

Music was inseparable from this counterculture; it varied greatly in content, but almost every song associated with this counterculture had a message or meaning challenging an established or assumed norm. Songs such as “Bad Moon Rising” and “Fortunate Son” by Creedence Clearwater Revival attempted to shed light on the futility of the Vietnam War as well as the hellish experience of the average American GI to the point of politicization.⁵⁵ “I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-To-Die” by Country Joe and the Fish is an explicit condemnation of the Vietnam War.⁵⁶ However, it is a critique of the so-called American Military Industrial Complex, mocking the sensibilities of anyone who might be pro-war. The music was not only about the Vietnam War, however. Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit” (1967) is a step-by-step account comparing a psychedelic drug trip to the story of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), which was a highly controversial song for its drug usage encouragement.⁵⁷ Jimi Hendrix’s “Hey Joe” (1967) tells the story of a man who has caught his wife being unfaithful to him with another man and exacts his revenge on them both.⁵⁸ One of the most vindictive protest songs of this time came from a performance by Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young in 1970 with a song simply called “Ohio,” which was an indictment for President Richard Nixon’s handling of the Kent State Shooting that had taken place in May of that same year. The

⁵³ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 63.

⁵⁴ Austerlitz, *Just a Shot Away*, 18, 21.

⁵⁵ CCR-*Fortunate Son.*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7qkQewyubs>.

⁵⁶ *Country Joe & the Fish -- Vietnam Song*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qPUJhy0Dz4>.

⁵⁷ *Jefferson Airplane - White Rabbit-*, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WANNqr-vcx0>.

⁵⁸ *The Jimi Hendrix Experience - Hey Joe (1967)*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUPifXX0foU>.

music had become much more serious or, at the very least, self-serious in its opinion of itself and the Hippie's mission of enacting change through insubordination.⁵⁹



Figure 2. Pulitzer Prize-winning photo taken by John Filo. Mary Ann Vecchio cries over the body of Jeffery Miller during the Ohio State Massacre. Filo, John. The Girl in the Kent State Photo and the Lifelong Burden of Being a National Symbol. Photograph. Accessed March 22, 2024.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2021/04/19/girl-kent-state-photo-lifelong-burden-being-national-symbol/>.

The counterculture took on an almost militantly progressive approach to the world, which frightened conservatives and federal authority figures alike. Its insubordination to authority and subversive protest methods challenged authoritarian autonomy in an altogether peaceful and therefore non-retaliatory way. Some even went to decry it as upsetting the civil order of the United States by attempting to upend patriotic duty through protesting the draft and any military conduct the United States was involved in. Those involved in this counterculture were labeled as communists, anarchists, and all-around social deviants. The actions taken by these individuals in the societal spectrum worsened these albeit politically charged opinions.⁶⁰ Issues such as Civil Rights for people of color were not a question to them but the only possible outcome, regardless of the events of the 1960s, earning African Americans their long overdue justice. Women's

⁵⁹ *Ohio- Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRE9vMBBe10>.

⁶⁰ Gentry, *What Will I Be*, 68.

liberation was another social issue prevalent in their protests, as many of these singers and bands consisted of women; therefore, much of their struggles and marginalization naturally came to the forefront of their lyrical content.⁶¹

President Richard Nixon himself saw the Hippies as a threat to the security of the United States. He on more than one occasion had been recorded calling Hippies and rock n' rollers as "homosexuals" and "slobs."⁶² President Nixon even went as far to use them as the primary subject matter in one of his presidential campaign ads naming them the "fringes of American society."⁶³ President Nixon felt that the Hippie movement was nothing more than a subversive plan by the Soviet Union to upend not only his presidency, but the United States' international power by corrupting the youth through drugs and sex. The music of the Hippies was also ghastly to President Nixon; however, he was not opposed to using it to his own advantage. On December 21, 1970, President Nixon met with none other than Elvis Presley to discuss how Mr. Presley might be of service to the administration. They discussed how Presley might be able to dissuade drug use and Hippie protest through his influence over young people. Presley agreed to oblige the president under the condition that he was to be made a "Federal Agent at Large" so that he might "infiltrate these groups in order to gain their trust along with information in order to make an arrest and future conviction." It should be noted that there is no such position within American federal agencies, nor was there evidence that Elvis ever used this position to make an arrest.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 78.

⁶² *Richard Nixon Discusses Homosexuality*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMfVnBmpMm8>.

⁶³ *1968 Richard Nixon Ad - Hippies*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBfpB8m4vSc>.

⁶⁴ Bud Krogh, "Transcript of Elvis Presley Meeting President Richard Nixon, December 21, 1970," accessed November 17, 2023, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/nixon-met-elvis/assets/doc_3.1_transcript.html.

Another quality of this movement was the challenging of sexual morality with “free love” (promiscuity and non-monogamous relationships being celebrated and encouraged in the most extreme cases, but altogether certainly tolerated) attempting to replace rigid, religious-based ideas about sex, gender, and identity. These rapid pushes for substantial social change changed the perception of the music as well, now being associated with morally loose, antiauthoritarian characters that were potentially dangerous not only to the youth but perhaps even to national security.⁶⁵ There is, however, some truth to the darker side to the Hippie music scene during the Cold War. As previously mentioned, casual sex was on the rise, and by extension, various STDs and STIs saw a dramatic uptick. Drug usage also had become commonplace, it was considered an expression of rebellion for the simple reason of it being illegal. The Hippie counterculture’s music and musicians during this time were not excluded from either one of these issues.⁶⁶

Incidents such as the Manson family murders, the free love escapades of Woodstock, and politically subversive protests carried out by these Hippies began to estrange them and their music with much of the wider public. This view became especially true as the United States was losing ground in Vietnam, and victory seemed out of the question, at least logistically.⁶⁷ The mood had soured not only towards the counterculture but also the music that had once preached peace and love that now seemed to stand for nothing but shirking responsibility, debauchery, and a borderline nihilistic worldview.⁶⁸ The final death knells the realm of pop culture for the Hippie counterculture and its music came at the free Rolling Stones concert at the Altamont Speedway on December 6, 1969. There, the event was disorderly and chaotic, which is summarized by the

⁶⁵ Labin, *Hippies, Drugs and Promiscuity*, 64, 156.

⁶⁶ Labin, 101, 110.

⁶⁷ Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 201, 216.

⁶⁸ Labin, *Hippies, Drugs and Promiscuity*, 199.

fact that the security staff comprised members of the infamous Hells Angels Motorcycle Club.⁶⁹ The crowd was belligerent, intoxicated, and, worst of all, violent. Just as the Rolling Stones had begun their set, a fracas broke out between some of the attendees and the security bikers, who themselves had also partaken in narcotics and libation that day. This altercation resulted in the fatal stabbing of Meredith Hunter by the biker gang over allegedly pulling a firearm out into the crowd.⁷⁰ This turmoil subsequently chased off the members of the Rolling Stones, and their cutting the concert short resulted in a full-scale riot of rape, property damage, and all other manner of violence.⁷¹



Figure 3. Left: Rolling Stones Performing at Altamont with Hell's Angels working security. The Rolling Stones Disaster at Altamont: What Happened? Photograph. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/the-rolling-stones-disaster-at-altamont-let-it-bleed-71299/>. Right: Meredith Hunter moments before his murder at Altamont. Killing of Meredith Hunter. February 29, 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Killing_of_Meredith_Hunter&oldid=1211014241.

Events like the Altamont incident showcased a darker side to rock n' roll that confirmed public opinion and furthered skepticism about the counterculture. A feeling of betrayal or hypocrisy was now associated with this activist music that left the fans disillusioned with it.⁷² This lack of honesty led a new generation of musicians going into the 1970s wanting to be more

⁶⁹ Selvin, *Altamont*, 74, 77–78.

⁷⁰ Austerlitz, *Just a Shot Away*, 250.

⁷¹ Selvin, *Altamont*, 244.

⁷² Mazierska, *Popular Music in Eastern Europe*, 7, 12.

honest not only with themselves and their art but also with their fans about what they were observing taking place in the Cold War society. An opinion began developing about counterculture ideology that it stood more for drug use, casual sex, and lack of responsibility rather than social change or progress. A handful of bands would begin to usher in not only a new way of approaching counterculture but a new and unheard-of musical art form.⁷³

The rock group known as Led Zeppelin formed in 1968 in London, England. These young English lads, in the wake of Hippie rock n' roll, took ample inspiration from this music but incorporated a heavier blues sound of down-tuned guitars, with more dark subject matter sprinkled into their songs.⁷⁴ They introduced a heavier or more distorted sound that incorporated mysticism and folk tales about love and death that would become hallmarks of heavier forms of music. They also were not shy about their groupie following; instead, they celebrated it with the public but more profoundly with the media press. In June 1973, Zeppelin was caught at Bingenheimer's English Disco in Los Angeles surrounded by beautiful women who were all "sharing." With that, they were enjoying beverages ranging from coffee to Irish whiskey alongside undisclosed narcotics. This Dionysian display was only a public glimpse into the candid Bohemian lives led by the band, communicating a free spirit liberated by rock n' roll.⁷⁵ Led Zeppelin was a turn away from the pretentious salvific figures of Neil Young or John Lennon and an honest reflection of the hedonistic rock n' roll lifestyles led by the likes of Elvis Presley or Jerry Lee Lewis.⁷⁶ Attribution to being one of, if not the first, bands to garner the genre label of Heavy Metal falls to Led Zeppelin. However, there is another band that might be

⁷³ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 195.

⁷⁴ Michael Heatley, *Heavy Metal: The Story in Pictures* (New York, NY: Chartwell Books, 2018), 24.

⁷⁵ "Led Zeppelin and Groupies at Sunset Blvd.," Groovy History, accessed November 17, 2023, <https://groovyhistory.com>.

⁷⁶ Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine, *Heavy Metal*, 13.

better deserving of this title, and equally influential on the genre, if not more so.⁷⁷

The Birmingham, England band Black Sabbath also felt a calling for a return to more blues-centric rock n' roll which stemmed from a desire to break away from the psychedelic dissonance of Hippy music in a return to pure appreciation for traditional musicianship. Their music would attempt to reflect the dark reality of postwar England and what they witnessed on news broadcasting in places such as Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and the United States.⁷⁸ Their lead guitar player, Toni Iommi, capitalized on a “forbidden.” In the Medieval and Reformation era, the diminished fifth, or tritone, was referred to as “the devil’s note”. The sexual and morbidly foreboding nature of this sound evoked a thought by fundamentalist Christians to have properties of summoning demonic entities. This guitar tone is known as the tri-tone or diminished fifth tune which gave his guitar a much more sinister and low sound which contrasted with the upbeat lightness of folk and Hippy rock music.⁷⁹ The irony of this edgier sound was that Iommi could only play this way as he had lost part of his fretting finger in a factory-related incident. Nevertheless, Iommi’s heavily down-tuned guitar, matched with vocalist Ozzy Osbourne’s shrieking wails, made up a triumphant discography at the inception of Heavy Metal.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ O’Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 25.

⁷⁸ Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 172–73.

⁷⁹ *Metal*.

⁸⁰ Wall, *Black Sabbath*, 40.



Figure 4. Chris Walter's photo of the members of Black Sabbath, 1970. (Left) Bill Ward, Geezer Butler, Ozzy Osbourne, and Tony Iommi. Walter, Chris. Black Sabbath 1970 #3 by Chris Walter. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://chris-walter.pixels.com/featured/black-sabbath-1970-3-chris-walter.html>.

Early Heavy Metal bands strove to break away from the conventions of Hippie counterculture, as it had become far too bloated with ideology, activism, and feigned self-righteousness. So much so that they found themselves in direct competition for the “soul” of rock n’ roll with the Hippie movement. The Hippie soft approach to rock n’ roll was, at the time, ceasing to appeal to those wishing to push the counterculture into a far more socially subversive realm rather than political. The members of both Sabbath and Zeppelin started bands out of love for their music. However, they strove for a more grounded and potentially frightening sound than their predecessors. This mission partly explains their dedication to blues-focused roots, but there was an intentional push from these bands to concoct music that was more nefarious and upsetting. They were not opposed to the values, attitudes, or aspirations of Hippie counterculture rock n’ roll; on the contrary, they embraced them.⁸¹ The difference is, however, that Black Sabbath and their peers did not try to either celebrate them or justify them as some form of higher transcendental consciousness. Instead, they were writing about what they partook in and understood, and furthermore, accepted them as flaws of not only their personality but of rock n’

⁸¹ Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 7–10.

roll itself. Whether it was their goal or not, they were the death knell of the Hippie music, culture, and naïve reform of the '60s, washing away any delusion of fantasy or revolution by the apparent revelation that the movement had failed in ending the Cold War and creating substantial positive change.⁸²

The excesses of drugs and sex were not used to “expand one’s mind” by the members of Black Sabbath or Led Zeppelin. It did not come through their music either. They opted for darker themes about the death and suffering that came with these pursuits, but also emphasized their use for pure hedonistic pleasure rather than meditative existential growth. They did, however, take the war and conquest that was so central Hippie culture’s ire and paint a picture of horror much more viscerally than any rock group had before through their music. Geezer Butler, bassist for Black Sabbath, once gave an interview in which he stated that he felt Black Sabbath was attempting to reflect and warn the world through their music about some of the more unpleasant and uncomfortable realities that were present in Birmingham such as the rise of severe unemployment and left-over trauma and destruction of World War II that still marred much of England that they felt unrepresented artistically.⁸³

Though they elicited a sense of disapproval for the anti-war movement, they did not support the blind and seemingly endless Western fight against communism. This approach was contradictory, to be sure. However, these new Metal groups opposed any previous position in favor of activism on a geopolitical process. It would be more accurate to say the Heavy Metal artists of the 1970s wanted a more accurate representation of the conflict than some idealistic notion of bringing an end to the Cold War through song and activism. Sabbath drummer Bill

⁸² Wall, *Black Sabbath*, 154.

⁸³ *Metal Mythos: BLACK SABBATH*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKejhWR9YjY>.

Ward took issue with some of the anti-war musicians having previously overlooked and even condemned the soldiers compelled or coerced to participate in a hellish conflict such as Vietnam, a view that attempted to be more honest and less progressively motivated. Black Sabbath wrote several songs, most notably “Hand of Doom,” that discussed a soldier’s returning from war physically and mentally maimed while being addicted to drugs.⁸⁴ “War Pigs” was condemnation and warning that the military-industrial complex would subsume the world in a fire if it did not learn to control itself, indicting both factions of the Cold War for perpetuating constant conflict.⁸⁵

The destruction or degradation of the nuclear family by infidelity, occult fascination, and the ever-increasing and present threat of nuclear war were at the heart of Heavy Metal material. The nuclear family was an integral part of the Western identity in the wake of World War II. So, Western Heavy Metal resented the slow removal and dissolution of this family unit that was once an integral part of its world previously. The nuclear family was a confirmation of the heterosexual marital ideal, which was to be the symbol of prosperity adorned with consumer-oriented goods and wealth.⁸⁶ The loss was stingily felt by many Metal musicians, who came from newly broken homes such as Ozzy Osbourne. Heavy Metal channeled the pain of that loss through their music yet another despair on the laundry list of other Cold War woes. Heavy Metal reflected a longing for a return to pre-Cold War domestic normalcy in a world where any form of normalcy was being torn asunder by imperialist war every day, but also the realization that this return would more likely than not take place. The music became an outcry of anguish longing for a return to these familiar oppressive, norms but at the same time knowing it would be an

⁸⁴ *Hand of Doom (2012 - Remaster)*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNIgt6yKgDM>.

⁸⁵ *BLACK SABBATH - “War Pigs” (Live Video)*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3b6SGoN6dA>.

⁸⁶ Natalia Sarkisian and Naomi Gerstel, *Nuclear Family Values, Extended Family Lives: The Power of Race, Class, and Gender*, 1st edition (Routledge, 2016), 13, 18.

impossibility.⁸⁷

Once Black Sabbath had earned themselves a record deal with Vertigo Records, a subsidiary of Warner Brothers, in 1970, they would soon find more than modest record sales and concert success. With that new platform, they went straight for the throat of the prior counterculture using their music as the razor. There is a song that directly refers to the Hippie counterculture. “Children of the Grave” is a direct reference to the peace and love movement that Black Sabbath had grown up around in their adolescent years in England. It is a prolific warning that these ideas about positive societal change and carefree self-indulgence were all well and good. However, they did not reflect the ever-present exterior threats circling around the world each day. Sabbath compared the Hippies to ignorant children due to their well-meaning innocence was breeding a very naïve and closed view of how to bring about social geo-political change which is typically violent and rarely for the better. Their dreams of love had now rotted and spoiled into feelings of hate and anger towards their government, their elders, and even their own “outsider fraternity”.⁸⁸ Also, Black Sabbath condemned the counterculture that their actions, while being well-intentioned, have only facilitated further issues that they purported to have opposition to. This song on the 1971 album *Master of Reality* is an assassination of all previous rock music that was so prevalent throughout the counterculture movement of the 1950s and 1960s that it would begin to fizzle out by the 1970s entirely. Their success in doing so is debatable, but it is undeniable that the sentiment towards it was beginning to be shared not only by detractors such as the conservative public, pop artists, and politicians but also by rockers who might have previously aligned themselves. Black Sabbath was the Heavy Metal hangover to the

⁸⁷ Gentry, *What Will I Be*, 102.

⁸⁸ *Children of the Grave (2014 Remaster)*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jN0h_x5qHgo.

Hippie hullabaloo.⁸⁹

The 1970s did not only bring about new artists wishing to break away from the pretentious and now cliched mode of Hippie protest and drug rock. Music buyers worldwide, too, had grown disillusioned with the peace and love music of the 60s. Typically, uncontroversial genres such as disco and light, blues-based acts such as the Bee Gees and Fleetwood Mac dominated for much of the decade.⁹⁰ However, a taste for heavier music was developing. Bands such as the aforementioned Black Sabbath, along with Led Zeppelin, and newly formed Speed Metal band Motorhead were charting new territory in musical heaviness. Black Sabbath had sold over 30 million copies of their first two records by 1971⁹¹, and Led Zeppelin sold that same amount on just their first album.⁹² On top of that, each band would go on to earn well over a million dollars on their debut tours.⁹³ It was not a simple breakthrough, however. It was an understandable casting of the early heavy Metal bands into the same label and genre as those they wished to break away from.⁹⁴ Lemmy Kilmister of Motorhead himself had performed in a plethora of other hippie-esque bands before starting Motorhead. Psychedelic rock band Hawkwind had brought him his initial claim to fame. However, after being excused for, in his words, “doing the wrong kinds of drugs,” Kilmister had an industry chip on his shoulder, so to speak. Kilmister and his peers seemingly decided to start making music that he himself enjoyed, regardless of if any consumers shared this aspiration or appreciated its sound.⁹⁵ Early Heavy

⁸⁹ *Metal Mythos*, 2018.

⁹⁰ Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 47.

⁹¹ “Black Sabbath Albums and Songs Sales - ChartMasters,” accessed November 10, 2023, <https://chartmasters.org/black-sabbath-albums-and-songs-sales/>.

⁹² “LED ZEPPELIN Album Sales,” BestSellingAlbums.org, accessed November 10, 2023, <https://bestsellingalbums.org/artist/7507>.

⁹³ Robert Pasbani, “Earnings & Attendance: How Much Do BLACK SABBATH, IRON MAIDEN, SLIPKNOT Make On Touring?,” Metal Injection, March 11, 2016, <https://metalinjection.net/its-just-business/earnings-attendance/how-much-do-black-sabbath-iron-maiden-slipknot-make-on-touring>.

⁹⁴ Wiederhorn and Turman, *Louder Than Hell*, 68, 78.

⁹⁵ Wall, *Lemmy*, 16.

Metal bands like Motorhead and Black Sabbath did not see a broad appeal with the music-buying public. However, an underground of zealously dedicated fans took shape. These fans would be almost religiously devoted to their chosen band, going to shows and spreading the word of how talented or fresh these bands indeed were.⁹⁶

Critics wrote off Heavy Metal as a grotesque phase, but not long for the world. One 1976 review in the *Pittsburgh Press* called Black Sabbath's music "irresponsible" despite drawing in a "red hot crowd."⁹⁷ Motorhead saw no favor with critics or publishers being once dubbed "the worst band in the world," in a 1981 editorial of the now defunct NME magazine.⁹⁸ Despite the efforts to shut Heavy Metal out of the limelight, the kids were still turning up with their hard-earned allowances to see these shows. Their sound along with their rough image were to blame for Heavy Metal's critically negative reception. The music itself was used as both a breakaway from traditional rock norms and as a form of social protest. That protest was of personal gratification and desires for personal fulfillment through their music.⁹⁹

This decision to break away from expected practices may have acted more as a detriment though record labels, too, did not pay much attention to these acts outside of those that could produce record sales and sell vast quantities of concert tickets. Bands like Black Sabbath were fortunate enough to produce both, but not all were as lucky to benefit from these advantages. Some bands, such as KISS, felt the need to branch out into flirting with other more pop-centric genres, such as disco, to stay relevant or make money.¹⁰⁰ Other bands "sold out" like this by

⁹⁶ Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 68.

⁹⁷ Pete Bishop, "Black Sabbath Draws a Red Hot Crowd," *Pittsburgh Press*, accessed November 10, 2023, <https://www.reddit.com/media?url=https%3A%2F%2Fi.redd.it%2Fbpetmq5g69s51.jpg>.

⁹⁸ Aaron Homer, "The Best Worst Band in the World," *Grunge*, July 7, 2021, <https://www.grunge.com/455087/the-real-reason-motorhead-almost-split-up-in-the-70s/>.

⁹⁹ Martin Popoff, *Beer Drinkers and Hell Raisers: The Rise of Motörhead* (Toronto, Ontario: ECW Press, 2017), 17.

¹⁰⁰ Gene Simmons: "The Fans Killed the Record Industry," 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZS-znRmfA4>.

censoring some of their more controversial material or softening their sound to appeal to a wider audience. The changing essence of what makes Heavy Metal drew tremendous backlash from some of the more die-hard fans who were, throughout the 1970s, already on a rollercoaster of disillusionment with the evolution of rock n' roll. To make matters worse, a new subgenre of rock attempted to stamp out Heavy Metal before it could even find its footing as a prominent and prosperous art form.¹⁰¹

Disco and softer rock were not the only competition to Heavy Metal vying for commercial success or fan acclaim. Metal had a rival concerning heavier and more aggressive music during the 1970s, Punk Rock.¹⁰² Though short-lived comparatively, Punk emphasized message and style over virtuosity and substance. Punk was the next contestant in Heavy Metal's competition for dominance in rock music. Springboarding off the political nature of Hippie music, Punk concerned itself more with presenting ideas and attitude than talent and musical capability.¹⁰³ The Punk rockers believed that actual aggression and violence were necessary for music to evoke real change, which Punk rockers felt was not adequately found in both softer rock bands and even Heavy Metal. It was born out of the same frustrations and hopelessness in the Cold War post-war world; however, Punk rockers were freed from talent as the purpose of Punk was not "to be the best" or gain much award or recognition but to express the anxieties and frustrations felt by the musicians that a large group of angsty young people identified with.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 11–12.

¹⁰² Hann, *DENIM AND LEATHER*, 6, 12.

¹⁰³ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 282.

¹⁰⁴ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 200.



Figure 5. The Punk band The Sex Pistols on Bill Grundy's 'Today' show, December 1, 1976. Singleton, Phil. God Save The Sex Pistols - Bill Grundy Show 1st December 1976. Television. Accessed March 29, 2024. http://www.philjens.plus.com/pistols/pistols/pistols_grundy.html.

A significant difference between Heavy Metal and Punk Rock is its reception in the public eye. Critics and authority figures often discounted Metal as being nothing more than a continuation of Hippies of some sort. Punk rockers such as Johnny “Rotten” Lydon shared this view. Punk, however, was being actively shut down by structures of authority and the mainstream music media almost as quickly as it arose. There were opinions that Punk sought to be actively violent and outwardly vulgar, spouting explicit sentiment against all manner of authority. This “unseemly” display occurred during the infamous London-bred Sex Pistols swear on a national broadcast of the British *Today* show with Bill Grundy in 1976. Grundy can be seen in the recording of this interview being belligerent, calling the bandmates “drunkards” and “not the nice clean boys like the Rolling Stones,” which irritated the Sex Pistols’ vocalist, Johnny “Rotten” Lydon. This incident, along with expletives, rude gestures, and shocking attire (including BDSM gear, nudity, and swastikas) garnered the whole Punk movement a large

amount of outcry and public criticism.¹⁰⁵

The government's response to this outrage was to shut down the Sex Pistols' performance and music video recording of their anti-monarchy indictment of an anthem, "God Save the Queen," in which Queen Elizabeth II is referred to as an inhuman "fascist" while riding down the Thames River via ferry all the way to Buckingham Palace. The fiasco resulted in not only the arrest of several of the band's members, including the infamous (albeit musically incompetent) Sid Vicious, along with the band's manager Malcolm McLaren. The filming of the music captured the whole ordeal, thus cementing the image of these "hooligans" as criminals rather than artists. It is worth noting the rumor that McLaren had orchestrated the situation as a publicity stunt for his clothing shop, "SEX," and as profitable footage for the music video that may have gone unnoticed otherwise.¹⁰⁶

Politics is another divide between Punk and Heavy Metal. These same politics made Punk's reception akin to the Hippie counterculture itself. Heavy Metal tends to take on a nihilistic or apolitical worldview but was viewed by the common public as a continuation of the Hippie movement even if only out of ignorance of its distinction. There is an apathetic acceptance of how things are geopolitically speaking. However, they made the effort to rebel for the sake of rebelling as a symbol of their own dissidence to whatever the accepted and socially established status quo may be.¹⁰⁷ Thus if Heavy Metal is the refutation of Hippie ideology, Punk is the logical evolution and extreme conclusion of it. Punk donned the vestiges of the Hippie movement pushing it to its limits bordering on advocating for an international state of anarchy.

¹⁰⁵ *Swearing /Sex Pistols Interview /Today Show /Thames TV / 1976, 2012,* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtHPhVhJ7Rs>.

¹⁰⁶ *Sex Pistols - God Save The Queen, 2011,* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02D2T3wGCYg>.

¹⁰⁷ Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 202.

Punk takes a much more active role in resisting institutions they deem unfit for leadership for whatever various reasons they find disagreeable.¹⁰⁸ Punk is typically militantly left-wing and progressive, with a few outliers, such as the Misfits and Johnny Ramone, being staunchly conservative. Punk has extremes across the board with the political, from Anarcho-Marxists to far-right Neo-Fascists; it is a piece of music that appeals to anger and solely to frustrations that is enterable by anyone with an opinion and guitar, talent to play them not required.¹⁰⁹ This total disestablishmentarian ideology in Punk Rock did not prove to help their longevity. However, it seemed to die off commercially almost as quickly as it had spawned due to its complete refusal to conform to standard business practices regarding music publishing. This quick burn effect left an opening for an albeit equally anti-establishment Heavy Metal but more artistically and creatively motivated to secure its position in the public eye.¹¹⁰

Heavy Metal, like many other types of Rock and Roll, capitalized and represented the mood of disaffected adolescents on the outskirts of society. The youth's admiration for removing any authority telling them what to do, whether it be to organize, partake in activism, or commit to a full-scale riot, was refreshing. Metal in the United Kingdom sprang from the same circumstances as Punk, and both might be considered forms of protest music. However, what set Heavy Metal apart in the space of protest was its lack of action or answer to the problems set by the Cold War.¹¹¹ It was simply them being heard and understood by the Heavy Metal musicians, as they were disenfranchised young people witnessing the seeming unraveling of the world at the hands of the older generation in power, and merely stating, "I do not like that" or "these things occurring upset me." It was just that simple. These feelings of identity mixed with commonly

¹⁰⁸ Mazierska, *Popular Music in Eastern Europe*, 127.

¹⁰⁹ Dyck, *Reichsrock*, 3, 10.

¹¹⁰ Heatley, *Heavy Metal*, 112.

¹¹¹ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 69.

typical wishes to rebel and upset overbearing authority figures gave Heavy Metal listeners a sense of power that they may not have found anywhere else, particularly with the more underprivileged working classes of the world. It would be a grave mistake to elementarily state that this generation of music lovers thought “Heavy Metal was cool, so they listened to it.” It is much more than that. Heavy Metal embodies all the frustrations of young people trying to live without a voice or sense of understanding, which is why it is so timeless.¹¹²

It is impossible to disassociate the attraction of Heavy Metal for its propensity for spectacle in a live setting. Record sales were certainly booming for these groups, who aligned themselves with heavier forms of music. However, unlike their Punk counterparts who had mastered stage performance, the metal bands had also gained this skill with the added ability to play their instruments talentedly.¹¹³ The mysterious personalities and controversies surrounding some of these groups, such as Black Sabbath, added appeal to the masses. Rumors of drug addiction and occult practices enticed listeners to come to check out shows to see if they were true. Even if they were disappointed by the lack of validity to some of these claims, they enjoyed the music and became loyal fans of the bands. These feelings of sincerity or honesty could be more transparent to the vast majority outside the Heavy Metal community. Hence, clarifying these ideas, labels, and definitions is invaluable.¹¹⁴

Heavy Metal emerged as a defined genre during this time of the mid to late 1970s. It is a title given by the music reviews to be sure, but what exactly is the genre label indicating? A series of established characteristics are established to give meaning to this definition. The term Heavy Metal was loosely associated with various groups of differing sounds, backgrounds, and

¹¹² Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 20, 144, 211–12.

¹¹³ Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine, *Heavy Metal*, 30, 40.

¹¹⁴ McParland, *Myth and Magic in Heavy Metal Music*, 65.

musical intentions. It had to define itself as a genre truly. However, the association slowly developing with it was a relatively fast-paced tempo, aggressively down-tuned instruments, and either screeching high, effeminate, falsetto singing or gravely, guttural, borderline-inaudible vocals, with each style eliciting a different feeling. Black Sabbath and Motorhead were the two bands responsible for setting the monikers and characteristics of the genre and acting as a sort of scale by which one could assess a band's "heaviness".¹¹⁵

Credit for the first usage or labeling of "heavy metal" varies wildly. The lyrics "heavy metal thunder" were first used in the song "Born to Be Wild" by hard rock band Steppenwolf on their debut self-titled album in 1968.¹¹⁶ It described the feeling of driving at high speeds on the open road, preferably atop a motorbike, with nothing keeping one from the road but skill and blind chance. The exhilarating, cavalier and potentially fatal feeling comes from the danger posed by the colliding of metal with asphalt and then, thereby, the flesh, emphasizing an almost sexual thrill from said danger. Led Zeppelin received the moniker "they sounded like heavy metals smashing" or "a heavy metal hullabaloo" in music review of their earlier live performances, speaking to the distorted twang and clang feeding back from the electric guitar amplifiers.¹¹⁷ Both Alice Cooper and Gene Simmons of KISS claim that their respective groups started Heavy Metal, but given their late entry into the genre, this is unsubstantiated. It is often and repeatedly noted by music critics and Heavy Metal fans alike that the accepted first Heavy Metal band was indeed Black Sabbath for its heavy, cold, and brutal nature within its music.¹¹⁸ Ironically, however, Ozzy Osbourne, lead vocalist and founding member of Black Sabbath, in an

¹¹⁵ *Metal*.

¹¹⁶ *Steppenwolf - Born To Be Wild (1969)*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=41cFf9N5F-A>.

¹¹⁷ "There's Art in the Led Zep's Heavy-Metal Hullabaloo - The New York Times," accessed November 3, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/02/02/archives/there-art-in-the-led-zeps-heavy-metal-hullabaloo.html>.

¹¹⁸ *Metal*.

interview with Vh1, claimed that he felt that it was Lemmy Kilmister and his band Motorhead that were better deserving of the title of “first” Metal band.¹¹⁹

In further irony, Kilmister denies ever being in a “Heavy Metal” band, but that Motorhead was simply a “rock n’ roll” band and identifying more with the Punk Rock groups such as the Damned or the Ramones than that of Black Sabbath or Judas Priest. However, despite his best contrarian efforts, Motorhead is almost always classified as Heavy Metal. Motorhead’s contribution to Heavy Metal comes more from their offstage antics than on, with Kilmister notoriously drinking liters of Jack Daniels a day, sucking down packs of cigarettes, and pervasively surrounding himself with beautiful women, all of which were pursuits that became the goal for many Metal musicians to follow as some form of desired example.¹²⁰ Kilmister once went on record before his passing stating that he bedded “a thousand women” over the course of his career, adding more legacy to this rugged, life-on-the-road lifestyle. Motorhead certainly formed the hedonism of Heavy Metal, but what of their sound? The music certainly falls into the Heavy Metal category with its shredding guitar, crushing bass lines, and the band’s most influential contribution, the introduction of double-kick bass drum.¹²¹ More complicated still, each of these groups has its own claim to the throne or crown as Heavy Metal’s sound utterly varies from one another, yet still fall under that title. How that is possible is due to a complicated but marginally traceable set of characteristics.¹²²

One of those characteristics previously mentioned is spectacle. In the case of Heavy Metal, it is more about shock value and theatrics than avant-garde performance pieces. This trend

¹¹⁹ *Lemmy Interview (From the Lemmy Movie)*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7GzjJnbe6g>.

¹²⁰ Wall, *Lemmy*, 216.

¹²¹ *Motörhead – Ace Of Spades (Official Video)*.

¹²² *LEMMY 2005 Interview for Headbanger’s Journey | Raw & Uncut*, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hcjx-i7rWk.

initially started with Black Sabbath bringing large crucifixes (often inverting them) and setting them ablaze (perhaps to offend those who might associate it with the Ku Klux Klan, or it may be a simple ad hominem jab at Christianity itself). Ozzy Osbourne of Black Sabbath later once bit the head off of a live bat, thinking it to be a rubber prop at the Veterans Hall Memorial in 1982.¹²³ However, Alice Cooper first brought a new meaning to Shock Rock. Alice Cooper (Vincent Furnier) formed his group in 1964. Their earlier efforts went under the radar, and it was not until Alice began adorning black eye makeup and fake blood during his stage performance that they began to receive both backlash from the critics and growing record sales. One concert that took place in Toronto in 1969 saw the accidental, wrongful killing of a chicken. The chicken was allegedly mistakenly thrown up on the stage during the feather pillow portion of Alice Cooper's show. Cooper mistakenly threw the chicken into the audience, assuming that it would fly away over the crowd. It did not; instead, it was torn apart by the audience, splattering blood and entrails over the stage and front rows. Cooper notes that the ironic twist about this was that these front rows were reserved for and comprised of individuals who were handicapped and confined to wheelchairs, so it would have undoubtedly been these participants who slaughtered the chicken.¹²⁴ This event earned Alice Cooper a reputation of riot starters and social deviants. This reputation is something Alice Cooper would live off, citing "bad press is good press," using these intended detrimental labels to sell out shows around the world.¹²⁵

¹²³ *Ozzy Osbourne Bites Bats Head Off!*, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeuW4Smf9PI>.

¹²⁴ *Alice Cooper's Chicken Incident*, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eq9bEzADxyk>.

¹²⁵ *Alice Cooper: The Controversial History of a Rock Legend*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzwwQtoY74Q>.



Figure 6. Alice Cooper hurling live chicken during performance in Toronto, 1969. Lot Detail - Alice Cooper "Chicken Incident" Original Photograph. September 13, 1969. <https://www.gottahaverockandroll.com/alice-cooper-chicken-incident-original-photograp-lot7306.aspx>.

Outside of falsely being accused of animal abuse, Alice Cooper did leave their mark on Heavy Metal live performances. Cooper quoted, "If you're going to sing about a nightmare, give them the nightmare." This ambition would take the shape of elaborate costumes and stage designs. One particular bit would see Cooper beheading himself with an onstage guillotine with the help of master magician The Amazing Randi.¹²⁶ Cooper's legacy in Heavy Metal cannot be understated, as it has been derivative throughout Metal over the decades, from Metallica to Marilyn Manson. Alice Cooper struggled with drug and alcohol addiction for many years despite his success. His personal life began to bleed over onto the stage quite literally. The shows became darker and more incoherent, but aspiring musicians and concertgoers assumed this was still part of the show. Cooper eventually took back control over his life with the help of his wife of 47 years and found a new lease on life through his newfound faith in Jesus Christ. The on and off-stage antics have become mild in the interim, but the legacy of darkness through visual art

¹²⁶ *Metal Mythos: ALICE COOPER*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hf_w0Z_j3Ho.

has become a mainstay of Heavy Metal.¹²⁷



*Figure 7. Right: Gene Simmons performing his signature fire breathing, Vancouver, BC, 1977. Rosenlof, William. Gene Simmons of Kiss in Vancouver BC 1977 | Kiss Band, Kiss Photo, Gene Simmons. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/gene-simmons-of-kiss-in-vancouver-bc-1977--401313016766569066/>. Left: KISS' stage show pyrotechnics in Las Vega, NV, 2014. Bennett, J. "Not Everything Paul Stanley of KISS Did in Vegas Stayed in Vegas." *Vice* (blog), August 25, 2016. <https://www.vice.com/da/article/4wxjjj/paul-stanley-kiss-vegas>.*

Heavy Metal's spectacle is not necessarily always for shock or morbid imagery. The New York-based band KISS wanted to turn rock n' roll into a nonstop party. Founding members Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley wanted to emphasize the fun of being in a rock n' roll band, which manifested itself in their stage performances. The members took on personas such as "The Demon" and "Star Child" to become more like characters rather than musicians. Makeup and elaborate stage costumes further emphasized this idea, the band members appearing devoid of humanity, primal or resembling some form of inhuman creature. It evoked controversy from concerned parents due to how shocking their look was, but the band assured their audience that it should not be taken too seriously. From dancing girls and intricate pyrotechnics to Gene Simmons' iconic blood spewing and fire breathing, KISS pushed their music to become more of

¹²⁷ Alice Cooper on His Christian Faith, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDWhxeg2F0M>.

a jovial celebration with circus-like qualities rather than brooding, antagonistic, or horror-inspired theatrics.¹²⁸

KISS was determined to “rock all night and party every day.” Sadly, their dedication to staying true to the Heavy Metal movement waned as their popularity grew. Guitarist Ace Frehley remembers when children and families began turning up to their concerts, which made some of their more sexually charged antics awkward and inappropriate, even for a global rock star. KISS’s music also suffered from this commercialization, flirting with the dreaded enemy and rival camp of disco with songs like “I Was Made for Lovin’ You Baby.”¹²⁹ This flirtation outside the genre of Heavy Metal earned the band criticism from their dedicated followers known as the KISS Army, a devoted following of KISS fans who not only bought their music but enlisted themselves as essentially free-walking advertisements from the band. Gene Simmons’ continual push for the band to commercialize did not help this situation, from putting the band’s logo on everything from prophylactics to lunchboxes to comic books to coffins. Through its financial gains, KISS had lost Heavy Metal’s true essence KISS had lost the essence, its central and integral quality is pure social rebellion through music.¹³⁰



¹²⁸ *Kiss - Gene Simmons Breathing Fire*, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnVfL7i4hvc>.

¹²⁹ *Kiss - I Was Made For Lovin' You*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhIsAZO5gI0>.

¹³⁰ Stephen Dowling, “Strangest Music Merchandise,” BBC, accessed November 12, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20190522-the-strangest-music-merchandise-ever>.

Figure 8. KISS merchandise: Comic book, coffin, condoms, and Scooby-Doo collaboration home video. Sartore, Melissa. Most Ridiculous KISS Merchandise Gene Simmons Signed Off On. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.ranker.com/list/ridiculous-kiss-merchandise/melissa-sartore>.

Heavy Metal is rebellion and social angst put to artform. It is resistance for resistance's sake. There is not innately a goal or desired outcome, but simply subversion for subversion's sake against whatever is the mainstream or accepted norm. There is an underground nature to it, born out of necessity. This underground, however, is incredibly popular and successful economically with sets of music listeners.¹³¹ Heavy Metal has been best described by musician and film director Rob Zombie as "all the weird, loner kids getting together in one place...and it is amazing how big it is for how few people know it even exists." This conclusion is a fair statement for the 1970s and even today in the proposed "aftermath" of post-Cold War Heavy Metal. However, a series of events in the 1980s not only allowed Heavy Metal to skyrocket in popularity, thus establishing its place in music history, but also brought it into the public eye and consciousness like never before, for better and in some cases, for worse.¹³²

¹³¹ Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine, *Heavy Metal*, 213.

¹³² *Metal*.

CHAPTER 2: THE 80s

Heavy Metal struggled to find its identity in the 1970s. However, the turning point for Heavy Metal during the Cold War was the 1980s. A perfect storm of entertainment and artistic innovations, political realities, and industry trends during this period brought Heavy Metal to the forefront of pop culture consciousness. There was a view in the late 1960s and 1970s that Heavy Metal was a flash in the pan for rock. The 1980s established Cold War Heavy Metal as remembered as a genre with big hair, big amps, big concerts, and big personalities that would subsume the music industry. Heavy Metal would remain with these standards until its collapse at the dawn of the 1990s.¹³³ Pop culture infused Heavy Metal with new goals and artistic inspiration that cycled back into the pop culture itself, creating a culture that thrived on masculinity and consumerist excess. The politics of the 1980s directly influenced and were influenced by Heavy Metal. Prominent political figures started a moral mission to oppose Heavy Metal. The dawn of MTV and the syndicated and circulated music videos were indispensable for Heavy Metal's skyrocketing fame and popularity with young, rebellious audiences.¹³⁴ However, these same vehicles that led to such a rise in commercial success for Heavy Metal were also some of the same factors that contributed to its rapid decline towards the end of the decade. Nevertheless, for the bettering or worsening of Cold War society, the 1980s belonged to Heavy Metal.

The 1980s brought immense change to the pop-culture dynamic of the Cold War. While the conflict had somewhat quieted in the 1970s, particularly during the second half of the decade, it began to warm up again. The 1980s brought a renewed enthusiasm in the West to reform a

¹³³ Ian Christie, *Sound of the Beast: The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (HarperCollins e-books, 2010), 84–86.

¹³⁴ Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks, *I Want My MTV: The Uncensored Story of the Music Video Revolution*, Illustrated edition (New York: Plume, 2012), 12, 20.

commitment to stopping the spread of Communism after the needlessly aimless failure that was the United States' involvement in Vietnam. President Carter's perceived weakness had American voters and policymakers clambering for potentially more decisive leadership.¹³⁵ The USSR also began to be more aggressive going into the 1980s by spreading its influence in countries such as Afghanistan and Angola. In the 1980 elections, American voters found Ronald Reagan to be the candidate to return the United States to the conservative values of the 1950s that rejected the hedonism and social experimentation of the 1960s and 1970s and also stand up to the threat of the Soviets. This new decade would bring change not only to the geopolitical climate but also to the artistic one. This change spread to music, and Heavy Metal was not exempt from this new swelling of unfamiliar emotions. During the 1980s, as the world danced on the edge of nuclear paranoia and cultural upheaval, Heavy Metal emerged as the thunderous soundtrack of rebellion and resilience. The music shook the foundations of conformity. Heavy Metal in the '80s wasn't just music — it was a defiant battle cry against the status quo. As legions of headbangers adorned in denim and leather raised their devil horns to the sky banging their heads to the music in unison, Heavy Metal became more than a genre; it was a defiant declaration of individualism in a world teetering on the brink of immense change. At the same time, mass popular culture was becoming even more homogenous in the expanding post-war years than before.¹³⁶

The 1980s saw a great deal of change not only politically but in the realm of pop culture as well. While disco and softer variations of rock dominated pop music throughout the 1970s, the new decade brought with it a desire for a show of force by the West, which was evidenced in popular culture such as movies, television, and music. *Star Wars* (1977), for example, showed

¹³⁵ *The Moment That Defined the 1980's: The Reagan-Carter Presidential Debate*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9HaeBkNLv0>.

¹³⁶ *President Ronald Reagan - "Evil Empire" Speech*, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do0x-Egc6oA>.

rebellious youth resisting against an overreaching, uniform Empire. This group of rebels valued the democratic individuality of “light” over the authoritative power of “dark.”¹³⁷ The television show *Knight Rider* (1982) anthologized billionaire Michael Knight fighting for justice against encroaching criminals and secret societies across the world in a story of how one man can make a difference.¹³⁸ At the end of the 1970s, Heavy Metal ceded popularity to the disco era but at the tail end of the 1970s and going into the 1980s, bands like Def Leppard and Iron Maiden led the "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" that helped bring the genre back to life.¹³⁹ Guitar virtuosos like Dave Murray and Glenn Tipton became adored not only for their rocker prowess but also for their immense musical talent, integrating classical roots such as Ludwig Beethoven and Johann Sebastian Bach with Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. A new class of bands that would build upon the groundwork laid by Zeppelin, Sabbath, and Motorhead, primarily hailing from the United Kingdom became known as the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM). Bands such as Judas Priest, Iron Maiden, and Saxon were some of such bands to push forward during this development; They would unite the genre stylistically and sonically.¹⁴⁰

The Cold War was grittier and somewhat bleak going into the 1980s as there was an air of uncertainty with the recent defeat of the United States in Vietnam along with Russian global efforts of expanding their influence. The NWOBHM musicians picked up on this anxiety and attempted to incorporate it in their music. NWOBHM bands were known for their powerful and aggressive guitar riffs. NWOBHM guitarists often employed fast-paced, energetic riffs that

¹³⁷ Scott Timberg, “‘Star Wars’ Got Us Ready for Reagan: ‘You Suddenly Have Permission to Think in Very Juvenile Terms about How History Works,’” *Salon*, December 22, 2015, sec. Culture, https://www.salon.com/2015/12/21/star_wars_got_us_ready_for_reagan_you_suddenly_have_permission_to_think_in_very_juvenile_terms_about_how_history_works/.

¹³⁸ “Six Ways Knight Rider Predicted the Future,” *BBC News*, November 17, 2014, sec. Technology, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-30087369>.

¹³⁹ Hann, *DENIM AND LEATHER*, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Hann, 48.

became a hallmark of the genre. Many NWOBHM bands featured dual lead guitarists, creating a distinctive sound characterized by harmonized guitar solos and intricate musical arrangements influenced by composers such as Ludwig Van Beethoven and Richard Wagner. The dual guitars gave a much larger sound to the bands that conveyed a much more epic or baroque impact on the listener. Iron Maiden, with guitarists Dave Murray and Adrian Smith, embraced this dual lead guitar approach. While NWOBHM retained the powerful and expressive vocal styles common in traditional Heavy Metal, the singing often had a more melodic quality. Iron Maiden and Saxon showcased vocalists with impactful and clear deliveries, allowing for a balance between aggression and melody.¹⁴¹ NWOBHM drummers also contributed to the genre's dynamic sound by delivering energetic and precise drumming. The drum patterns often complemented the fast-paced guitar work and added to the overall intensity of the music. NWOBHM lyrics explored themes including fantasy, mythology, science fiction, and social issues which differed greatly from older Heavy Metal that dealt with themes of social upheaval, drug experimentation, and romance. While some bands delved into darker and more introspective topics like occultism or tyrannical world governments, others embraced a more celebratory and anthemic approach in their lyrical content such as in Iron Maiden's "The Trooper" with "The bugle sounds, the charge begins But on this battlefield, no one wins"¹⁴² or Judas Priest lyrics, "Let me hear the battle cry Calling on the wind Let me see the banners fly Before the storm begins".¹⁴³ Judas Priest, hailing from the birthplace of Heavy Metal, Birmingham, UK, created songs such as "Painkiller" and "One Shot at Glory" that evoked images of masculine machismo on some long-lost battlefield.¹⁴⁴ Iron Maiden sang about the occult and historical literary titles such as in their song "Rime of the

¹⁴¹ O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 166.

¹⁴² McAlister, "Historical Subject Matter in the Music of Iron Maiden."

¹⁴³ Hann, *DENIM AND LEATHER*, 222.

¹⁴⁴ *Judas Priest - Electric Eye (Official Video)*, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yMVV_HsHcX0.

Ancient Mariner", a retelling of the 1834 poem by Samuel Taylor Coolidge.¹⁴⁵

Escapism was on the rise throughout the late 1970s going into the Reagan era of the 1980s. The NWOBHM furthered this fan escapism with their live shows. One of the primary contributions of this new music style, which would be later considered "Classical Metal," was the expansion of production to large arena stage shows and the adoption of music festival culture to Heavy Metal. The definition or classification of "Classic Metal" is muddled and ambiguous.¹⁴⁶ Some music historians go as far as to call Metallica classic rock, but this needs revision given this period. This fallacy is simply an oversimplification based on the period of the height of their popularity coinciding at the same time as other Classic Rock bands such as Def Leppard or Saxon. Metallica is indeed true Heavy Metal, not only for its contributions to the genre but also for the qualifying characteristics of the genre itself.¹⁴⁷

These so-called arena bands such as Iron Maiden and Judas Priest became the desired commodity for those music fans seeking heavier music against the overwhelming tide of New Wave and Disco. Peter York of the Monkees said that Heavy Metal was an outlet about "shutting out the tensions of life, putting it away."¹⁴⁸ Hundreds of thousands of people began attending Metal festivals and large concerts occurring primarily in the United States and Western Europe, as many venues east of the Iron Curtain were restricted and regulated so as to not spread Western influence. The concerts ranged in size and scope, but some average characteristics were large, ear shattering sound systems, a noticeable lack of seating, and the occasional mosh pit. A mosh pit is an area at a rock event, typically in front of the stage, where members of the audience

¹⁴⁵ *Iron Maiden - Rime Of The Ancient Mariner -Live After Death HD*, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXSZk_EpDio.

¹⁴⁶ Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 333.

¹⁴⁷ Pranav, "Metal – A Culture of Outsiders."

¹⁴⁸ Peter Tork, Peter Tork Quote on Metal, January 24, 1980, <https://www.azquotes.com/tag/heavy-metal-music>.

dance frantically and violently, typically with shoving and occasionally involving punching, though the violence is more attributed to hardcore “slam dancing.” This mode of dance is a staple of Heavy Metal concerts as it is seen as a rhythmic release in cadence with the beat and tempo of the song.¹⁴⁹ Large productions of Metal concerts had rarely happened until this point, outside of the occasional appearance of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. While Black Sabbath had begun the tradition of live Metal shows with a great deal of spectacle attached to them, acts such as Alice Cooper and KISS added a range of shock value with fire breathing, spewing blood, and simulated executions. With the emergence of NWOBHM, full-blown animatronics and pyrotechnics added to performances were not only the norm but expected.¹⁵⁰

When going to live events built on the KISS and Alice Cooper model of concerts, Heavy Metal concert goers expected a level of showmanship and musical proficiency. The former ground laying acts mastered the showmanship but lacked musical mastery. The NWOBHM bands were the solution to this demand. Judas Priest vocalist Rob Halford would ride out on stage on the back of a custom Harley Davidson motorcycle to start their sets off while adorning leather bondage and biker attire alongside the rest of his bandmates following suit.¹⁵¹ Iron Maiden started an even more spectacular tradition by introducing the first Heavy Metal mascot, Eddie. This innovation is sometimes attributed to Motorhead, but their Warpig/Snaggletooth logo was nothing more than a brand or image. Eddie, a zombified/mummified monster featured on almost all of Iron Maiden's discography cover art, was turned into an animatronic marionette that would "crash" their live performances. The crowds would cheer and applaud at the mere

¹⁴⁹ O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 28.

¹⁵⁰ Hann, *DENIM AND LEATHER*, 12.

¹⁵¹ *Judas Priest - Hell Bent For Leather Live US Festival*, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3-_2jKHbIIg.

opportunity of witnessing such a sight.¹⁵²

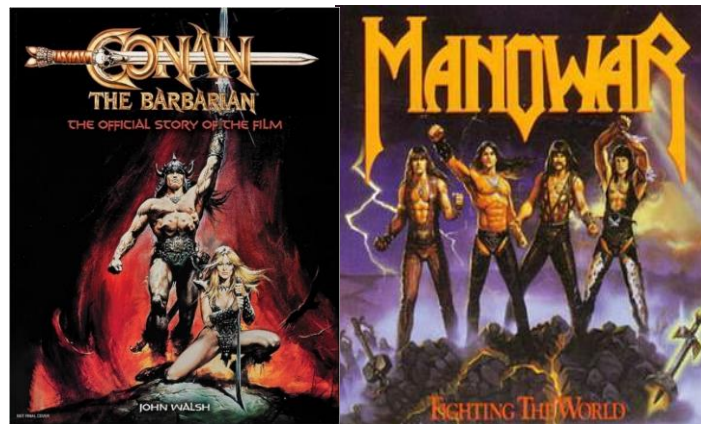


Figure 9. Left: Iron Maiden's "Eddie" Mascot created by Derek Riggs. Saxon, Arthur. Eddie - Iron Maiden - Artz For Artz Sake. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.ArtPal.com/ArtzForArtzSake?i=191717-57>. Right: Motorhead's "Warpig" or "Snaggletooth" logo created by Joe Petegano. Bennett, J. Motörhead's Snaggletooth: The Story Behind Lemmy and Co.'s Iconic Mascot | Revolver. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.revolvermag.com/culture/mot%C3%B6rheads-snaggletooth-story-behind-lemmy-and-cos-iconic-mascot>.

Why was there such a desire for spectacular and potentially horrifying visualizations during this latter part of the Cold War? This followed an increase in the popularity of science fiction and fantasy films in the late 1970s and 1980s. Films such as the *Star Wars* (1977-1983) trilogy, *Terminator* (1984), and *Conan the Barbarian* (1982) might be partially to blame for this shift in the pop-cultural zeitgeist. They served to reinforce a growing insecurity of Western masculine identity and male body image. These films both are responsible for perpetuating these insecurities but in turn reflect this issue. Marianne Kac-Vergne states that, “The 1980s witnessed an increased visibility of masculinity, notably in science fiction films, which revised the genre's central dichotomy between humans and non-humans, including

¹⁵² *Iron Maiden Live with Eddie the Head on Stage* (1985), 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMaU3a7VCC4>.

machines, to present mechanically enhanced paragons of hypermasculinity.”¹⁵³ Mainstream media still ignored Heavy Metal unlike its praise for these films, but fans were turning up to shows, record signing/sales, and buying the merchandise.¹⁵⁴ Independent producers and radio hosts such as DJ Neal Kay of Soundhouse Radio worked incessantly to get bands such as Judas Priest, Maiden, and Motorhead airplay on the radio. He did so out of his love of Heavy Metal and contempt for mainstream radio ignoring his beloved genre stating, “I was passionate, driven, and full of belief”. However, Kay states that he felt his role was “insignificant” to the movement and that the music was the reason for its rise in popularity.¹⁵⁵ This airtime rocked the United Kingdom to its core, and the musical movement was able to travel across the pond and find a popular foothold in the United States. Another reason for this new force of music's popularity based on its spectacle is that it was such a profound rejection of the niceties and norms of popular music of that time. The appeal lies almost solely in how different it was from other artists at that time¹⁵⁶.



¹⁵³ Marianne Kac-Vergne, “Losing Visibility? The Rise and Fall of Hypermasculinity in Science Fiction Films,” *InMedia. The French Journal of Media Studies*, no. 2 (November 15, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4000/inmedia.491>.

¹⁵⁴ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 195.

¹⁵⁵ Kay Neal, HM Soundhouse with Kay Neal, Web, accessed January 24, 2024, <http://www.hmsoundhouse.com/nwobhm.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Brian Slagel, Mark Eglinton, and Lars Ulrich, *For The Sake of Heaviness: The History of Metal Blade Records*, 1st edition (BMG Books, 2017), 82.

Figure 10. Left: Renato Cataro's movie poster of John Milius' Conan the Barbarian (1982). Contaro, Renato. Conan the Barbarian (1982). 1982. <https://www.originalfilmart.com/products/conan-the-barbarian-b2-1982>. Right: Longtime collaborator Ken Kelly's artwork for NWOBHM band Manowar's 1987 Album 'Fighting the World.' Kelly, Ken. Fighting the World. March 6, 2024. Album Cover. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fighting_the_World&oldid=1212226444.

Early 1980s Heavy Metal appealed to fears about destruction and apocalypse that better reflected the growing attitude towards pop music at that time. Most pop musical acts in a live setting at this time revolved around dance, choreography, and pomp. Youth and critics began viewing it as vapid, commercial, and trying too hard to be perfect or aesthetically appealing. An anonymous teenager outside tailgating outside of a Ratt concert in 1986, was quoted saying, “Heavy Metal rules all that punk shit sucks it belongs on fucking Mars man! Madonna can go to hell, she's a dick.”¹⁵⁷ Some aspects of this trend were viewed as effeminate. Adjectives such as “gay” or “lame” or “sissy” were directed at 1980s pop music by Metal heads across the United States. A feeling of hypermasculine insecurity was not a new phenomenon as there were recorded instances of that same agitation being felt primarily by young men as far back as the 1950s with figures such as Rosemary Clooney and Liberace. Figures like these normalized femininity on a mass scale that traditional heteronormative culture abhorred, such as Daily Mail columnist William Connor called, “neutered, ‘fruit’-flavored, and for the love of mothers.”¹⁵⁸

There then comes a Heavy Metal force bedecked in leather and denim that is in stark contrast to the sequins and glitter of previous pop acts, ostentatiously and intentionally renewing hypermasculine and quasi-patriotism in young men across the world, especially in the West. The style was to imitate perceived hypermasculine figures such as Elvis Presley, James Dean, or

¹⁵⁷ *Metal*. Dunn

¹⁵⁸ William Connor, “Liberace: An American Boy, Excerpt,” *Daily Mirror*, September 26, 1956, <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/686671.html>.

“tough guy” archetypes such as bikers, particularly Marlon Brando’s character Johnny Strabler in the *Wild One* (1953). These figures displayed essences of stoicism, assertiveness, dependability, and charisma with women. Metal fan and bands appearances were to elicit a sense of danger and mystery from potentially hostile or at least critical onlookers. It was a complete rejection of peace-loving hippies and effeminate introspection.

Ironically, a lot of Heavy Metal imagery is incredibly homoerotic, thus creating new, even greater quandaries concerning the sexuality within the genre's fan culture. Rob Halford was instrumental in normalizing this aesthetic and was a closeted homosexual until 1998. He used this attire to deal with both his stage fright feeling empowered in his get up along with expressing his sexuality in an unassuming way. His incorporation of leather biker and bondage gear worked in favor of Priests’ popularity as young Metal fan men perceived this clothing as being the highest form of strength and masculinity, but they were unwittingly participating in chic most associated with the hardcore BDSM community of the gay variety.



Figure 11. Rob Halford wearing leather bondage/biker gear atop his iconic Harley Davidson motorcycle at a concert, 1984. Fortney, Adam. "Metal Music and Gender," n.d.

Regardless of this paradox, young people attempting to defy the social reset back to the

conservatism of the early post-war period, yearned for music that spoke to their desires for the same sense of individuality conveyed through music and outward presentation. These new Heavy Metal acts broke onto the music scene banging away at guitars and screaming like demons right out of hell.¹⁵⁹ It was an outlet for young men to potentially reclaim a visceral sense of masculinity through angsty displays of emotion -sometimes violent - that this generation felt had been stripped away from them by the façade of what would become known as political correctness born out of corporate expectations and Hippie peace-loving sentiment. Shirtless mosh pits replaced orderly studio audiences and hippie drum circles. Instead, Heavy Metal began incorporating slam dancing and “mosh pits” from the Punk scene where concert goers would form dance circles where jumping, pushing, and occasionally hitting one another to the beat and rhythm of the music. They rejected the production values of clean-cut looks and sonic perfectionism set by the record labels. Gone were the Youngbloods' wish for peace of people coming together and loving one another replaced by grim songs like Motorhead's “Brotherhood of Man” that condemn humanity with choruses stating “Monsters rule your world Are you too scared to understand? You shall be forever judged And you shall surely hang We live and scrape in misery We die by our own hand And still we murder our own children Brotherhood of man.”

President Reagan started his administration with his “Vision for America” speech in which he stated a desire to see America return to hard work, family, and “spiritual commitment” as a way of revitalizing the American dream.¹⁶⁰ Heavy Metal offered a contrasting vision in the 1980s that began to embrace a chauvinistic culture for young men to beat their chests in a brotherhood bonded by the homosocial love and adoration of Heavy Metal.¹⁶¹ This community

¹⁵⁹ Wiederhorn and Turman, *Louder Than Hell*, 600.

¹⁶⁰ Ronald Reagan's Election Eve Address “A Vision for America” on November 3, 1980, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMx3KsU-Rcg>.

¹⁶¹ Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 300.

becomes even more appealing with the aforementioned continual decay and degradation of the nuclear family and Reagan's vision being little more than a pipedream at worst and an unattainable ideal at best. In 1980, 22.6 married women out of 1,000 divorced, which was a 50% increase from the 1960s.¹⁶² Many of the children coming from this mass increase in broken homes were looking for a surrogate replacement that many found in the communal fandom of Heavy Metal.¹⁶³

The NWOBHM suggested that Metal was not a post-counterculture fad leftover from the hippie counterculture, but a genre that would last longer than expected by critics. Furthermore, as Cold War tensions increased, Metal emerged as a cultural weapon for the West to prove its way of life had bravado and lust for life in the face of domineering Soviet influence. President Reagan made a connection between prosperity and patriotism. The West's wealth and freedom was for Reagan its most effective weapon against the encroaching forces of the Communist bloc. Hair Metal represented a feasible alternative way of life to prevailing ideas of affluence with patriotic prosperity. As Dr. Chelsea Anne Watts states, "In other words, being a successful rock star, or looking and living the part, functioned as an alternate expression of the traditional American dream."¹⁶⁴ This defying of norms created an unfortunate dilemma for Western nations wishing to utilize Metal as some propaganda for bolstering their position. Metal was rebelling against all forms of oppression, Soviet or otherwise, meaning it engendered opposition from Western politics just as much as those in the East albeit more so for moral issues than those of economics.¹⁶⁵ Soviet Union leaders were not ignorant to Heavy Metal's rise in popularity within

¹⁶² "The Evolution of Divorce," accessed January 26, 2024, <https://nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-evolution-of-divorce>.

¹⁶³ Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 93.

¹⁶⁴ Chelsea Anne Watts, "Nothin' But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s," n.d., 12.

¹⁶⁵ Mazierska, *Popular Music in Eastern Europe*, 184.

their own borders. The Soviets misinterpreted Metal as being a new form of Jazz, which has traceable Western roots with observable ties to the United States. They oppressed it by censoring radio stations and jamming pirate radio stations. The Soviets referred to these types of stations as “radio hooligans” attempting to promote Western ideals and values with the music they aired. While both the United States and Soviet Union cracked down on this genre of music, the Russians were much more drastic in their approach by imprisoning individuals caught broadcasting Heavy Metal.¹⁶⁶

Nevertheless, Metal's popularity in the early 80s was far from declining despite moralists' and censors' best efforts. Motley Crue and Venom were some of the earlier examples of using explicit occult imagery in not only their music but their style as well. Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin had alluded to it with throwaway lyrics, the occasional pagan iconography or at most an inverted or ablaze cross. Bands were putting it directly on the album sleeve with pentagrams and goat heads. These bands were using this imagery solely for shock value in the beginning or to offend whoever might take objection with such associations, none of these earlier groups held occult leanings or affiliations.¹⁶⁷ The increase in occult association clashed with 1980s America's renewed evangelical spirituality that had aligned itself with the Reagan administration's moral front. The continual use by Heavy Metal of Satan, the occult, and debaucherous hedonism in its music and image frightened and angered these censors. These groups attempted to silence them before they became too popular to contain. Heavy Metal was indeed entering the public and popular media's consciousness when South Carolina Senator Ernest F. Hollings said Heavy Metal “It is outrageous filth, and we must do something about

¹⁶⁶ Mazierska, 81–84.

¹⁶⁷ *The War On Heavy Metal In The '80s*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaMJ49R97SM>.

it.”¹⁶⁸ On the contrary, there was an explosion of a cultural phenomenon that would cement Metal in music history and cultural history forever.¹⁶⁹

Glam Metal was increasingly pushing Heavy Metal into a complete material culture brought on by Reagan’s America. The art was important to be sure, but the fruits from the labor put into said art were far more sought after, such as women, wealth, and fame. The 1980s are often associated with a culture of conspicuous consumption and materialism. The pursuit of wealth and status became more pronounced, emphasizing luxury goods, designer brands, and an overall focus on accumulating possessions as symbols of success. The financial sector experienced unprecedented growth during the 1980s, particularly on Wall Street. The era saw the rise of corporate raiders, leveraged buyouts, and a wave of mergers and acquisitions.¹⁷⁰ The pursuit of wealth in the financial industry, increasingly overtly at the expense of traditional business ethics, contributed to the perception of excess. Among the middle class, the term "yuppie" (young urban professional) became popular in the 1980s to describe a demographic characterized by upward mobility, high incomes, and a focus on career success garnering the bottom average salary of over \$40,000 a year.¹⁷¹ Yuppies were associated with a lifestyle that included expensive tastes, upscale living, and a strong desire for material success, the near antithesis of the Hippie movement.¹⁷² At the same time, the economic policies of United States under President Ronald Reagan included substantial tax cuts for high-income individuals and

¹⁶⁸ “Parental Advisory: When Tipper Gore Took on ‘80s Rock Music,” Mental Floss, September 14, 2023, <https://www.mentalfloss.com/posts/tipper-gore-fought-against-80s-rock-music-parental-advisory>.

¹⁶⁹ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 92.

¹⁷⁰ William A. Niskanen, *Reaganomics: An Insider’s Account of the Policies and the People*, First Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 195–98.

¹⁷¹ Michael C. Tipping, “Yuppies Are Thriving Despite Market Dive,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1988, sec. Business, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-05-22-me-5041-story.html>.

¹⁷² Tom McGrath, *Triumph of the Yuppies: America, the Eighties, and the Creation of An Unequal Nation* (Grand Central Publishing, 2024), 64.

corporations, which critics argued disproportionately benefited the wealthy, contributing to income inequality and a culture of greed.¹⁷³ The 1980s saw an increase in the use of debt and leverage, both at the corporate and individual levels. Meanwhile movies, television shows, and popular media of the 1980s often portrayed characters living extravagant lifestyles, reinforcing the image of excess.¹⁷⁴ Heavy Metal in the 1980s began to be influenced by this increasing valuation on material culture, stepping away from the artistry and counterculture that had spawned it. David Coverdale, vocalist of White Snake, stated that MTV and material culture had saved him years of hard work and touring. He went on to infer that there was a new level of instant gratification if a Heavy Metal band had the “look”, a video that made it on MTV, and had a hit single out.¹⁷⁵

Rockstars would not be ignorant of this cultural and economic shift of 1980s America, as Metal predicated itself on many of these pursuits, albeit unorthodoxically and unconventionally. Young people demonstrated their resistance – or at least manifested their freedom relative to the autocracies of the Iron Curtain in the idealization of the partying fun enjoyed by metal bands and rock stars. While criticizing social strictures, Heavy Metal celebrated the Western way of life by emphasizing individual freedom, in a way that began to resonate not only with young (typically Caucasian male) individuals but also began to appeal to a broader audience.¹⁷⁶ Heavy Metal bands began stepping away from dark, brooding, and globally conscious aesthetics and moved on to a puckish rogue role. This new subgenre of Heavy Metal would find a distinct home and scene primarily in Los Angeles, along Hollywood Boulevard and the notorious Sunset Strip, with

¹⁷³ Rick Perlstein, *Reaganland: America's Right Turn 1976-1980*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2021), 120.

¹⁷⁴ McGrath, *Triumph of the Yuppies*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Wiederhorn and Turman, *Louder Than Hell*, 186.

¹⁷⁶ Perlstein, *Reaganland*, 221.

its various bars, music venues, and gentlemen's clubs.¹⁷⁷

Van Halen and Motley Crue were earlier examples of this new breath of late Cold War Heavy Metal. They sang about having fun as an adolescent, fun which involved acholic escapades of drug-induced shenanigans and pursuing women. Any darker themes of the lyrical or stylistic content were put on for shock value to upset concerned parents or donned as a display that they, too, wished to fall under the banner of "tough guy" Heavy Metal.¹⁷⁸ For example, bands such as WASP and Motley Crue would pose as being rebels resisting mainstream culture by adorning leather and growing their hair to ridiculous lengths, but in their private lives were reserved, quiet book readers that had a tendency to vote fiscally conservative.¹⁷⁹ Blackie Lawless (Steven Edward Duren) of WASP has been quoted as saying "I care dearly for this country [USA]. I do love this country. I spend enough time overseas to realize that as bad as it is it's still probably about the best thing going. What kills me though is when I know it can be better," and "I was raised very religious. I always went to church. I am Jewish bloodline, but I am Christian faith. I was brought up Christian faith rather. I still have very deep beliefs in God and things like that, but I don't subscribe to the organized religion that I grew up with." This discrepancy put these new Glam Metal bands against the initial Metal philosophy of rebellion for rebellion's sake which would in time put them at odds with the Metal community.¹⁸⁰

Cold War Western culture cultivated the idea that "big is better." This sentiment is seen not only in consumerism, but in the style and expression of the period. Large, extravagant

¹⁷⁷ *When Metal Ruled The World 80's LA Sunset Strip Story*, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUrHVWa3s2Y>.

¹⁷⁸ Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal*, 14–16.

¹⁷⁹ John Sewell, "'Doing It For The Dudes': A Comparative Ethnographic Study of Performative Masculinity in Heavy Metal and Hardcore Subcultures" (Georgia State University), accessed January 24, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.57709/3056249>.

¹⁸⁰ "Blackie Lawless Quote," Lib Quotes, accessed January 24, 2024, <https://libquotes.com/blackie-lawless/quote/lbm3p2n>.

hairstyles, or “blow-outs” were commonplace. Heavy Metal picked up on this trend and influenced it. These bands would later be qualified as "Hair Metal" due to their large and expansive hairdos and particularly their excessive usage of hairspray while they built off of their earlier Metal influences with a new style but innovating sound.¹⁸¹ This image contrasted starkly with previous bands' dingy and minimalist styles that mainly incorporated denim, leather, and military-esque attire. This new flavor of the Metal genre had a unique appearance and sound that was to become the main staple of most Heavy Metal in the 1980s. Rather than rejecting the excesses of the decade, this subgenre’s music and dress promoted an extravagant influence that was becoming commonplace in all facets of 1980s pop culture.¹⁸²



Figure 12. Photo by Neil Zlozower of Glam Metal band, Poison, 1986. (Left) CC DeVille, Brett Michaels, Bobby Dail, and Rikki Rockett. Young, Madison. Madison Young on Poison. 1986. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/poison--464785624037056075/>.

Much like the 1950s pop heartthrob songs of crooners like Bobby Darin and Buddy Holly, Glam Metal attempted to reconcile Heavy Metal’s outsider character with the dominant

¹⁸¹ Sean Kelly, *Don't Call It Hair Metal: Art in the Excess of '80s Rock* (ECW Press, 2023), 23.

¹⁸² Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal*, 20.

social trends in the eighties. It featured melodic and catchy tunes, often with anthemic choruses, guitar solos, and polished production. Guitars were a prominent feature, often with flashy solos and a clean, audible sound. The Glam Metal genre also introduced the Metal ballad, which has a unique ability to be emotionally appealing while still maintaining the signature intensity.¹⁸³ By incorporating hard rock and pop elements, Glam Metal almost uniquely created Metal that was accessible and even radio friendly. These features appealed to a much more comprehensive and inclusive audience than Heavy Metal had in the past. The lyrics of hair metal songs often revolve around themes such as love, relationships, partying, and a carefree lifestyle. While not always deep or introspective, Glam Metal artists such as Van Halen and Poison crafted lyrics to be relatable and resonate with listeners rather than dark, existential lyrics found in the likes of Black Sabbath or Iron Maiden.¹⁸⁴

The inception of MTV on August 1, 1981, took Heavy Metal to a place it had not been before in the sphere of the pop music mainstream. Heavy Metal bands, with their newfound image, were seemingly ready to adapt to this new form of publicity and consumption. With their spectacle and theatrical performance history, Metal bands were seemingly tailored and ready for this change of medium.¹⁸⁵ The invention of playing a music video on heavy rotation in every household was a revolution. This mass repetition of videos meant that if the TV channel picked up a band's video, they would have continuous borderline advertisements internationally and MTV-savvy bands accomplished in a day what took older and less adaptive bands months and years of touring. David Coverdale of Glam Metal band Whitesnake stated, “thank God for MTV. That saved me years of touring. I feel bad for the guys who couldn’t be a part of that [MTV].”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 112.

¹⁸⁴ Kelly, *Don't Call It Hair Metal*, 51, 56.

¹⁸⁵ *When Metal Ruled The World 80's LA Sunset Strip Story*.

¹⁸⁶ ASK DAVID COVERDALE, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vpr2unEem3s>.

Now, a band no longer necessarily had to tour to get public recognition so long as they had a hit video. However, this would soon lead to bands' value less depending on musical prowess or technical ability in favor of visual appeal and glamorous appearance.¹⁸⁷

A Cold War pop phenomenon, largely thanks to MTV, was an intense quick-burn effect, and Glam Metal was no exception. Bands were skyrocketing in popularity seemingly overnight so long as they had a single or video that struck a chord with fans. Glam Metal bands began to monetarily outperform all other forms of rock. They were selling out arena-sized shows across the world and achieved massive album sales. Bands like Bon Jovi, Def Leppard, Guns N' Roses, and Motley Crue released albums that topped the charts and sold millions of copies worldwide. Poison's first tour saw them playing in front of an average of 81,000 people a night.¹⁸⁸ These bands sold tickets at an average \$166 and were selling out arena venues every night of their tours making well over a million dollars a show just for the band. Albums such as *Slippery When Wet* (1986) by Bon Jovi and *Hysteria* (1987) by Def Leppard represented such blockbuster releases going multiple times platinum. Hair Metal bands produced a plethora of hit singles that received extensive radio airplay.¹⁸⁹ These catchy and melodic songs helped propel the bands to mainstream success and attracted a broad audience. Singles like "Livin' on a Prayer" by Bon Jovi and "Sweet Child of Mine" by Guns N' Roses became iconic anthems. The image-driven nature of Hair Metal made it highly marketable. Bands capitalized on this by offering a wide range of merchandise, including clothing, posters, and accessories. The marketing of the bands often focused on the charismatic personalities of the members and their visually distinctive styles.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks, *I Want My MTV: The Uncensored Story of the Music Video Revolution*, Illustrated edition (New York: Plume, 2012), 25–29.

¹⁸⁸ Wiederhorn and Turman, *Louder Than Hell*, 166.

¹⁸⁹ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 48, 200.

¹⁹⁰ Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal*, 81, 85.

This model achieved significant commercial success, particularly with a previously overlooked demographic for Heavy Metal: women. As the bands became increasingly physically attractive and aesthetically stylish, there was an uptick in female Heavy Metal fans, at least vocally and publicly seeing a 20% increase in female interest over the course of the 1980s.¹⁹¹ The female audience did not only enjoy these Glam Metal bands based on looks, but the external presentation also made them more accessible as their appearance and sound were not as shocking or frighteningly off-putting.¹⁹² The Glam Metal's more whimsical music and less depressive music seemed to resonate with more young people during the 1980s, including women. Female Heavy Metal acts began to reach a level of prominence. Girlschool was one such band that had been touring since the 1970s, but reached public fame in the eighties, while bands such as Motorhead found a more substantial following from more female fans as their numbers increased. Ex-guitarists Lita Ford and Joan Jett started their own Heavy Metal-inspired solo projects in the wake of this new female-empowered enthusiasm.¹⁹³

1980s Cold War America saw a great deal of change in the dynamic of Heavy Metal's relationship with women as evidenced above. Some of the more traditional female roles changed as well. Groupies (a partially derogatory slang term for young women who followed the bands on tour hoping to establish relationships with the musicians) of these younger acts were now brought to the forefront and celebrated as objects of success.¹⁹⁴ Groupies of the past pined for the attention of band members no differently than these new 1980 Glam bands. The difference

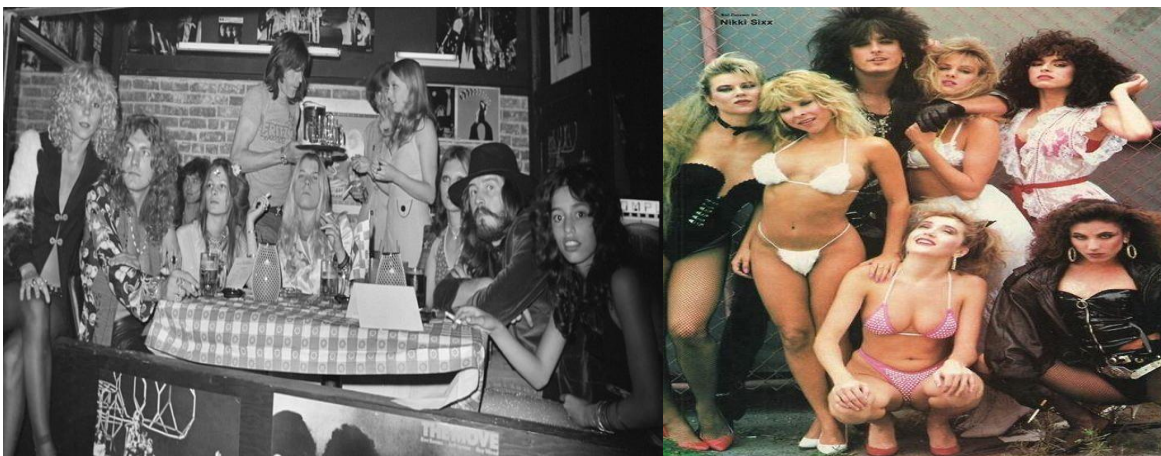
¹⁹¹ Tasha R. Howe and Howard S. Friedman, "Sex and Gender in the 1980s Heavy Metal Scene: Groupies, Musicians, and Fans Recall Their Experiences," *Sexuality and Culture* 18, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 608–30, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-013-9218-x>.

¹⁹² O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 175.

¹⁹³ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 92.

¹⁹⁴ *Do It For The Band: The Women Of The Sunset Strip - VHI rockDOCS*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WV9Qok5L-F0>.

though was in their presentation. They consisted almost exclusively of young adult women unlike the cult-like family-oriented ordeal of Grateful Dead cult-like followers. The other difference was in the attire and image. Groupies of Elvis, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC/ and even KISS dressed casually and even at times conservatively.¹⁹⁵ The 1980 Glam Metal groupies were almost always scantily clad in bikinis, lingerie, or nothing at all. They were not depicted as being shy or modest, often hanging off band members as a display of moral looseness or devotion to the band.¹⁹⁶ Motley Crue's tour manager, Doc McGhee, recalled one instance in which the band's tour bus was "a revolving door of girls." They came in one door of the vehicle and, after their liaison, left out the back. Ironically, these same Glam bands began appearing increasingly like conventional contemporary women for that period. The irony was that the gender bending attire that outsiders perceived as either queer or homosexual was being worn by rockers who were vocally, visibly, and publicly heterosexual. This unscrupulous objectification of women mixed with potentially feminine or even homosexual appearances left more purist, elitist Metal fans disgruntled and dissatisfied with this new trend.¹⁹⁷



¹⁹⁵ "Bon Scott (AC/DC) & Some Groupies. | Bon Scott, Acdc Bon Scott, Acdc," Pinterest, accessed January 24, 2024, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/acdc-rennie-ellis--382172718359472954/>.

¹⁹⁶ "Sunset Strip: The Boulevard of My Sleazy Dreams Part 1," *GlamRat* (blog), August 6, 2020, <https://glamratt.com/2020/08/06/sunset-strip-the-boulevard-of-my-sleazy-dreams-part-1/>.

¹⁹⁷ Tommy Lee et al., *The Dirt: Confessions of the World's Most Notorious Rock Band* (Dey Street Books, 2014), 21, 24.

Figure 13. Left: Members of Led Zepelin with Groupies, Sunset Strip, LA, 1977. Robert Plant (left), John Bonham (on right with beard), Jimmy Page (background) and John Paul Jones (with drinks). Weinheimer, Alaina. *Dazed and Confused | A "Ramble On" Led Zeppelin*. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://sites.psu.edu/ledzeppelin/2012/09/21/dazed-and-confused/>. Right: Nikki Sixx with Groupies, Sunset Strip, LA, 1987. Ahrens, Chris. *Motley Crue Groupies | Motley Groupies | Motley Crue | Heavy Metal Girl, Nikki Sixx, Groupies*. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/t-r-a-h--36429905733777894/>.

Drug culture also shifted during the 1980s. While still very illegal, narcotics such as marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, developed a wider elitist appeal. In other words, one was not “cool” unless one took drugs which was in direct response to the Reagan Administration’s D.A.R.E campaign. While drugs and alcohol were always present in the Heavy Metal lifestyle, the rise of commercial success meant that they were more widely available. A multitude of musicians developed habitual dependencies, a trend highlighted when Nikki Sixx, (Frank Carlton Serafino Feranna, Jr.) bassist of Motley Crue, overdosed on heroin three times in one night, the last being after he had returned from the hospital for treatment for a previous overdose.¹⁹⁸ In another incident, Nikki Sixx and Ozzy Osbourne held a competition to see who could snort the most cocaine by their Los Angeles hotel pool. The game developed into Nikki Sixx urinating by the poolside, and as he began to lean down to lick it up as a feat of accomplishment, Osbourne pushed him out of the way to do the same, nasally ingesting a line of ants on top of the urine.¹⁹⁹ These antics, along with drug-fueled destruction of hotels, such as setting them on fire or throwing television sets out of windows, became characteristically associated with many Glam Metal bands throughout the 1980s. Their behavior was theatrical and indulgent which went against the idealistic image set forth by 1980s moralists but was more reflective of this decade’s reality than perhaps figures like President Reagan or Tipper Gore would like to admit.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Nikki Sixx, *The Heroin Diaries: Ten Year Anniversary Edition: A Year in the Life of a Shattered Rock Star*, Anniversary edition (MTV Books, 2017), 102–4.

¹⁹⁹ Lee et al., *The Dirt*, 130.

²⁰⁰ Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal*, 70.

The excesses of the Reagan era proved divisive to the Heavy Metal community. The record labels gave their financially lucrative acts anything that they desired by way of women, drugs, and money, so long as they received a return on their investment. Recreating a singular type of band over and over by assembly line-esque means of production became profitable as the metal market was starting to explode in the late 1980s²⁰¹. In a documentary by Penelope Spheeris, *The Decline of Western Civilization II: The Metal Years* (1988), some of the cracks of this overly extravagant industry began to show. The display of WASP guitarist Chris Holmes during an interview in the film is the centerpiece of this degenerative unraveling. He is wading in a swimming pool wholly clothed, swallowing an entire bottle of vodka while observably inebriated. He states that he only lives for himself but does not believe he is worthy of the rockstar lifestyle or is even a "good" person. Holmes notes that fame, money, and women did not make him happy or fulfill his life in any way. The vodka turned out to be only water, but his intoxication and remarks were genuine at that moment. The staging of this implies that despite Holmes' clear intoxication, the need of him or even that of Spheeris to keep up the bad boy appearance took precedence over journalist integrity, more than likely for sensationalism. Throughout the film, there are instances of Glam rockers destroying hotel rooms and harassing young women backstage with no repercussions whatsoever. This immunity was only possible due to the protection they received from the recording labels.²⁰²

The popularity of Metal during this period also caught the attention of social conservatives, generating a backlash against it on its rise. The popularization of Metal during this period allowed for its first officially legislated means of censorship, the PMRC. The PMRC laid

²⁰¹ Slagel, Eglinton, and Ulrich, *For The Sake of Heaviness*, 217.

²⁰² *The Decline of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years (2/6) W.A.S.P. 's Chris Holmes (1988)*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUxXO3eSHa0>.

issues of occult practices, sexism, and violence at Metal's feet for corrupting the youth and causing insubordination to conservative moral norms that came with political ramifications. The Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) was formed in 1985 in the United States. It was founded by four women: Tipper Gore, wife of then-Senator Al Gore; Susan Baker, wife of Treasury Secretary James Baker; Pam Howar, wife of Washington realtor Raymond Howar; and Sally Nevius, wife of former Washington City Council Chairman John Nevius. The PMRC was established primarily in response to concerns about the lyrical content of popular music, particularly rock and rap music, which were perceived to contain explicit or objectionable material. Tipper Gore became alarmed after her daughter purchased a Prince album with explicit lyrics without her knowledge. The PMRC's main objectives were to increase parental awareness of the content of popular music and to push for a rating system, akin to that used for movies, to label albums with explicit content. The PMRC held hearings before the United States Congress, during which its spokeswomen advocated for the adoption of warning labels on records deemed to contain explicit or objectionable content. Despite opposition from musicians, music industry figures, and free speech advocates, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) eventually acceded to the pressure from the PMRC and agreed to place Parental Advisory stickers on albums with explicit content voluntarily. This move effectively created the modern-day explicit content warning labels found on many albums.

The PMRC framed its campaign as being primarily concerned with protecting children from exposure to explicit or objectionable content in music. By emphasizing the vulnerability of young listeners and the potential negative impact of explicit lyrics on their moral development, the PMRC sought to generate support for its proposals among parents and policymakers. The PMRC often adopted a language of moral panic, portraying explicit music lyrics as a grave threat

to societal values and the well-being of young people. By highlighting examples of graphic or controversial lyrics, the PMRC sought to evoke outrage and alarm among the public, amplifying concerns about the content of popular music and the influence it might have on youth culture. The PMRC often invoked the voices of concerned parents, educators, and medical professionals to lend credibility to its arguments. Dr. Joe Steussy stated that the music had the power to influence behavior. He stated that Heavy Metal, ““had as one of its central elements the element of hatred.” Dr. Paul King, an adolescent psychiatrist, testified on the deification of Heavy Metal performers and their religionization of Heavy Metal. By highlighting the endorsements of prominent individuals and organizations, the PMRC sought to portray its campaign as a legitimate response to a genuine social problem, thereby bolstering its credibility and influence. They created a stigmatized list of not just Heavy Metal artists, but various genre’s the PMRC thought were reprehensible. This list was called the “Filthy Fifteen.” These claims were not entirely unfounded, as just as the medium of video had breathed new life into the genre, it was also beginning to be evidence of condemnation and guilt.²⁰³

²⁰³ itsallmadonnasfault, “PMRC Filthy Fifteen,” Tumblr, *Tumblr* (blog), September 2021, <https://itsallmadonnasfault.tumblr.com/post/662737009038802944/the-filthy-fifteen-list-of-songs-created-by-pmrc>.

The Filthy Fifteen		
ARTIST	SONG	RATING*
JUDAS PRIEST	"Eat Me Alive"	X
MÖTLEY CRÜE	"Bastard"	V
PRINCE	"Darling Nikki"	X
SHEENA EASTON	"Sugar Walls"	X
W.A.S.P.	"(Animal) Fuck Like a Beast"	X
MERCYFUL FATE	"Into the Coven"	O
VANITY	"Strap On Robby Baby"	X
DEF LEPPARD	"High 'n' Dry"	D/A
TWISTED SISTER	"We're Not Gonna Take It"	V
MADONNA	"Dress You Up"	X
CYNDI LAUPER	"She Bop"	X
AC/DC	"Let Me Put My Love into You"	X
BLACK SABBATH	"Trashed"	D/A
MARY JANE GIRLS	"My House"	X
VENOM	"Possessed"	O

* (Proposed) X = Profane or sexually explicit O = Occult D/A = Drugs or alcohol V = Violent

Figure 14. Filthy Fifteen blacklist established by the PMRC, 1985. *itsallmadonnasfault*. PMRC Filthy Fifteen. September 2021. <https://itsallmadonnasfault.tumblr.com/post/662737009038802944/the-filthy-fifteen-list-of-songs-created-by-pmrc>.

Moral panic and violence were some of the more egregious issues afflicting Heavy Metal during the Cold War, as harsh bitter realities reared its ugly head. The paying public saw an increase in it as well. Someone had to desire and purchase these extreme variations of Metal. Metal was no stranger to controversy, but a trend had been occurring over the 1980s that was making Heavy Metal a potential threat or concern—reports of several suicides inspired by Heavy Metal lyrics. Accusations against Judas Priest for the culpability of their music for the attempted 1985 suicides of Ray Belknap and James Vance were carried to trial years later.²⁰⁴ However, the charges were dismissed due to lack of evidence. Ozzy Osbourne's single "Suicide Solution" was blamed in the trial of James McCollum's 1986 suicide as inciting the 19-year-old to take his own life.²⁰⁵ Serial killer Richard Ramirez, also known as the "Nightstalker", claimed he was inspired by AC/DC's music during his murder spree from June 1984 to August 1985. This claim has

²⁰⁴ *Judas Priest 1990*, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZiW0ee7s0FA>.

²⁰⁵ Kim Murphy, "Suit Claiming Ozzy Osbourne Song Led to Suicide Dismissed," *Los Angeles Times*, December 20, 1986, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-12-20-mn-4460-story.html>.

support due to a male's AC/DC ballcap found at the scene of one of his crimes.²⁰⁶ Metal artists defended themselves from Christian parent groups and the PMRC as best as they could from these accusations. Glam Metal singer Dee Snider went to Washington in 1985 for a PMRC hearing defending his beloved art form from accusations of violence and rape. Snider cited that "the music is what you make it, and you will find whatever you're looking for" noting that music is art and art is open for interpretation. Snider also implied that the founder and head of the PMRC, Tipper Gore, was merely using Metal as a scapegoat to explain the failures of many parents and the moral fabric decay of Western society.²⁰⁷



Figure 15. Mark Weiss' photo of Dee Snider of Twisted Sister testifying before the US Senate at hearing for the PMRC, September 15, 1985. Weiss, Mark. Dee Snider on PMRC Hearing: "I Was a Public Enemy." Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/dee-snider-on-pmrc-hearing-i-was-a-public-enemy-71205/>.

As mentioned, 1980s Cold War-era Glam Metal groups had a quick burn effect which was as much a curse as it was a blessing. There had begun an oversaturation of the market and an over-reliance on music videos and hit singles created stagnation of the music genre. Innovation

²⁰⁶ "How Rotting Teeth and an AC/DC Hat Finally Led Los Angeles Police to Night Stalker Richard Ramirez | Daily Mail Online," accessed January 4, 2024, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9147521/How-rotting-teeth-AC-DC-hat-finally-led-Los-Angeles-police-Night-Stalker-Richard-Ramirez.html>.

²⁰⁷ *Dee Snider's PMRC Senate Hearing Speech (Full)*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0Vyr1TyITE>.

was limited, as producers relied upon formulas that they knew could create successful albums and bands became so formulaic that it was difficult to distinguish between groups that had all started to sound similar. Almost every single being produced by Glam Metal bands in the 1980s had to do with “having nothing but a good time” which was growing stale with the record buying public as sales began to decrease by 20% going forward from 1988.²⁰⁸ While the genre initially thrived on its energetic and melodic appeal, a lack of musical evolution contributed to its decline. The public and some critics began to view the image as excessive and disconnected from the authenticity that other emerging genres were emphasizing.²⁰⁹ The Guardian newspaper had been critical throughout the 1980s of Heavy Metal calling it “psychopathic” and “noise designed to outrage” while chastising its fans as nothing more than “lambs in leather.”²¹⁰ MTV, which significantly promoted hair metal through music videos, also shifted its programming focus. In the early 1990s, the rise of reality TV and a change in the channel's programming strategy reduced the exposure of traditional music videos, impacting the promotional avenues for many Hair Metal bands. To compound the crisis, the first years of the 1990s saw an economic recession. Consumers became more discerning in their spending, and the excesses associated with the Hair and Glam Metal lifestyle were no longer as appealing during more challenging economic times.²¹¹

Another issue for Glam Metal was the Cold War era's emphasis on competition. Going back to the “bigger is better” philosophy, Glam Metal always tried to outdo itself. In other

²⁰⁸ “Iron Maiden Albums and Songs Sales - ChartMasters,” accessed January 29, 2024, <https://chartmasters.org/iron-maiden-albums-and-songs-sales/>.

²⁰⁹ Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine, *Heavy Metal*, 130–32.

²¹⁰ Harry Burton, “‘A Noise Designed to Outrage’: How the Guardian Has Covered Heavy Metal,” *The Guardian*, August 12, 2016, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/from-the-archive-blog/2016/aug/12/metallica-black-album-heavy-metal-archive>.

²¹¹ Tannenbaum and Marks, *I Want My MTV*, 92–95.

words, Glam Metal bands were in competition with each other to be the “best” or most successful band in order to stay signed with their labels and accumulate the most wealth and fame. This caused bands to work harder on catchy singles than fully realized and produced albums.²¹² Jani Layne, vocalist and lead songwriter of Warrant, emphasized how much of an issue this was for his band writing their 1990 album. “The record was supposed to be called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. My producer calls me up and says, ‘I don’t hear the single.’ I wrote *Cherry Pie* in five minutes. Now the album is *Cherry Pie*, the hit is *Cherry Pie*, I’m doing cherry pie eating contests. I’m now known as the *Cherry Pie* guy. I could shoot myself in the fucking head for writing that song.”²¹³ The excessive overemphasis on competition for success in Glam Metal was one of the leading causes of its fall from popularity as it stripped away the creativity and artistic expression that made the genre popular in the first place.²¹⁴ Dee Snider, Metal’s advocate, went as far to say, “It became so processed, refined, and formulaic, it became pablum. Then someone got the bright idea to ‘unplug’ Metal. The MTV crowd had the idea that ‘if you can’t play acoustic, you’re not really a musician.’”²¹⁵ However, creative interference to make the best competitive product would be the least of Glam Metal’s product as resentment to their style of Metal was growing.²¹⁶

While Glam Metal channeled eighties excess and struggled in its wake, a new form of heavy Metal would begin in 1982 with the formation of San Francisco-based Metallica as a counterpoint to Glam Metal’s direction. Metallica’s founders were deeply opposed to the excess

²¹² Sean Kelly, *Don’t Call It Hair Metal: Art in the Excess of ’80s Rock* (ECW Press, 2023), 223.

²¹³ *Why Hair Metal Got Pounded (and Deserved It)*, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ae-_XicGGkk.

²¹⁴ Martin Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal: The Illustrated Oral History of Heavy Metal’s Debauched Decade* (Voyageur Press, 2014), 214.

²¹⁵ *Dee Snider on the Fall of Metal Music*, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOi3HcvKvbQ>.

²¹⁶ Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman, *Louder Than Hell: The Definitive Oral History of Metal*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: It Books, 2014), 223.

and glamorization that had taken hold of the Metal scene in Los Angeles. Founding guitarist of Megadeth and Metallica Dave Mustaine quoted to VH1, “If you have to dress like a chick on stage just to get people to come check you out first of all you have unresolved issues and second off is your music even that good?”²¹⁷ Metallica and other early Thrash Metal groups yearned for a return to classic Metal such as Iron Maiden and Motorhead. With their first record, *Kill 'Em All* (1983), they invented a new sound based on classic 1970s Metal and the NWOBHM, which would come to be known as Thrash Metal. By taking elements of hardcore punk rock and fusing them with the technicality of traditional Metal, Metallica’s sound was significantly more aggressive and faster than anything before it.²¹⁸ Metallica achieved unprecedented success for a Heavy Metal band, breaking into the mainstream with their fifth studio album, "The Black Album" (1991), which became one of the best-selling albums of all time, reaching a massive audience and introducing many people to the world of Heavy Metal. Initially, however, they were so different from their Glam contemporaries, that most rock clubs thought them to be some new form of Punk and treated them with contempt and dismissal due to this perception.²¹⁹ Metallica's discography showcases a range of musical styles and influences, demonstrating their ability to evolve and experiment while maintaining their core sound. From thrash Metal to hard rock and symphonic elements, Metallica's versatility has contributed to their longevity. Metallica's music has transcended traditional Metal boundaries, appealing to a broad and diverse audience. Their success would legitimize heavy Metal as a significant and respected form of musical expression. Metallica’s impact extends beyond the Metal community, influencing artists in various genres and contributing to the acceptance of heavy Metal in mainstream culture.²²⁰

²¹⁷ *The History Of Thrash Metal*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4LnRiA3HLc>.

²¹⁸ Garry Sharpe-Young, *Thrash Metal* (Zonda Books Limited, 2007), 10–11.

²¹⁹ *Music Behind Metallica 60FPS*, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc_lxw5OWMA.

²²⁰ Sharpe-Young, *Thrash Metal*, 90.



*Figure 16. Gary L. Heard's photo of the members of Metallica, 1983. (left) Kirk Hammet, Cliff Burton, Lars Ulrich, and James Hetfield. Heard, Gary L. English: Metallica in a Press Photo Dated to 1983. Photo Is Definitely Pre-1989, as Metallica Left Megaforce and Signed to Elektra in 1984. No Copyright Markings on the Photo and No Registration Could Be Found in the US Copyright Search Records. 1983. Immediate (Amazon Listing) Worthpoint.
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metallica_1983_press_p hoto.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Metallica_1983_press_photo.jpg).*

This resistant subgenre returned Heavy Metal to its themes of Nuclear Armageddon and worrying geopolitics, rejecting womanizing and cavalier attitudes. Thrash Metal was an attempt to recapture the broader genre as a form of artistic expression rather than as simply entertainment. Thrash Metal's high tempo, aggressive guitar riffs, and rapid drumming was designed to push the boundaries of musical intensity, showcasing technical skill and innovation. Metallica and other Thrash Metal bands positioned themselves as demonstrating the musicians' skills and pushing the boundaries of what is possible within the musical framework, rather than creating music to gain riches, fame, or other self-serving vices.²²¹ This form of music and its musicians purposefully challenged conventional music norms, both in terms of song structure and production. Its aggressive and unapologetic style departed from more mainstream and polished musical forms. Rather than marketable, anodyne topics, Thrash Metal often features lyrics that address social and political issues, including war, corruption, environmental concerns,

²²¹ *The History Of Thrash Metal.*

feelings of isolation, and societal injustice. In this framework of dissent from “marketable” Metal, Thrash Metal bands like Slayer, Anthrax, Megadeth, Exodus, and Testament used the genre to express dissent, anger, and a desire for change. Even the names of the bands had become darker and more violent from Cinderella or Tesla providing more evidence of this Heavy Metal divorce from itself towards a darker, grounded path.²²²

There was an active competitive rivalry between Thrash and Glam Metal in the 1980s. The two camps separated into those who were promoting materialism and conformity with excess, and those doing it for the love of the music itself and its artistry. Thrash Metal artists were vocal about their disdain for Glam Metal calling it “sissy” and “gay” and inferred a severe lack of talent musically. Name-calling between the groups primarily persisted with ad hominem attacks between bands in the press and MTV interviews. Thrash bands often proclaimed they were less effeminate than the LA Glam bands while Glam bands would retaliate with insults about the Thrash band's grungy and grimy appearances, inferring that they did not bathe. These were personal attacks hurled at one another, but they also represented an idea of a division in “class” so to speak between perceived “lowly” Thrashers and “sophisticated” rockstars of the Glam world. In one case Metallica drummer Lars and Motley Crue bassist Nikki Sixx came to blows on LA’s Sunset Strip. Ulrich insulted Sixx's band, after which a short chase ensued. However, Ulrich commented that Sixx's six-inch platform boots did not allow him to catch up with Ulrich - a former National Tennis Championship competitor – who managed to outrun the Glam icon.²²³ Several altercations between Glam fans and Thrash fans occurred at various concerts and the musicians did little to abate the hostilities. Metallica, in fact, went so far as to

²²² Sharpe-Young, *Thrash Metal*, 48.

²²³ *Lars Ulrich Talks About Motley Crue. GLAM vs Thrash*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N21nxVLbJo8>.

say that they designed their music to "kill" all the "fake" Metal people in the world.²²⁴

Thrash Metal emerged during a time when more polished and commercial sounds dominated mainstream music. Thrash, with its raw and rebellious nature, became a counter-cultural movement that rejected the norms of mainstream music. This pattern is almost an exact repetition of counterculture music going against the popular counterculture of its time. Once, it was Classic Metal against Hippie culture; now, it was Thrash and other forms of Extreme Metal resisting the onslaught and oversaturation of Glam and Hair Metal. Thrash and other forms of extreme Metal struggled to find mainstream appeal in freshman outings than in LA and MTV's hair and glamor bands. Instead, their fame would rise through an underground network of Metal scenes utilizing word-of-mouth and tape trading. Mainstream and commercial media had no control over these publication techniques as it was almost entirely independent. Labels dedicated to "true" Metal, such as Napalm Records, Def Jam, and Metal Blade, would form. Thrash Metal distribution fueled an entire industry outside the world of mainstream music production that was not as lucrative as its mainstream counterparts but rose in popularity despite the lack of recognition.²²⁵ These Thrash Metal bands stripped back the layers of glitz and glamor that had taken hold over their music genre.²²⁶

The Cold War consumerism was cannibalizing Heavy Metal by the late 1980s. Thrash often earns the moniker of having saved heavy Metal from becoming clichéd and thus ruining its own appeal. Returning to musical virtuosity over spectacle and rockstar personas. Thrash Metal resonated with a younger audience seeking music that reflected their rebellious spirit and

²²⁴ *Metallica - No Remorse 1983*, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMqLdI0uuaw>.

²²⁵ Slagel, Eglinton, and Ulrich, *For The Sake of Heaviness*, 217.

²²⁶ Antoine Grand et al., *The Death Metal Bible: A Journey Through the World of Death Metal Brutality* (Independently published, 2023), 2–3.

dissatisfaction with the consumerism and excess that Glam Metal had embraced.²²⁷ The genre's attitude and anti-establishment themes appealed to a generation looking for an alternative to more commercial forms of music. It cultivated a distinct cultural identity among its fans, providing a sense of belonging and shared identity for those who identify with the genre's music, fashion, and ethos laid forth by the forbearers of Metal such as Sabbath, Zeppelin, and Motorhead. Thrash Metal embraced a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethos, with many bands starting in local scenes, recording their music, and distributing it independently.²²⁸ This grassroots Metal scene fostered creativity and diversity while prioritizing intensity, darkness, and instrumental mastery. A tangible message of sincerity about music overcoming consumer excess would now fully challenge the vapidness of commercialism and conservative constraints. While Glam Metal was far from conservative in the sense of the Reagan administration, they were preferable and palatable to a wider audience due to their following of the capitalist and commercial formula.²²⁹ In comparison, the underground nature of Thrash Metal cultivated a culture and ideology of musical purity. They simply wanted to “rock” and have recognition for their artistry alone, and not by how much money they could make and spend.²³⁰

The rivalry between "mainstream" Metal and "extreme" Metal that arose and held throughout the 80s was not dissimilar to the rivalry between the US and the USSR in the sense of one always attempting to outdo the other by very different means. Both the US and USSR were motivated by furtherance of their ideological standpoint. So too were these divisions in Metal. The Extreme Metal groups represented freedom of expression and musical artistry, while Glam

²²⁷ Ronnie James Dio: “MTV Killed Heavy Metal Music” / “MTV Mató El Heavy Metal,” 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnLe_h4JI0M.

²²⁸ Sharpe-Young, *Thrash Metal*, 207.

²²⁹ Niskanen, *Reaganomics*, 260.

²³⁰ *The History Of Thrash Metal*.

passively and inactively furthered a consumerist and commercial agenda of being trendy and possessing widespread appeal. Nevertheless, all must follow the commonplace structure of attaining power and wealth. However, various subgenres were being generated congruently with these two rock 'n' roll powerhouses, but like the splintering factionalism found internationally during the late 1980s, in that same vein, all of these subcategories tended to follow a similar pattern set by either Glam or Extreme Metal, paralleled to that of capitalism or communism. All of this is to say that the 1980s saw groups from all walks of life, from political to musical, lose a sense of cultural identity as the decade waned, and set out in search of individual meaning.²³¹ For example, the USA had subsidiary freedom fighters in Central America that bastardized the ideals of the US for their own means. This is not a far-fetched albeit very loose connection to Glam Metal perverting the ideology of previous Heavy Metal bands. The stakes to be clear are very different, but it is interesting that in the 1980s there were so many misinterpretations of preceding movements or ideas that stemmed from the Cold War, as if it were the trend of this period. As the Cold War went on, and the hollow façade of decadence that was the Reagan era began to fade, darker and more cynical forms of musical thought began to take hold. Towards the end of the decade, bands began to try to be more extreme than the last, whether in the heaviness of playing or malevolent content.²³²

Some Metal musicians and fans felt Thrash was not reflective or dark enough for the increasing chaos of the 1980s. As bands competed to establish “genuinity” through adopting darker and darker themes, this competition led to the emergence of the subgenre of Death Metal – beginning with, perhaps unironically, a band called Death. Their earlier discography saw

²³¹ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 122.

²³² Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine, *Heavy Metal*, 131.

marginal success, but it was not until the 1987 album *Scream Bloody Gore* that Death would become a new subgenre of Metal known as Death Metal. Death metal is known for its fast and aggressive guitar riffs. The guitar work often includes tremolo picking, palm muting, and intricate technical patterns. Distorted and heavily down-tuned guitars contribute to the genre's intense sound. Death Metal vocals often feature deep, guttural growls or low-pitched grunts. This vocal style is one of the most defining characteristics of the genre and is often used to convey aggressive and intense emotions. Drummers in Death Metal bands often employ complex and fast-paced drumming techniques.²³³ This style includes rapid double bass pedal work, blast beats, and intricate fills. The drumming style adds to the overall intensity and technicality of the music. This style or technique is called a "blast beat." The blast beat is where the drummer alternates rapidly between the snare drum and bass drum. This technique is an evolution of the traditional double-kick drumbeat produced by Motorhead years prior, and other extreme Metal genres integrated it as a staple.²³⁴

Death frontman Chuck Schuldiner's approach to guitar playing and songwriting and his use of growling vocals helped define the characteristics of Death Metal.²³⁵ Throughout Death's discography, Schuldiner led the band through various musical phases, showcasing an evolution in sound and style. Schuldiner's approach to lyricism set Death apart. While Death Metal often explores dark and brutal themes, Schuldiner incorporated more thoughtful and nightmarishly transcendental elements into his lyrics, addressing topics such as the human condition, spirituality, and philosophical reflections. Often conflated as thrash, Death Metal deals with horrifying depictions of war and gore. These topics explore previously taboo issues that clashed

²³³ Grand et al., *The Death Metal Bible*, 38.

²³⁴ Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 97.

²³⁵ Grand et al., *The Death Metal Bible*, 23.

with the conservative resurgence of the 1980s. The rise of Death Metal coincided with the broader cultural phenomenon of moral panic surrounding music lyrics and imagery. Bands faced censorship and backlash from authorities, religious groups, and parents' organizations who deemed their music to be offensive or harmful. This resistance to censorship and the defense of artistic freedom became a rallying point for Death Metal artists and fans, aligning the genre with broader debates about freedom of expression and censorship in the 1980s.²³⁶

Death Metal increasingly incorporated the more horrific realities of the Cold War, with events such as the Russian invasion of Afghanistan that took a turn for the worse for the Russians in the late 1980s. The most notorious Death Metal band is undoubtedly Cannibal Corpse who aimed to reflect on these occurrences. Their songs, such as "Hammer Smashed Face" and "A Skull Full of Maggots," deal with very visceral body horror and grotesque depictions of murder and death. The band is notorious for its graphic and controversial lyrics, often exploring violence, gore, and horror themes.²³⁷ While the explicit nature of their lyrics has sparked controversy and even led to bans in certain countries, it has also become a defining feature of their image and contributed to the shock value associated with Death Metal. The band's album artwork, often created by artist Vincent Locke, is iconic in the Metal world. Some albums show images of aborted fetuses ripped from their wombs or eviscerated human remains. The gruesome and detailed artwork has become synonymous with Cannibal Corpse's aesthetic and has contributed to the band's visual identity.²³⁸

²³⁶ DEATH - "Pull the Plug - Remastered" Official Track, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_duhhVa-dk8.

²³⁷ Cannibal Corpse - Hammer Smashed Face (OFFICIAL), 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIgiWBCbCJk>.

²³⁸ MetalSucks, "Paul Mazurkiewicz Ranks Cannibal Corpse Album Covers From Least to Most Disgusting," MetalSucks, March 2, 2021, <https://www.metalsucks.net/2021/03/02/paul-mazurkiewicz-ranks-cannibal-corpse-album-covers-from-least-to-most-disgusting/>.



Figure 17. (Left) Vincent Locke's artwork for Cannibal Corpse's 1991 album 'Butchered at Birth' and (Right) Cannibal Corpse's 1992 Album 'Tomb of the Mutilated'. Locke, Vince. 15 Album Artworks from 1990. October 16, 2021. Album Cover. <https://www.pickledpriest.com/single-post/album-cover-story-4-cannibal-corpse-s-unholy-alliance-with-artist-vincent-locke>.

Metal's growing intensity and dark themes stem from the desire to break away from the glamor of mainstream Metal and other music forms. Metal bands possess an almost "need" to "out evil" previous bands to gain more notoriety – equivalent to free publicity for up-and-coming independent or underground-supported bands. This push within Metal, however, also spoke to a feeling of growing nihilism that spawned in the latter half of the 1980s.²³⁹ The emptiness of consumerism mixed with the shabby and feigned image of a renewed nuclear family fell upon deaf ears in the Metal community. These people did not come from affluent backgrounds according to Malcolm Dome, who said younger Metalheads of this time wanted “straight, undiluted Heavy Metal.” That was not their lives, nor did it reflect any reality felt by many of them. They came from places that were isolated, or as Corey Taylor who grew up during this period stated “places where people would rather kill themselves than use their imaginations, places where churches outnumber people, places where the cemetery is the only place where there is anything to do. Also, the continually heating tension between Russia and the United

²³⁹ “The 31 Scariest Metal Album Covers All Time,” accessed August 1, 2023, <https://loudwire.com/scariest-metal-album-covers/>.

States did nothing to abate these feelings of dread and increasing fascination with death as it would appear to be impending ever more rapidly alongside these same tensions.²⁴⁰

Moral darkness and nihilistic viewpoints were slowly subsuming the Heavy Metal genre as an extension of the waning Cold War. It was no longer about fighting dragons or getting girls but fermenting anxieties about death, murder, and hell. Metal was beginning to be truly terrifying in a genuine and tangible sense. It seemed to threaten or at least call into question the values of the of the Western world. Heavy Metal received more backlash for being an “unnecessary and immoral distraction” from both the Soviet Union and the United States.²⁴¹ The stomping out of any form of dissension took place lest it make the West appear weak or disintegrating. Death and Black Metal (more on Black Metal later) were turning the public opinion of Metal that it was legitimately dangerous for singing about serial killers and Satan. President Ronald Reagan's enthusiasm and optimism had waned in favor of feelings of impending doom at the close of the Cold War, which was an ironic concern due to the West being on the verge of victory.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ (2001) *Decline of Hair Metal Bands in the Early 90s*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipydKP4zr-M>.

²⁴¹ *The War On Heavy Metal In The '80s*.

²⁴² (2001) *Decline of Hair Metal Bands in the Early 90s*.

CHAPTER 3: THE 90s

Heavy Metal was splintering and imploding on itself, and the 1990s would only worsen this issue for the genre. Capitalist greed created a creatively bankrupt atmosphere for artists. It started a wave of new Heavy Metal subgenres who felt deprived of expression that accurately reflected the opinions and experiences of both them and their fans during the Cold War.²⁴³ In attempting to regain originality and integrity, however, these new Heavy Metal factions estranged their audiences by going to darker, heavier places with their music that was less about fun and rebellious antics and more about death and decay. Heavy Metal always garnered controversy, with the odd accusation of misdoings of influence through their lyrics, written off as the grumblings of older adults trying to control the younger generation.²⁴⁴ These were largely speculation and curmudgeonly murmurs of the “moral majority” and overly concerned parents through the prior decades. However, the 1990s would make these concerns a very tangible reality for Heavy Metal, with bands involved in several murders, hate groups, and arsons.²⁴⁵ Heavy Metal’s competition for rock n’ roll counterculture dominance would also resume with the emergence of the new zeitgeist of Grunge music that resonated deeply with the post-Cold War world. To make matters worse, Heavy Metal attempted to regain its position in rock n’ roll pop culture by blending with other genres, including Hip-Hop and Techno, which did not appeal to mass audiences or die-hard fans. However, an event at the end of the Cold War inspired this thesis and acts as a capstone to Heavy Metal’s legacy during the Cold War.²⁴⁶

On September 28, 1991, just a few months before the official dissolution of the Soviet

²⁴³ Brian Slagel, Mark Eglinton, and Lars Ulrich, *For The Sake of Heaviness: The History of Metal Blade Records*, 1st edition (BMG Books, 2017), 201, 207.

²⁴⁴ Robert McParland, *Myth and Magic in Heavy Metal Music* (McFarland, 2018), 201, 208–9.

²⁴⁵ Dayal Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, Illustrated edition (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2014), 201–4.

²⁴⁶ Christie, *Sound of the Beast*, 407–10.

Union, a concert called Monsters of Rock took place in Moscow, the capital of the soon to be former Soviet Union. The headlining bands were AC/DC, Metallica, and Pantera, who would play in front of an audience of 1.6 million fans. KGB officers and Soviet military personnel policed the event who were at odds with the attendees, did not understand their zeal and excitement, and thought it to be a riot.²⁴⁷ The interviewed Soviet security policing the event said that the mosh pits and slam dancing were the cause of this confusion. This gross misunderstanding came from the fact that Russians who were willingly or unwillingly cut off from the West had no concept of what a mosh pit was. Most of the security looked horrified at the unruly and intoxicated crowd. Some of the guards, however, removed their uniforms and joined in with the festivities, making the concert a groundbreaking moment of rock n' roll. The concert was a watershed moment to rival the fall of the Berlin Wall, showcasing the West breaking through to the East in a moment of victory. To top it off, Metallica performed their hit song "Harvester of Sorrow," which directly references the state-induced famine of the 1920s placed upon Ukraine by the Soviet Union as an ultimate show of defiance and contempt for this once robust regime.²⁴⁸



²⁴⁷ Pantera - *Cowboys From Hell (Live, Moscow '91) [HD]*, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgOyXKanKHc>.

²⁴⁸ Metallica - *Harvester Of Sorrow - Live in Moscow, Russia (1991) [Pro-Shot]*, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R22xm1PTBL8>.

Figure 18. Left: Soviet riot security detaining an attendee at the Monsters of Rock concert, Moscow, 1991. Riot Police Arrest a Monsters of Rock Concertgoer. September 28, 1991. <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2021/10/14/30-years-since-moscow-s-monsters-of-rock>. Right: Metallica performing 'Harvester of Sorrow' with Soviet security helicopter in background, at Monsters of Rock, Moscow, 1991. Young, Simon. Watch Metallica Play To 1.6 Million Russian Fans In This... | Kerrang! Photograph. Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.kerrang.com/watch-metallica-play-to-1-6-million-russian-fans-in-this-1991-footage>.

The Monsters of Rock 1991 Moscow Concert marked a dramatic shift in Metal's geopolitical standing. What should have been a moment hinting that Heavy Metal might be in the vanguard of repairing Soviet and American relations, at least culturally.²⁴⁹ This musical mending would not come to pass however, due to reasons that would reveal themselves as the decade went on. Heavy Metal was already suffering from a decline in creativity and reputation brought on by the bloated excesses of Glam Metal in the 1980s. Its authenticity was now being questioned more scrupulously by critics and fans.²⁵⁰ The 1990s was an incredibly turbulent soundscape. In the late eighties, the Cold War was seemingly coming to an end as the Soviet Union visibly collapsed in on itself with its military failures in Afghanistan. Meanwhile the Chernobyl power plant disaster focused critique against the regime, as President Mikhail Gorbachev increasingly democratized his administration. These changes forced Heavy Metal, as much as the rest of the world, to reconcile with these realities. While the Cold War overall was a period of uncertainty, the 90s ushered in new questions as the "game," so to speak, had changed.²⁵¹ What identity remained for those who had tied their own so closely to the ideologies of that conflict? Had the West indeed won? What did people in both the West and the old Eastern Bloc believe in anymore? Values seem poised to shift as the notion of "peace" was a foreign one that would take time to manifest. The West's influence now was to be almost all-consuming in regions Western Nations (primarily the United States) had previously yet to have access to.

²⁴⁹ Lars Ulrich: *Moscow 1991 Is a "Mindf**k" Of A Concert To Watch | Conan O'Brien Needs A Friend*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9VqEXbEsto>.

²⁵⁰ O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 191.

²⁵¹ Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War: 1985-1991*, First Edition (New York: PublicAffairs, 2015), 210–11, 215.

Heavy Metal had to navigate these inquiries as its creative direction became obsolete and aimless in the cultural and political shift of the post-Cold War world.²⁵² As foreign relations shifted away from superpower competition, listeners' desire for the intense competition that characterized Heavy Metal culture waned in the face of ideologically anti-competitive Grunge Rock.²⁵³

The significance of this cultural moment cannot be overstated. Metallica, an American band that represented the country's success and bravado at that time, was at the height of popularity when it performed in Moscow, essentially playing the funeral dirge of the Soviet Union, the United States' former archenemy. The fact that MTV, a Western media company, had a presence to record the event or interview its attendees speaks to the barriers of communication that had been broken down from 1989-1991. The hordes of Russian Metal fans that attended this concert demonstrated the ultimate victory of the underground resistance to Soviet cultural pressures, as their country celebrated the symbolic liberation from the oppression of the Soviet Union with an American band.²⁵⁴ While McDonalds and blue jeans had made their way into Russia through the thawing of Soviet Cold War policies, Heavy Metal music was another public "invasion" of the USSR, and in the final days of the Soviet Union, there was nothing that authorities were willing to do to stop it.²⁵⁵ What had once been an underground or pirated genre was now playing for millions to hear on live, open air. The large number of former Soviet citizens who attended the concert reveals a hidden feature of the Cold War's culture that was

²⁵² Gentry, *What Will I Be*, 182.

²⁵³ Mark Yarm, *Everybody Loves Our Town: An Oral History of Grunge*, 2.12.2012 edition (New York: Crown, 2012), 92.

²⁵⁴ Bill Keller and Special To the New York Times, "FOR SOVIET ROCK MUSICIANS, GLASNOST IS ANGST," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1987, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/09/arts/for-soviet-rock-musicians-glasnost-is-angst.html>.

²⁵⁵ *McDonald's Opens in Hungry Moscow, but Costs Half-a-Day's Wages for Lunch*, 1990, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckbfS99N6jY>.

never widely reported. Soviet representatives dismissed the Heavy Metal subculture, seeing it as "perversion" or "hooliganism," which is in direct parallel to the United States' excoriation and attempted censorship of not just the music but the fans as well. Unlike in the United States, however, Heavy Metal was never a specific or explicit issue in the USSR, but rather was lumped together with jeans and McDonalds as another act of Western capitalist subversion.²⁵⁶

Two policies by President Gorbachev's administration directly benefited the popularization and spread of Heavy Metal in the Soviet Union. The first was "perestroika" or "restructure." This attempt to reform the Soviet economy was manifested by introducing elements of market socialism and decentralization. The policy sought to modernize and improve the Soviet economy, suffering from inefficiency, stagnation, and corruption. Perestroika aimed to increase productivity, encourage innovation, and create a more flexible economic system to respond to the changing global landscape.²⁵⁷ This new flexibility meant more Western music, including Heavy Metal, became accessible to Soviet citizens through legal and illegal channels.²⁵⁸ With fewer restrictions on cultural imports, Soviet Metal fans had access to a wider variety of music, influencing tastes and inspiring local musicians. The distribution of Western music meant that Metal found a wider audience within the Soviet Union, creating more international revenue streams that were once verboten or limited.²⁵⁹

The second policy was that of "glasnost." This "openness" or "transparency" was

²⁵⁶ Boris Von Faust, "Let There Be Rock: 'Western' Heavy Metal in Soviet Press and Public Opinion during the Soviet Union's Final Decade," *Metal Music Studies* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 377–94.

²⁵⁷ Michael MccGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security* (Brookings Institution Press, 1991), 91–96, https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/perestroika-and-soviet-national-security_michael-mccgwire_michael-mccgwire/1794448/.

²⁵⁸ Matt Potter, *The Outlaws Inc.: Under the Radar and on the Black Market with the World's Most Dangerous Smugglers*, Complete Numbers Starting with 1, 1st Ed edition (Bloomsbury USA, 2011), 78.

²⁵⁹ Ed A. Hewett and Victor H. Winston, eds., *Milestones in Glasnost and Perestroika: Politics and People* (Washington/D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1991), 120.

Gorbachev's policy of political openness, aimed at increasing transparency, public participation, and freedom of expression within the Soviet Union, especially in the realm of music. Overall, glasnost played a crucial role in fostering a more dynamic and vibrant music scene in the Soviet Union. Glasnost also led to an increase in live music performances and cultural events.

Musicians were able to perform in public spaces and venues without as much fear of government reprisal, allowing them to connect with audiences and share their music more freely. Glasnost relaxed censorship and allowed greater freedom of speech, press, and assembly. It encouraged public discussion and debate on political, social, and cultural issues. The policy addressed bureaucracy and oppression by fostering public accountability and encouraging citizens to participate in politics.²⁶⁰ The lack of censorship in favor of open discourse and expression directly affected Metal's presence in the Soviet Union by making it a readily available and now decriminalized form of expression. Glasnost encouraged artistic freedom and encouraged musicians to explore new sounds, styles, and approaches to music.²⁶¹ The search for novelty fits in well with Heavy Metal's non-conformist sensibility. Heavy Metal bands in the Soviet Union felt empowered to push boundaries, experiment with different genres and influences, and create music that reflected their unique perspectives and experiences from generations of oppression, which translated very well into Heavy Metal's aggressive and conscious style of music.²⁶²

Metal has been popular in Europe since its inception, beginning in England, but it historically played a significantly different role in Eastern Europe. Most of the leadership of Soviet-occupied Europe viewed Metal as Western and, therefore, a tool of the enemy to corrupt

²⁶⁰ Stephen F. Cohen, *Voices of Glasnost: Interviews With Gorbachev's Reformers* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 100, https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/voices-of-glasnost-interviews-with-gorbachevs-reformers_stephen-f-cohen_katrina-vanden-heuvel/742140/.

²⁶¹ Caryl Emerson, "Glasnost' in Russian Music: The Musorgsky Jubilee during a Time of Trouble," *Slavic Review* 51, no. 3 (October 1992): 544–56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2500061>.

²⁶² Watts, "Nothin' But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s," 202.

minds into taking capitalistic views.²⁶³ Bands such as Motorhead, the Scorpions (a band from West Germany), and others circumvented this issue by playing in relatively liberal Soviet-allied countries such as Poland or Eastern Germany, where Soviet Metal fans could make the trip to see the bands live.²⁶⁴ For many Eastern European listeners, Metal was an escape from the oppressive reality of the Soviet Union and a symbol of freedom from its control. While there is no recorded quote from Eastern European fans, they expressed their love for the music primarily through graffiti. The logos for KISS and AC/DC were spray painted across the Soviet Union, with one instance of it even being blasted onto the headquarters for the Politburo. The Soviet media responded to this by calling Heavy Metal, “Unoriginal and ugly...and it echoes the violence of the Nazi Party.”²⁶⁵ Many Eastern European bands started secretly and performed underground shows in defiance of the constraining government. Some, such as Kruiz, Master, and Ariya, saw limited success through the 80s by navigating the laws placed on music distribution. Ariya and Master coheadlined the Russian national tour in 1988.²⁶⁶

The Cold War black market in the Soviet Union emerged as a resilient underground economy, characterized by clandestine exchanges of goods, currency, and information, navigating the constraints of communist ideology and state control. Heavy Metal music became an element of this Soviet shadow economy, as tape trading and word-of-mouth marketing that had worked wonders in the West worked doubly well in the East as it was one of the only ways to discover new music. Pirate radio stations smuggling Western music into the Soviet Union

²⁶³ L. D. Anderson, *Underground: Life and Survival in the Russian Black Market: A Memoir* (iUniverse, 2008), 80.

²⁶⁴ Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, 88.

²⁶⁵ Faust, “Let There Be Rock.”

²⁶⁶ Joanna Stingray and Madison Stingray, *Red Wave: An American in the Soviet Music Underground* (Los Angeles California: DoppelHouse Press, 2020), 198.

since the beginning of the Cold War also played Heavy Metal.²⁶⁷ It paralleled the tape trading scene of the United States but carried far more risk potential, such as prison time for crimes of "smuggling contraband." A Metal black market (not to be confused with the Black Metal market) was also present, dealing in records, merchandise, and magazines.²⁶⁸ Testimonies of Heavy Metal fans stated that they would order the music they could get from hardware catalogs and have it shipped to these underground markets for future purchase and pickup.²⁶⁹ Aleks Alekperov stated that, "I had already fallen in love with western rock, and when the stores wouldn't give me that stuff...I had to order it for import. There was only one record company [in the Soviet Union] called Melodydia, and it was run by the Ministry of Culture."²⁷⁰ Metal records were precious to these Soviet fans as they were incredibly difficult to obtain given their lack of legality. This band worship produced a loyalty out of the Soviet fans that was even stronger and tangible than their Western counterparts due to the risk of imprisonment or even violence due to their fandom. As the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s, and early 1990s, Soviet Metalheads' resistance to cultural conformity became more active and emboldened. Bands were no longer afraid to conduct concerts, and citizens who enjoyed Heavy Metal began to display t-shirts, patches, and other Metal articles of clothing.²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ R. Eugene Parta, *Under the Radar: Tracking Western Radio Listeners in the Soviet Union* (Budapest New York: Central European University Press, 2022), 222.

²⁶⁸ Mazierska, *Popular Music in Eastern Europe*, 218.

²⁶⁹ Stingray and Stingray, *Red Wave*, 200–202.

²⁷⁰ Andrew Friedman, I ran the official record store of Soviet Azerbaijan, March 19, 2016, <https://www.factmag.com/2016/03/19/i-ran-the-official-record-store-soviet-azerbaijan/>.

²⁷¹ Anderson, *Underground*, 182.



Figure 19. Aleks Alekperov's record store in Soviet Azerbaijan, 1982. Ediriwira, Amar. *Aleks Alekperov's Soviet Record Store*. September 3, 2016. <https://thevinylfactory.com/features/i-ran-the-official-record-store-of-soviet-azerbaijan/>.

The West's victory in the Cold War established Western culture as hegemonic, ironically removing the last traces of subversiveness associated with Western popular culture; the ultimate victory of Western culture ironically led to the demise of many cultural forms that positioned themselves as “edgy” – on the margins of acceptability.²⁷² Throughout the Cold War, the United States defined itself in opposition to the Soviet Union and communism. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant the disappearance of this clear external threat, leaving the U.S. without a unifying enemy to define itself against. This loss of a common adversary raised questions about America's purpose and identity in the post-Cold War world. The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of globalization and multipolarity, with emerging powers challenging America's status as the sole superpower. The post-Cold War period saw significant economic and social transformations within the United States.²⁷³ Transnational politics, technological advancements, and neoliberal economic policies led to economic restructuring, deindustrialization, and

²⁷² Titus Hjelm, Keith Kahn-Harris, and Mark LeVine, *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Counterculture*, Illustrated edition (Sheffield, UK Bristol, CT: Equinox Publishing, 2013), 186.

²⁷³ Engelhardt, *The End Of Victory Culture*, 301–3.

widening income inequality. The end of the Cold War coincided with the rise of identity politics and cultural fragmentation within American society. Debates over race, gender, sexuality, immigration, and multiculturalism intensified, highlighting deep divisions and tensions within the country. These divisions provided openings for Metal, but also marginalized the music as a whole. In the absence of a clear existential threat, the United States faced challenges in defining its foreign policy objectives and interventions.²⁷⁴ Debates over humanitarian interventions, nation-building efforts, and the use of military force abroad highlighted the complexities of America's role as a global leader and the limits of its power to shape world events. As a genre originating from and associated with the West, Heavy Metal music culture felt the effects of this dilemma as it took on new interpretations and genres that reflected this groundbreaking shift.²⁷⁵

After the end of the Cold War, crises of identity and culture were not limited to the United States and the Soviet Union. The border countries of east and west were the epitome breeding grounds for radicalism both in the forms of western liberalism and eastern authoritarianism. The end of the Cold War ushered in a new era of increased Western influence across the globe, characterized by the spread of democratic ideals, capitalist economic systems, and cultural globalization to circumvent and double down on outmoded American ideals of identity. This Western hegemonic influence was felt across Europe with the spread of American cultural globalization such as the introduction of fast food and other enterprises that had not been there before.²⁷⁶ In Scandinavia, once the literal borderland outpost between the capitalist West and the Soviet Union, Heavy Metal became popular not as a passive form of countercultural resistance but as a tool to disseminate radical ideology to this increase of Western influence.

²⁷⁴ Service, *The End of the Cold War*, 499.

²⁷⁵ Perlstein, *Reaganland*, 1087.

²⁷⁶ Niskanen, *Reaganomics*, 302.

Especially in Norway and Sweden, the bands that arose from this scene felt that Metal bands of the West had not taken their message far enough, claiming they were "posers" or "cowards" for not putting their songs into practice either through violence or self-harm.²⁷⁷ The genre that spawned from this sentiment would be known as Black Metal, the darkest and most extreme of all Metal subgenres. Black Metal was a direct response to Western ideological imperialist thought, as it sought to actively return Scandinavia to its pagan, archaic past through music.²⁷⁸

Black Metal was a resistance to two Cold War Western initiatives: Western Christianization and American consumer culture. Brands such as Walmart and McDonalds threatened to replace Scandinavia's indigenous industry, culture, and religion. Varg Vikernes of Black Metal bands Mayhem and Burzum remarked that, "My friends and I would sometimes get on bikes and ride down to Oslo or Bergen and shoot at McDonalds and the customers inside. It's poison."²⁷⁹ Black Metal began in the 1980s with an English band called Venom and as a genre creates an eerie layer of atmosphere with little value given to production quality or auditory appeal. The droning vocals explicitly promote satanism and anti-Christian and anti-authoritarian sentiments.²⁸⁰ Poland's Behemoth wrote a song titled, "Christians to the Lions," which celebrates the ancient Rome practice in which Christians were fed, sacrificed, and martyred in the Colosseum by being offered to lions and other predatory animals. Black Metal rebelled against the idea of having morals or politics seen as foreign and threatening imposed on their local culture. The Cold War was a massive exchange and eventual conquest of ideas, morals, and politics with which Central Europe was the battleground. Scandinavia has a long history of

²⁷⁷ Ika Johannesson and Jon Jefferson Klingberg, *Blood, Fire, Death: The Swedish Metal Story* (Feral House, 2018), 17–18.

²⁷⁸ Patterson, *Black Metal*, 13–14.

²⁷⁹ *Until the Light Takes Us - Varg Vikernes (Burzum) Interview* (中文字幕), 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=314w6-bEBpw>.

²⁸⁰ Christe, *Sound of the Beast*, 107.

resisting outsider influence, going as far back as the Viking age violently rebuking the introduction of Christianity.²⁸¹

For Scandinavian Metalheads, the rise of Western influence was just another invader that the more zealous and traditional youth of that time saw fit to strike down with not only their music but actions as well. If Death Metal took Metal to its heaviest conclusion, Black Metal with its blast beats and Ring Wraith screaming rather than singing, took it to its darkest. Building off Swedish band Bathory, a swathe of Norwegian and other Scandinavian Black Metal bands such as Mayhem, Celtic Frost, Immortal, and Gorgoroth began in the early 1990s. More so than earlier Black Metal bands, the Scandinavian bands' militancy was more at the forefront of their music. Some bands took on a neo-Volkisch ideology that saw Christianity and Westernism threatening their Scandinavian culture and traditions by replacing them and their memory. The United States' apparent victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War worsened Black Metal's fears of Western subsuming Scandinavian culture. There was now no reason for the West to stop increasing its influence in places such as Scandinavia, Germany, and Eastern Europe which was being embraced especially in the countries that had endured the most oppression at the hands of the Soviets. To combat this shift, Black Metal used a message of Satanism, death, and evil that were no longer passive subtleties or tongue-in-cheek jokes. The message was now explicitly displayed on the album sleeves and stated clearly (albeit not sonically clearly) through the lyrics.²⁸² For example, Mayhem's song "Pure Fucking Armageddon" proclaims, "Violent torture, Death has arrived, Armageddon, Terror and fright, Stinking corpses, Rotting decay, Anarchy, Antichrist, Violent torture, Lucifer, Pure Fucking Armageddon." The end of the Cold War

²⁸¹ *Metal*.

²⁸² Patterson, *Black Metal*, 213–14.

worsened their neo-fascist concerns about the dissolution of their culture. While previous Metal subgenres may have been seen as violent, dangerous, or Satanic, Black Metal actively sought to go far beyond mere perceptions by turning lyrics into action.²⁸³



Figure 20. Per "Dead" Olin wearing Black Metal "corpse" paint while performing with Mayhem live in Leipzig, 1990. Lahtinen, Luxi. Tribute to Per Yngve Ohlin Aka "Dead." Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.metalcrypt.com/pages/interviews.php?intid=731>.

Words were no longer enough for the hyperbolicity of Black metal. The post-Cold War climate created a feeling that extremism was necessary to establish one's identity in Heavy Metal. This extremity though would go too far to the point of real-world violence, forever tarnishing Heavy Metal's reputation. Church burnings were a staple of Black Metal in the early 1990s. The church burnings were part of a broader wave of controversial and sometimes criminal activities associated with individuals and bands within the Norwegian Black Metal scene. Some of the most notorious incidents include the burning of the historic Fantoft Stave Church in Bergen in 1992 and the Holmenkollen Chapel in Oslo in 1992.²⁸⁴ These acts of arson caused significant damage to these historic buildings and sparked outrage and controversy both within

²⁸³ *Pure Fucking Armageddon (Live in Leipzig, 1990)*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTwCOw6wxcw>.

²⁸⁴ *Fantoft Stavkirke - Stave Church Bergen Norway*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYJ6H2kKbFE>.

Norway and internationally. What should be noted is that these Stave churches were originally built upon Viking burial sites and temples to “cleanse” them of pagan influence. One of the justifications given by Varg Vikernes is, “The Christians had no respect for my culture, so I showed disrespect to theirs.”²⁸⁵ Many of the musicians involved in the early Norwegian Black Metal scene were outspoken in their rejection of Christianity, which they saw as a foreign, oppressive influence on Norwegian culture. Black Metal extremists saw burning churches as symbolically rejecting Christianity and striking back against what they perceived as an unwanted cultural imposition.²⁸⁶ Both "Varg" Christian Vikernes of Burzum and Mayhem (or Count Grishnackh in some circles of the Black Metal scene) and Gaahl (Kristian Espedal) of Gorgoroth held the sentiment that Christianity was a "foreign Jewish disease" and that "every trace of it must be stamped out and erased."²⁸⁷



Figure 21. The Fantoft Stave Church burning carried out by Varg Vikernes, reported by Bergen News Channel 12, June 6, 1992. Ristesund, Arne. Fantoft Stavkyrkje Burns (Norwegian Church Arson 1992) Photos & Video. June 6, 1992. <https://todestrieb.co.uk/blogs/daily-noise/25-years-ago-fantoft-stavkyrkje-burns-norwegian-church-arson-1992-photos-video>.

Mayhem, Black Metal's most notorious group, publicly claimed to have a hand in these arsons. They desired this notoriety to build credibility for the authenticity and commitment to

²⁸⁵ *Until the Light Takes Us - Varg Vikernes (Burzum) Interview (中文字幕).*

²⁸⁶ *Until the Light Takes Us - Varg Vikernes (Burzum) Interview (中文字幕).*

²⁸⁷ *True Norwegian Black Metal | VICE, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32iX5lbVDto>.*

Black Metal ideology, along with perhaps boosting record sales with the publicity. While Mayhem's founder and lead vocalist Euronymous (Øystein Aarseth) only claimed as much for publicity for his band, Mayhem. Fellow member Varg Vikernes claimed Euronymous played no such part in the arsons and that only himself (Vikernes) burned the churches.²⁸⁸ The mutual dislike between Vikernes and Aarseth that had formed over their ideas and commitment to the Black Metal movement came to a head when Vikernes murdered Euronymous in August 1993 in his apartment by stabbing him multiple times. The exact motivations behind Euronymous's murder are still subject to speculation and debate. Some accounts suggest that the killing was the result of a personal dispute and power struggle between Euronymous and Vikernes. In contrast, others attribute it to ideological differences within the Norwegian Black Metal scene.²⁸⁹ Vikernes was arrested and charged with Euronymous's murder shortly after the crime. He was convicted and sentenced to 21 years in prison in 1994, the maximum sentence under Norwegian law. He was released from prison in 2009 after serving 16 years.²⁹⁰ The murder of Euronymous and its aftermath had a profound impact on the Norwegian Black Metal scene and its perception in the broader music community. It further solidified the genre's association with controversy, violence, and extremism, and it brought increased scrutiny to its participants. There is also a rumor started by both Varg and fellow Mayhem member Necrobutcher (Jørn Stubberud) that halfway through the incident, Varg poured and drank a glass of milk to typify his unfeelingness towards the matter.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ DARYA, "The Murder of Euronymous: A Critical Analysis Of Varg Vikernes," *Miss Mephistopheles* (blog), December 10, 2019, <https://missmephistopheles.wordpress.com/2019/12/10/euronymous-and-varg-vikernes/>.

²⁸⁹ *Varg Talks About The Murder Of Euronymous*, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDJh_k4quqw.

²⁹⁰ *Vikernes Sentence... and a Smile for the Camera*, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqMZrMx6mkM>.

²⁹¹ "Mayhem's Necrobutcher: I Was On My Way To Kill Euronymous Myself," *Kerrang!*, October 16, 2019, <https://www.kerrang.com/mayhems-necrobutcher-i-was-on-my-way-to-kill-euronymous-myself/>.



Figure 22. Varg Vikernes smirking at news coverage after sentencing in Oslo, 1994. Arne, Hans. "Norway's Most Notorious Musician to Be Released from Prison." *The Guardian*, March 11, 2009, sec. Music. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/mar/11/norwegian-black-metal-varg-vikernes>.

Black Metal felt the ramifications of some of the more progressive sexual liberation and awakenings that took place over the course of the Cold War. Black Metal typically took on a nihilistic view on sexuality as it was another meaningless point of life, so casual sex was tolerated but not celebrated as in Glam Metal. Some of the more militant Black Metal artists such as Varg Vikernes took a harder stance on sex stating, "Loose sex is a good way to catch diseases. You should respect yourself more."²⁹² Black Metal dealt with this in a rather violent way with another murder linked to Black Metal ideology. Faust, whose real name is Bård Eithun, was the drummer for Emperor during the early 1990s. In 1992, Faust was involved in the murder of Magne Andreassen, a homosexual man, in Lillehammer, Norway, whom Faust claimed made unwanted sexual advances on him in a park in Norway.²⁹³ The murder was reportedly motivated by Faust's homophobic beliefs. Faust confessed to the murder in 1993 and was sentenced to 14 years in prison. He served his sentence and was released in 2003. Following his release, Faust

²⁹² *Until the Light Takes Us - Varg Vikernes (Burzum) Interview* (中文字幕).

²⁹³ Patterson, *Black Metal*, 266.

continued his involvement in the music industry, albeit with considerably less prominence.²⁹⁴

Although not all Black Metal bands went to this extreme, even the ones who didn't commit crimes incorporated these themes into their live shows, demonstrating the centrality of rejecting Western Judeo-Christian values to Metal culture at the end of the Cold War. It should be noted that these groups are picking and choosing which aspects of both Viking religion and Christian religion they are responding to. They are reacting against a very Western and American version of Christianity involving meritocracy and militant evangelism. Fascist Black Metal bands derive their understanding of Jewish religion and culture from figures such as Adolf Hitler or Carl Schmitt. "I read *Mein Kampf*," Viekernel said, "While I was in prison. I don't agree with everything he said, but the Jew certainly plays a role in bringing societies down by using ideas like communism, liberalism, and Christianity to do so. They are culture destroyers just like Christians. They erase the culture wherever they go." These neo-pagans willfully misinterpret or ignore some of the more nonconservative teachings found in Heathenism and Asatru religion. For example, the god of mischief Loki, has a very loose gender identity and sexuality. This contradicts some of Black Metal's more traditionally strict viewpoints.

Although Gorgoroth and Behemoth did not actively participate in actions such as church burnings, their stage shows were at the root of several controversies. In 2004, Gorgoroth performed a concert in, Warsaw, Poland that featured controversial elements such as mock crucifixions incorporating nude models (some of which passed out from suffocation due to the burlap sacks over their heads) and sheep heads on stakes.²⁹⁵ The performance led to a criminal

²⁹⁴ "Why Is The Convicted Murderer Of A Gay Man Being Celebrated At A Major Metal Festival?," accessed February 18, 2024, <https://www.vh1.com/news/afgpnw/bard-faust-eithun-martyrdoom-controversy>.

²⁹⁵ *GORGOROTH - Black Mass [FULL CONCERT] 2004 - Krakow.*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr-O1Ds0Pec>.

investigation and legal proceedings against the band members and the concert's organizers. In 2007, the band's lead guitarist, Infernus, was found guilty of religious offense and fined by a Polish court. When asked what his defense or inspiration for these actions was, Gaahl chillingly replied, "Satan."²⁹⁶ Gaahl in 2005 was sentenced to 14 months in prison for imprisoning a 41-year-old man in his home after a party, while forcing him to drink his own blood in 2002. Gaahl claimed that the man was “disrespectful” and “needed to be taught some manners” to explain his actions. When questioned by the Gulating Court about what inspired Gaahl to commit such an act, Gaahl replied “the tenants of Satanism require that if a guest oversteps in my home, I am required to retaliate.”

Several Behemoth albums have been censored and banned in various countries due to their controversial content. Their 2014 album "The Satanist" was delayed in Russia due to concerns over its blasphemous themes and artwork. The cover art for their 2009 album "Evangelion" faced legal challenges in Poland and was deemed offensive by conservative groups. Both records portray Lucifer as a “light bringer” or “liberator” which is intended by the band to insult and question Christian and Islamic canon.²⁹⁷ Behemoth's ban from performing live in several countries for political or religious reasons spread to countries such as Poland, Russia, and various Islamic countries.²⁹⁸ The controversy surrounding Behemoth and other Black Metal groups shows that while movements like Black Metal were one interpretation of a post-Cold War identity or value system, much of the world, East and West, were still clinging to political

²⁹⁶ *Metal*.

²⁹⁷ Michael Hann, “Nergal: The Extreme Metal Musician Fighting Poland’s Blasphemy Laws,” *The Guardian*, March 18, 2021, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/mar/18/nergal-the-extreme-metal-musician-fighting-poland-blasphemy-laws>.

²⁹⁸ Guardian music, “Controversial Metal Band Behemoth Ordered to Leave Russia,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 2014, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/may/22/behemoth-ordered-leave-russia-metal>.

hegemony and traditional, conservative moral uniformity.²⁹⁹



Figure 23. Left: "Ghaal" Kristian Espedal of Gorgoroth adorning Black Metal attire outside Oslo. Beste, Peter. Gaahl in Corpse Paint. April 11, 2008. Photograph. <https://www.cadnauseam.com/2008/04/11/gaahls-tr00-life-adventures-week-1/>. Right: Gorgoroth performing during their infamous Warsaw concert, 2004. Stefan, Stoian Andrei. Concert Gorgoroth Live. Photograph. Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/concert-gorgoroth-live--411023903461898792/>.

The range of extremism in Black Metal varies wildly. Some artists like Abbath and Cradle of Filth maintained the image and ideology of Black Metal, at least intellectually, without succumbing to criminality but at the same time did not decry or oppose their peers' involvement either. Olve Eikemo (Abbath) of Immortal and Abbath fame pragmatically claimed that he saw no point in engaging in politics or church burnings, stating, "If you burn a church, the government will just rebuild it and use our taxes to pay for it."³⁰⁰ So, there are two camps of nihilists within Black Metal, the first being the militantly satanic and pagan, and the other being passively critical of Western and Christian hegemony but pragmatic enough to maintain a music career without facing jail time for criminal acts, like Abbath.³⁰¹

Black Metal remains one of the more lasting subgenres of Heavy Metal, with groups still

²⁹⁹ Johannesson and Klingberg, *Blood, Fire, Death*, 127.

³⁰⁰ *Immortal on "Reality Check TV"* (2002), 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORey8ZYyaQU>.

³⁰¹ Dayal Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, Illustrated edition (Port Townsend, WA: Feral House, 2014), 333, 411.

going strong in the 2020s although its popularity and intrigue faded after these occurrences resolved themselves. Some Metal theorists argue that Black Metal was the last true thrope of Heavy Metal after the 1990s saw its dissolution and all-around identity crisis in tandem with the close of the Cold War.³⁰² The focus of public discourse moved away from Cold War tensions toward new challenges and issues, which influenced the themes and messages explored in Metal music. These Satanic and violent messages that emerged in the waning days of the Cold War were far too negative for the broader commercial public who were seemingly more interested in peace after decades of espionage and nuclear threat. In 1999, the Southern Poverty Law Center, or SPLC, in 1999 cited Black Metal as, “Spreading hate...during a time of recovery and potential peace. Regional coordinator of the Northwest Coalition Against Malicious Harassment, Eric K. Ward quoted, “After the fall of the Berlin Wall, I think everyone just wanted prosperity, not collapse which Black Metal believes to be inevitable.”³⁰³

Scandinavian Black Metal confirmed what the Cold War public had feared about Heavy Metal; Black Metal had lived up to their reputation as violent doom bringers that would actively try to destroy the world, no matter how fringe they were. While the rise of Grunge Rock would be a powerful pull factor away from Metal, the nineties saw growing concerns about the danger Heavy Metal posed to the youth that led to its removal from the wide assortment of what is considered “pop” music.³⁰⁴ These newfound concerns extended far beyond that of Satanic occultism to include anxiety about devolving Western morals, suicide, and violence. There had already been cases of violence and suicide in Heavy Metal whose victims the popular media

³⁰² Bill Peel, *Tonight It's a World We Bury: Black Metal, Red Politics* (London: Repeater, 2023), 202–3.

³⁰³ “Black Metal Spreads Neo-Nazi Hate Message,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/1999/black-metal-spreads-neo-nazi-hate-message>.

³⁰⁴ *The War On Heavy Metal In The '80s*.

wrote off as being "weirdos," "burnouts," or "serial killers."³⁰⁵ As it retreated to the fringe, Heavy Metal found a new home in young, disenfranchised, and isolated circles. Concerned parent groups and politicians across the world associated Metal acts, like Marilyn Manson, that rose in popularity in the 90s with everything evil and wrong with youth culture. Former Connecticut senator Joe Lieberman called Manson "The sickest group ever promoted by a recording company."³⁰⁶ Marilyn Manson (Brian Hugh Warner) had garnered a reputation of controversy for his lyrics and stage performances using pervasive profanity and often genuine violence against his audience. Songs like the "Fight Song" claim, "But I'm not a slave To a god that doesn't exist, And I'm not a slave To a world that doesn't give a shit."³⁰⁷ Manson actively attacked the idealistic image of the Nuclear Family in the video and America's reputational image of being a morally virtuous land of opportunity.

There was a growing concern in post-Cold War America that the youth were losing their morality and becoming more dangerous in the process. Manson was a focal talking point in post-Cold War rock n' roll, being seen as both a cause and symptom of America's moral decline. His music was directly blamed for the Columbine massacre of 1998 in which students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed 12 students at their Colorado high school. The media and the religious right attacked Manson blaming him stating, "If Marilyn Manson thinks he can walk into our town and promote hate, violence, suicide, and death and other Columbine-like behavior, we say not without a fight he can't."³⁰⁸ Parent and Christian groups protested his music and

³⁰⁵ Amy Binder, "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music," *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 6 (December 1993): 753, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095949>.

³⁰⁶ Neil Strauss, "A Bogey Band to Scare Parents With," *The New York Times*, May 17, 1997, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/05/17/arts/a-bogey-band-to-scare-parents-with.html>.

³⁰⁷ *Marilyn Manson - The Fight Song (Official Music Video)*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GFI6Rf-IkI>.

³⁰⁸ *Bowling for Columbine - Marilyn Manson (Fear and Consumption)*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NOFSOeOBsk>.

sought to ban him from playing live claiming, “Some think that we believe if all who hear Manson will go out and commit violent acts. The answer is no, but does everyone who watches a Lexus ad go out and buy one? No, but a few do.”³⁰⁹ When asked by Michael Moore what he would say to the killers, Manson responded, “I wouldn’t say anything at all. I would listen to them which nobody did.”³¹⁰ Deflecting responsibility on American society, Manson went on to criticize the hypocrisy of the media bashing his music when President Clinton’s administration dropped more bombs on Kosovo on the day of the Columbine tragedy than at any part of the war. Criticizing the president directly and America’s interference with foreign conflicts speaks to a great divide between Metal and American hegemony. It is a condemnation of the military industrial complex which is a much darker and more serious position than previous Metal acts.³¹¹ Metal’s edginess was no longer the brinkmanship for entertainment but instead dragged into horrific incidents. Metal had once again begun to be associated with ne’er-do-wells and the dregs of society, falling from its more mainstream position than it had occupied in the previous decades. The continuing anxieties and aimlessness of the postwar 1990s did nothing to abate these feelings.³¹²

If some decline in Heavy Metal’s popularity was because Thrash, Death, and Black Metal were too extreme for most audiences, some was also due to the changing cultural attitudes after the conclusion of the Cold War. Excess and glamor had fallen out of fashion. In response to the excesses of the Cold War era, there was a growing cultural movement towards minimalism, simplicity, and mindfulness. Many sought to declutter their lives both physically and mentally by

³⁰⁹ *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), accessed March 11, 2024, <https://tubitv.com/movies/356528/bowling-for-columbine>.

³¹⁰ *Bowling for Columbine - Marilyn Manson (Fear and Consumption)*.

³¹¹ Mary McGory, “Slaughter in Colorado and Kosovo,” *Tampa Bay Times*, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/1999/04/24/slaughter-in-colorado-and-kosovo/>.

³¹² *Bowling for Columbine* (2002).

focusing on experiences, relationships, and personal fulfillment rather than material possessions.³¹³ During the Cold War, conspicuous consumption was often associated with the success of the capitalist model and was seen to demonstrate superiority over Communist ideologies. However, with the end of the Cold War, there was a shift in values away from materialism and conspicuous consumption as the primary markers of success. Economic downturns, recessions, and financial instability led people to reassess their spending habits and prioritize financial security over excess.³¹⁴

The post-Cold War 1990s saw a vast introspective turn in both culture and art while Heavy Metal subculture embraced a lifestyle of excess both on and off the stage. The Cold War had brought uniformity and importance of profits through competition to all aspects of life. For Metal bands, this meant there had been a winning strategy of having a hit single, accompanied by a hit music video for said single. Then a tour would be put on for the hot band, rinse and repeat. The music industry kept a tight grip on heavy Metal music production and output, which means the producers and promoters tampered with much of the final product art.³¹⁵ Bands such as Tesla and Skid Row caught much criticism for this interference by trying to make Heavy Metal go acoustic, which did little but upset traditional Heavy Metal fans.³¹⁶ Metal began to stop prioritizing what was heavy and sincere in favor of profitability. Often, that meant venturing into other genres that did not align with Heavy Metal. While this was not inherently detrimental for Metal, introducing full-blown pop and acoustic performances disillusioned much of the fandom with the music. By this point, the public appearance of well-known rock stars as sleazy drug

³¹³ Greg Prato, *Grunge Is Dead: The Oral History of Seattle Rock Music* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2009), 130.

³¹⁴ Gentry, *What Will I Be*, 190, 198.

³¹⁵ Slagel, Eglinton, and Ulrich, *For The Sake of Heaviness*, 217.

³¹⁶ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 246.

addicts, public opinion had soured in search of something more genuine and down to earth.³¹⁷

The Metal fandom too faced an existential crisis; within the Heavy Metal community itself, there were tensions and conflicts over the direction of the genre. Debates over musical styles, commercialization, and authenticity divided fans and musicians, leading to fragmentation within the scene and a loss of cohesion. Death Metal and Black Metal had an ongoing dispute with who was the more brutal and extreme subgenre. Fenriz (Gylve Nagell) of Black Metal band Darkthrone recalled, “we really liked what the Death Metal guys in Florida were doing. But then when they kept doing the same thing over and over, we were like, ‘This shit sucks.’”³¹⁸ Combining push and pull factors, viewership of Metal music videos had dropped by 12%-22% by 1991 and continued to decline throughout the decade.³¹⁹ Shows such as the comedy animated sitcom *Beavis and Butthead* kept the interest of viewers while commenting and parodying various Metal music videos but at the same time giving exposure to up-and-coming bands, such as White Zombie and Korn that provided an alternative “alternative” for Metal.³²⁰

If all these factors pushed the public away from Heavy Metal, it was Grunge music and its success that was primarily responsible for ending the once titan Metal reputation in the 1990s. The appeal of grunge music in the United States during the post-Cold War era can be understood within the broader cultural and social context of the time. Grunge emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s primarily from the Pacific Northwest, particularly Seattle, Washington. Its rise in popularity coincided with the end of the Cold War and reflected the disillusionment and angst

³¹⁷ O’Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 111.

³¹⁸ *DARKTHRONE’s Fenriz Interview on the Evils of Compression 2013 | Raw & Uncut*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1iXsF8787M>.

³¹⁹ “Did Vinyl Really Die in the ’90s? Well, Sort Of... - SPIN,” accessed February 18, 2024, <https://www.spin.com/2014/05/did-vinyl-really-die-in-the-90s-death-resurgence-sales/>.

³²⁰ *How BEAVIS & BUTTHEAD Saved 90s Metal*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G62IPdzHHc>.

felt by many young people in America. Grunge came to represent a post-Cold War shift in Western identity.³²¹ The Grunge aesthetic, characterized by flannel shirts, ripped jeans, and unkempt hair, reflected a rejection of conventional notions of fashion and beauty. This non-conformist style resonated with many young people who rejected the polished and glamorous image often associated with mainstream culture. Young people coming of age in the late eighties and early nineties grew up in both the aftermath of the idealism of the 1960s and the consumerism of the 1980s. The intellectual nature of 1990s music was a reaction against the preceding decade's materialism, excess, and superficiality.³²² Grunge music was characterized by its anti-establishment ethos and rejection of mainstream norms. The lyrics often expressed feelings of alienation, frustration, and disaffection with society. This resonated with a generation that felt disconnected from traditional institutions and values. Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit", gave voice to 1990s youth rejecting previous norms and values of their predecessors when Kurt Cobain wailed, "With the lights out, it's less dangerous Here we are now, entertain us I feel stupid and contagious Here we are now, entertain us."³²³ The song is simultaneously parodying, encouraging, and inciting a youth revolt. It channels the passive aggressive mentality of Generation X in the Pacific Northwest. All the anger, anxiety, and depression form into a discontented rage. But in the conclusion, the narrator understands the futility of it all, and the passive hostility resumes. Cobain along with many other artists sought to explore deeper emotional and existential themes in their music such as Nirvana, moving away from the hedonism and escapism often associated with the 1980s.³²⁴

³²¹ Yarm, *Everybody Loves Our Town*, 194.

³²² Greg Prato, *Grunge Is Dead: The Oral History of Seattle Rock Music* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2009), 401.

³²³ *Nirvana - Smells Like Teen Spirit (Official Music Video)*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTWKbfoikeg>.

³²⁴ Yarm, *Everybody Loves Our Town*, 201–2.

The emergence of alternative rock and Grunge in the early 1990s played a significant role in shaping the introspective nature of the music of that era. Bands like Nirvana, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, and Alice in Chains became the voice of a disenchanting generation, with their raw, confessional lyrics and stripped-down musical aesthetics resonating with audiences seeking authenticity and emotional honesty in music.³²⁵ Accomplished hip-hop artist but Heavy Metal outsider Anthon L. Ray (Sir Mix-a-Lot) said, “What I like about Grunge was the realness. It wasn’t pretty, it wasn’t glamorous.” The 1990s saw a renewed emphasis on personal expression and authenticity in music. Many artists prioritized honesty and vulnerability in their songwriting, exploring themes such as depression, anxiety, alienation, and social injustice. Marc Jacobs, American fashion designer who incorporated Grunge into his designs said, “Grunge is a hippied romantic version of punk.”³²⁶ This approach allowed listeners to connect with the music on a deeper emotional level, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding.³²⁷ It is a total rejection of both the Cold War and Heavy Metal’s competitive culture, in favor of peace and self-discovery through music about one’s identity and relationship in the community of the larger world, nihilistically or otherwise. Post-Grunge rock band Alterbridge’s vocalist Myles Kennedy said, “Grunge was, to me, the last big movement. It had such an impact on pop culture. We haven't really seen anything like that since, and we may never again.”³²⁸ Metal was once the epitome of musical authenticity and integrity, but the 1990s with the introduction of Grunge shifted that perception. Heavy Metal lost its authenticity competitively to Grunge, the Metal post-Cold War interpretation of authenticity was record sales or wanton acts of violence. Grunge

³²⁵ Yarm, 212–13.

³²⁶ Danielle Dahl, “70 Musicians and Artists Give Thoughts on Grunge,” Everyday Power, November 4, 2022, <https://everydaypower.com/grunge-quotes/>.

³²⁷ *Hair Metal Musicians Reacting to Grunge*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdEqcEU15X4>.

³²⁸ Myles Kennedy, Alterbridge’s Myles Kennedy Gives Thoughts on Modern Rock, 2008, <https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/grunge-quotes>.

saw authenticity as writing personal stories in its music with honest musicianship that connected and resonated with audiences.³²⁹

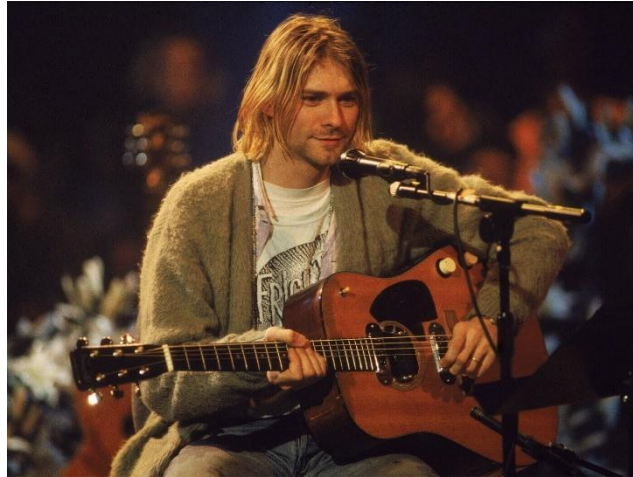


Figure 24. Kurt Cobain in minimalist, Grunge attire performing with Nirvana at MTV's "Unplugged" in New York, November 1, 1994. Micelotta, Frank. In the Room at Nirvana's "MTV Unplugged in New York." Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/in-the-room-at-nirvanas-mtv-unplugged-in-new-york-904777/>.

While Grunge did not completely replace or "kill off" Metal as some journalists have implied, its appeal to the younger generation certainly displaced Heavy Metal from its throne atop the rock n' roll dominance hierarchy. Some hair bands, such as Guns N' Roses and Skid Row, managed to survive, but the musical tastes of a new generation made it difficult to be a lucrative enterprise outside these rare cases.³³⁰ Extreme Metal had to go underground and survive, but out of the public eye Metal could not sell the number of records or tickets it had in the past. Nirvana's Kurt Cobain criticized Heavy Metal for being "sexist" and lacking opportunities for women to participate outside of the groupie norm.³³¹ Other grunge artists compared their artistry favorably to Metal stating that Grunge's goal was to emphasize "back on

³²⁹ Prato, *Grunge Is Dead*, 70, 79.

³³⁰ Kelly, *Don't Call It Hair Metal*, 70.

³³¹ "Kurt Cobain Felt That Most Heavy Metal 'Has Always Been Pretty Sexist,'" accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.wearethepit.com/2022/12/kurt-cobain-felt-that-most-heavy-metal-has-always-been-pretty-sexist/>.

the song instead of the guitar solo."³³² This rejection of Metal for Grunge was apparent in the nearly 80% increase in Grunge's band record sales in 1991, as Metal continued to decline. Nirvana's studio debut, "Nevermind," sold 30 million copies, an almost unheard-of sales figure, especially in the world of rock n' roll.³³³

The 80s were associated with the Cold War boom of excitement, and now that the war was over, the public had lost interest in it. Heavy Metal was a product of the Cold War, and now that that conflict was seemingly over, its time was also over.³³⁴ The same factors that led to its precipitous rise in popularity in the previous two decades also contributed to its downfall. Ronnie James Dio, former singer of Black Sabbath, Rainbow, and Dio, said, "MTV killed Heavy Metal. It was no longer about what they could play but what they looked like. It became about how many parties you could throw or how many fourteen-year-old girls you could pull after the show, and the music was rubbish. [they] destroyed what the rest of us created...So when Grunge came on the scene, singing songs that meant something, Metal was doomed. I hate that."³³⁵ Dio bemoaned the failure of a music movement he was a leading trendsetter in. Now, Grunge upended his beloved passion but moreover Heavy Metal fell prey to its own hubris and greed which are the sorts of practices Dio and others like him set out to break away from during the decadence and excess of Hippie music.

While Grunge and Heavy Metal would become to be associated with nihilism and even suicide, the way that the two genres reached this point highlights the differences between them. .

³³² Lauryn SchaffnerLauryn Schaffner, "How Grunge Killed Hair Metal," Loudwire, June 14, 2019, <https://loudwire.com/grunge-killed-ended-hair-metal/>.

³³³ "Nirvana's 'Nevermind,' By The Numbers | News | MTV," accessed March 4, 2024, <https://www.mtv.com/news/wuxmlg/nevermind-nirvana-album>.

³³⁴ Popoff, *The Big Book of Hair Metal*, 140.

³³⁵ *Ronnie James Dio*.

Suicide within Grunge culture stems from a post-Cold War epiphany of sorts about the lack of importance of the individual.³³⁶ This realization does not go in direct contrast with Cold War patriotism favoring the greater good of one's nation, but somewhat brings it to a fuller conclusion, that if indeed the war is over, then the individual has no greater good to serve. Nations are meaningless, values are subjective, and if the individual serves no higher purpose out of insignificance, then Grunge begs the question, "What difference does it make if one were to kill themselves?" The media fervently covered troubled artists such as Kurt Cobain and Layne Staley of Alice in Chains whose images also were closely tied to the 1990s resurgence in the popularity of narcotics such as heroin and other opiates for recreational use. This philosophy about the significance of life mixed with drug addiction created an atmosphere of dreary depression brought about by the crushing self-realization evidenced by this music. Take Alice in Chain's hit song "Nutshell" for example, "My gift of self is raped My privacy is raked And yet I find, and yet I find Repeating in my head If I can't be my own, I'd feel better dead."³³⁷ The media and post-Cold War feelings of meaninglessness trapped Grunge into losing all sense of grass roots musicality and stripped-down musicianship to the point of literally killing itself.³³⁸

Black Metal's answer to post-Cold War ideological nihilistic aimlessness differs greatly to that of Grunge's tortured artists' cry for help. Mayhem vocalist Per Yngve Olin (also known as "Dead") took his own life in April 1991 when he was just 22 years old. He died from a self-inflicted shotgun wound to the head (with which Varg claimed to have supplied a weapon and ammo) at the band's communal house in Oslo, Norway.³³⁹ Dead's troubled mental state and

³³⁶ Prato, *Grunge Is Dead*, 209.

³³⁷ *Alice In Chains - Nutshell (Official Audio)*, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G23iLGhh91o>.

³³⁸ Sharon R. Mazzarella, "The Voice of a Generation"? Media Coverage of the Suicide of Kurt Cobain," *Popular Music & Society*, June 1, 1995, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007769508591591>.

³³⁹ Johannesson and Klingberg, *Blood, Fire, Death*, 191.

fascination with death were well-known among his bandmates and acquaintances. He was known to have extreme beliefs and a morbid worldview, which manifested itself in his lyrics and stage performances.³⁴⁰ Dead's stage presence was notorious for its shocking and theatrical elements, including self-mutilation and the use of pig heads and animal blood during performances.³⁴¹ Some accounts suggest that Euronymous and other members of Mayhem were deeply affected by Dead's death, while others claim that they were fascinated by and even celebrated the event. When Euronymous discovered Dead's body, he took photographs of the scene, which Euronymous later used as the cover of a bootleg album released by the band and allegedly made necklaces out of fragments of Dead's skull.³⁴² Whereas for Grunge, suicide was the ultimate realization of insignificance, Black Metal fetishized it as being “true” to the genre’s fascination with death.



Figure 25. Per Olin's corpse used for the 1991 Mayhem album, 'Dawn of the Black Hearts'. Aarseth, Øystein. Mayhem Dawn of the Black Hearts Album Cover. Album Cover. Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://imgur.com/gallery/lyE6H/comment/830098244>.

In Grunge, suicide is a final call for help, where in Black Metal it is reveled and

³⁴⁰ Michael Moynihan, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* (Feral House, 2006), 45, 206, https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/lords-of-chaos-the-bloody-rise-of-the-satanic-metal-underground-new-edition_michael-moynihan_didrik-sderlind/342510/.

³⁴¹ *Mayhem's Necrobutcher: Dead Loved to F*ck With People*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewIRR-mPOT0>.

³⁴² *Mayhem's Necrobutcher: I Planned to Kill Euronymous Myself*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GhafMM90X0>.

celebrated as a performative way to complete the intended goal to eviscerate all Western Christian values. Suicide is almost the ultimate way to showcase one's commitment to authenticity within the movement of Black Metal. This obsession with authenticity was not limited to Black Metal, as it had been a need or strive within all of Metal since its inception. However, this need to prove integrity, honesty, and most importantly authenticity was in the 1990s killing Heavy Metal.³⁴³

One of the final nails in the coffin so to speak, is Heavy Metal's association with hate groups, a phenomenon which made association with the genre potentially toxic. The United States experienced profound demographic changes during the post-Cold War era, including increasing racial and ethnic diversity.³⁴⁴ Some individuals and groups perceived these demographic shifts as a threat to their cultural, social, and political dominance. In response, they embraced extremist ideologies that promoted racial superiority and exclusionary nationalism. Economic uncertainty, job insecurity, and widening income inequality fueled social discontent and provided fertile ground for extremist ideologies to take root among certain segments of the population. The post-Cold War period witnessed significant social progress in the United States, including advancements in civil rights, LGBT rights, and gender equality. However, these advancements also sparked a backlash among individuals and groups opposed to social change.³⁴⁵ Hate groups exploited fears and anxieties of ignorant and afraid white Americans. These fears were of their own racial standing in society linked to their jobs and monetary status. Fears of being "replaced" either in their job or existence were not new to the 1990s but were exacerbated by the end of the Cold War. The United States experienced increasing political

³⁴³ Johannesson and Klingberg, *Blood, Fire, Death*, 218.

³⁴⁴ Dyck, *Reichsrock*, 14.

³⁴⁵ Elaine Landau, *The White Power Movement: America's Racist Hate Groups* (Millbrook Pr, 1993), 148, 193.

polarization during the post-Cold War era, as partisan divides deepened, and ideological extremism gained traction within certain segments of society. Extremist groups capitalized on this polarization by promoting conspiracy theories, spreading disinformation, and targeting marginalized communities, not least of which was the Heavy Metal community.³⁴⁶

Hate groups began to utilize Heavy Metal in the 1990s for nefarious purposes. Neo-Nazi organizations sought to infiltrate existing metal subcultures and exploit the camaraderie and sense of belonging within these communities.³⁴⁷ They distributed propaganda, recruited members, and organized events within Metal scenes, attempting to spread their ideologies. Neo-Nazis appropriated symbols and imagery associated with Metal, such as album artwork, band logos, and concert flyers. They would often incorporate white supremacist symbols, such as swastikas, SS runes, and other hate symbols, into their designs to signal their allegiance to extremist ideologies. Neo-Nazi groups organized concerts, festivals, and other events within the metal scene as a means of promoting their agendas and fostering a sense of community among like-minded individuals. These events would often feature performances by white power bands and serve as recruiting grounds for neo-Nazi organizations. With the rise of the internet in the 1990s, neo-Nazi groups utilized online platforms to create websites, forums, and social media profiles to spread their messages and connect with potential recruits.³⁴⁸

Heavy Metal in the 1990s was a perfect host for these hate groups. Since its inception, Heavy Metal has been enjoyed and targeted at young, Caucasian, heterosexual males- the target audience for many of these groups. Metal fans are also disproportionately made up of individuals

³⁴⁶ Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right*, First Edition (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004), 204.

³⁴⁷ *Fascism in Black Metal and How to Spot It*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Grmi9xdB5M>.

³⁴⁸ *Inside a Neo Nazi Music Festival | Decade of Hate*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKX9OjNy_NI.

of the lower middle to working classes, groups who were negatively impacted by policies such as Affirmative Action.³⁴⁹ During the late 1980s going into the 1990s, many layoffs of blue collar and entry level jobs previously held by white working-class men disappeared.³⁵⁰ While the adults that worked these jobs may not have been either hateful or Metal fans, their children were much more likely at risk, witnessing their parents struggles and the domestic turmoil it brought made these disenfranchised white youth angrier and more susceptible to hate group manipulation, utilizing angry music as a platform to indoctrinate and spread their ideologies and agendas.³⁵¹ Reformed skinhead Bryon Widner stated that hate groups “would show up to Metal gigs all the time. They would pass out pamphlets like preachers or something. More than anything, they tried to make you feel like a part of a family, which a lot of us didn’t have. They’d take you in, feed you, dress you, then turn you into a weapon.” The tactic of brainwashing young people is not new, but Heavy Metal provided a hipper avenue for hate and had a primed audience of social outsiders.³⁵²

While the early Black Metal bands had incorporated some Fascist ideology into their music, this occurrence was rare, and their thoughts were usually kept private outside of a few outliers like Varg Vikernes. Even most Black Metal bands did not subscribe to political ideology outside of anarchy and nihilism.³⁵³ This fact was not the same case for a new phenomenon that arose in the 1990s: Hate Rock or Reich Rock. White power groups such as the National Socialist Party of America and the Ku Klux Klan had taken notice of the power and influence that music

³⁴⁹ William L. Taylor and Susan M. Liss, “Affirmative Action in the 1990s: Staying the Course,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 523 (1992): 30–37.

³⁵⁰ Dyck, *Reichsrock*, 88.

³⁵¹ Landau, *The White Power Movement*, 199–200.

³⁵² *A Reformed Skinhead, Bryon Widner Was Desperate to Rid Himself of the Racist Tattoos That Covered Hi*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHNyNBVbtio>.

³⁵³ *Fascism in Black Metal and How to Spot It*.

had on young people and began signing and subsidizing skinhead Metal bands to their labels such as Tightrape records along with featuring their music at hate rallies.³⁵⁴ These bands often espoused racist and extremist ideologies in their lyrics and imagery, using music as a platform to propagate their hateful beliefs.³⁵⁵ Hate Metal band Total War produced a song called “Hatred is My Life,” stating “They say no one is born to hate but I don’t think that’s true, from day one I hated niggers, spics, and fucking jews Lived my life without regret make no apologies If I could make this last request it’s that you would hate me.”³⁵⁶ It is clear that these lyrics go far beyond attempting to offend, but are directly hateful, using the aggression of Metal to convey this anger. The music incites people to hate the band as well, leading to a continuation of the cycle of violence.

The association with White Power movements tainted a large swathe of Heavy Metal. Most notably, Louisiana/Texas based Metal band Pantera faced backlash due to this perception. Most notably, Phil Anselmo drew the most criticism from MTV and other Metal media outlets. He called Metal shows “a white thing” in an interview with MTV in 1994, which was seen by many in the Metal community as exclusionary.³⁵⁷ Fellow Metal band musician of Machinehead, Robb Flynn, condemned Anselmo’s comments stating they were “outdated” and that “it is time that we [the Metal community] stop letting shit like this slide and call it out for the racist garbage that it is.”³⁵⁸ What did not abate these accusations was Pantera’s usage of the Confederate Battle Flag on many of their album covers, tour promotional material, and merchandise. Pantera maintained that they were not a racist band but rather were simply “proud of their Southern roots

³⁵⁴ Kirsten Dyck, *Reichsrock: The International Web of White-Power and Neo-Nazi Hate Music* (New Brunswick New Jersey London: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 116.

³⁵⁵ Dyck, *Reichsrock*, 160–61.

³⁵⁶ *Total War - Hatred Is My Life*, accessed March 12, 2024, <https://www.bitchute.com/video/0RTSUEVWD9G6/>.

³⁵⁷ *Pantera Accused of Racism by Media (1994)*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0DeEbyezN8>.

³⁵⁸ *Robb Flynn - Racism In Metal*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCBKzWg4WYo>.

and heritage.”³⁵⁹ Regardless of intention, this association with white power music stained Pantera’s reputation and led to their banning in both Germany and Austria until 2016. Pantera attempted to distance itself from this racist image, especially after the murder of Pantera guitarist “Dimebag” Darrell Abbott 2004 by removing most of the Confederate imagery from their discography and t-shirts.³⁶⁰

Post-Cold War Metal struggled to find its footing during the 1990s due to all this negativity. The school shootings, suicide, and political implications of hate mixed with the genre's commercial fall from grace had devastated the music. Metal kept growing darker and less "fun." Alongside Grunge, Metal merged with Goth and Rave culture that began to emerge in the mid-1990s. Techno and futuristic synthetic sounds began to perforate the bands that survived Metal’s collapse in popularity.³⁶¹ This emergent “Industrial” Metal was a short-lived movement but sought to shock and angst itself into the eye of the public while being a niche subgenre. Its edginess and blasé sound were not nearly as well understood or received as its predecessors.³⁶² Marilyn Manson, Nine Inch Nails, Ministry, and Hair Metal turned Industrial, WASP, attempted to shock, adapt, and invigorate the bloated corpse of this genre with relative success. However, by the end of the 1990s, Industrial Metal, too, had been left behind by the metal-consuming public.³⁶³

There would be a final push from Metal to regain its popularity through the fusing would of Rap and Metal. However, this last mainstream Metal push would go far too commercial for

³⁵⁹ *Phil Anselmo Giving a Speech on Races and Respect*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eDp4wFUPMw>.

³⁶⁰ *PHIL ANSELMO Says He ‘Disavows’ Confederate Flag During PANTERA’s Show In Bulgaria*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7AzrizlYhY>.

³⁶¹ *WHAT KILLED 90s ALT-METAL? - Danzig, Primus, White Zombie, Rollins Band*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaVrrQB7GTQ>.

³⁶² *Metal Mythos: DANZIG*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1jgRdGwD0A>.

³⁶³ *Metal Mythos: W.A.S.P.*, 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVjYs_NDoV8.

the Heavy Metal community. The first example of this came when Big Four Thrash Metal band Anthrax did a track with notorious Hip Hop duo Public Enemy called "Bring Tha Noize." This joining of two wildly different cultures and styles would be the jump-off point for the next stage of mainstream and commercial Metal.³⁶⁴ Bands such as Limp Bizkit, Korn, Slipknot, and Rage Against the Machine incorporated Metal instrumentals accompanied by hip-hop lyrics. Utilizing turntables that sometimes outshined the guitars and drums was considered distasteful and trendy. The older Metal fanbase viewed this as a corporate plant as commercial campaigns, movie/videogame soundtracks, and clothing advertisements widely utilized this subgenre.³⁶⁵ This "Nu-Metal" was a massive success for its time. It disassociated itself with all forms of controversy with either Black Metal or Shock Rock to return to more cavalier and youthful perceptions that were more commercially viable. Their overly marketed presence offended Metal Underground. Its rejection by both the mainstream and Metal community came almost as quickly as it had arrived.³⁶⁶

If Metallica's performance in Moscow marked the high point for Metal's popularity at the dusk of the Cold War, Nu-Metal band Limp Bizkit's performance at Woodstock '99, remembered widely for the chaotic and destructive atmosphere that surrounded it, may mark Metal's final demise as a popular genre. The intention of Woodstock '99 was to be a celebration of music and peace, echoing the original Woodstock festival held in 1969 with new artists such as Kid Rock, Korn, and the Red-Hot Chili Peppers. However, numerous factors contributed to the breakdown of order and the emergence of violence during the event, and Limp Bizkit's performance became emblematic of the darker aspects of the festival. During Limp Bizkit's set,

³⁶⁴ *Scott Ian of Anthrax Talks Bring the Noise*, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RZXDryPI_4.

³⁶⁵ *Musicians Reacting to Nu Metal*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDAbvXS1hW4>.

³⁶⁶ *WHAT KILLED NU-METAL? Korn, Slipknot, Limp Bizkit*, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATllyNXF3Kg>.

which took place on the festival's final day, the crowd became increasingly unruly. Reports suggest that the atmosphere was tense, with instances of crowd surfing, moshing, and even four counts of sexual assault occurring in the audience.³⁶⁷ Limp Bizkit's frontman, Fred Durst, allegedly encouraged these behaviors with provocative statements and gestures from the stage. The band performed their hit song "Break Stuff," which features aggressive lyrics and an energetic, mosh-inducing rhythm. As the song played, the crowd erupted into chaos, and reports emerged of widespread vandalism, fires, and assaults breaking out in the audience. The situation escalated to the point where festival organizers had to intervene and shut down the performance.³⁶⁸ The events at Woodstock '99, including Limp Bizkit's performance, raised serious concerns about safety, security, and the commercialization of music festivals. Critics pointed to factors such as overcrowding, inadequate facilities, high prices for food and water, and a lack of proper planning and organization as contributing to the breakdown of order. In the aftermath of Woodstock '99, there was significant scrutiny and criticism of the festival's organizers, as well as discussions about the state of youth culture and the role of music in shaping behavior. The events at Woodstock '99 served as a cautionary tale about the potential consequences of unchecked aggression, mob mentality, and the exploitation of countercultural movements for commercial gain. The mirroring parallels of this incident to the Rolling Stones' Altamont concert 30 years prior are uncanny and astounding. Heavy Metal had come full circle culturally and commercially. It had finally become the very thing it set out to break away from.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ *Woodstock 99: Peace, Love, and Rage*, Documentary (HBO, 2021), <https://www.hbo.com/movies/music-box-woodstock-99-peace-love-and-rage>.

³⁶⁸ *Limp Bizkit - Break Stuff (Live at Woodstock 1999) Official Pro Shot / *AAC #Remastered*, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPk7-fCvba0>.

³⁶⁹ *Trainwreck: Woodstock '99*, Documentary (Netflix, 2022), <https://www.netflix.com/title/81280924>.



Figure 26. Right: Fred Durst antagonizing the audience at Woodstock, '99. Micelotta, Frank. *Fred Durst with Audience*. August 1, 2022. Photograph. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/aug/01/woodstock-99-full-metal-racket-the-jaw-dropping-story-of-a-disastrous-music-festival>. Right: Fred Durst riding a broken piece of pallet during the riot at Woodstock, '99. Wake, Matt. *Limp Bizkit Woodstock '99*. Photograph. Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.metaledgemag.com/metal-wire/limp-bizkit-didnt-ruin-woodstock-99-greed-did>.

Much of Heavy Metal's success depended upon railing against the fears and realities of the Cold War. When the war ended, that lost almost all appeal. Metal had become a parody of itself that was no longer being tolerated or taken seriously. Media outlets subsequently stopped supporting Heavy Metal or publishing articles or shows about them.³⁷⁰ The invention of digital recording and distribution also significantly hurt record sales, which Heavy Metal desperately depended on at the time. The introduction of MP3s in the late 1990s saw the decline of all record sales, not just Metal, rising by 38% and growing.³⁷¹ The cost of live performances versus fan turnout hurt the genre significantly and, thus, stopped being heavily supported by the record labels. Metal tours of the 1980s generally ranged from roughly \$590,000 to over a million. These costs were cut to around half, with over \$500,000 being the higher end of a stage production. Hip Hop quickly replaced heavy Metal as the new rebellious music during the 1990s. Metal had lost its goal of rebellion for rebellion's sake, becoming about money and popularity rather than

³⁷⁰ Monica Hesse, "Perspective | What '90s Girls Knew about Britney Spears," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/power/2023/10/27/britney-spears-and-1990s-girls/>.

³⁷¹ Tom Lamont, "Napster: The Day the Music Was Set Free," *The Observer*, February 24, 2013, sec. Music, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/feb/24/napster-music-free-file-sharing>.

artistry and vision. Broad audiences and popularity were never Heavy Metal's target. Metal's initial intention was to be outsider music, so when it fell from public view, it fell hard.³⁷²

³⁷² “Heavy Metal | History, Music, Bands, & Facts | Britannica,” accessed February 18, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/art/heavy-metal-music>.

CONCLUSION

Heavy Metal emerged as a global cultural force in the aftermath of the Cold War, transcending borders and ideologies. Its rebellious spirit resonated with a world in flux as the Iron Curtain fell, offering an outlet for expression and resistance.³⁷³ This music phenomenon amazingly mirrored the complexities of a post-Cold War era, where old certainties dissolved, and new possibilities emerged through its diverse sounds and subcultures. However, the music had artistically stagnated in the West by the end of the Cold War due to record label greed, lack of creativity, and intense inter-band competition instead of cooperation for the sake of Metal music. The post-Cold War era and its international barrier breaking atmosphere allowed Metal to spread to the developing world. Metal found resonance and a renaissance of sorts in Third World and Second World countries where the same feelings of oppression either politically or socially began to be more commonly resisted. In this dynamic landscape, Heavy Metal became not just a genre of music but a symbol of resilience, adaptation, and the enduring quest for freedom in a rapidly changing world.³⁷⁴

Although Metal experienced a revival in the West as well, as fans yearned for the classics such as Motorhead and Judas Priest in the early 2000s with bands such as Slipknot, Lamb of God, and Trivium, it never returned to the mass popularity it had during the late Cold War, from the 1970s through the 1980s. While Metalcore is the most popular subgenre of Metal in the world today, it has yet to evolve into anything more than a sum of all the genres that came before it. Without the Cold War, Metal stagnated and became a static genre.³⁷⁵ It is a product that benefitted from that period of uneasiness, and what little scraps remained of its original form

³⁷³ Wiederhorn and Turman, *Louder Than Hell*, 567.

³⁷⁴ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 199.

³⁷⁵ *Metal Mythos: MOTÖRHEAD (Updated)*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRgDJ5yQhUA>.

have been swallowed by commercialism and material sales. The invention of MP3s, YouTube, and other online streaming/downloading services cut off the last bit of viable value the industry had, with Metal's primary source of income now derived from a dedicated and fanatical albeit limited base of listeners. However, this fan base spread in an unexpected way after the Cold War.³⁷⁶

With the collapse of Soviet influence and the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, the world witnessed a seismic shift in power dynamics and ideological paradigms. Simultaneously, former colonies across the globe asserted their independence and sought to redefine their identities in the wake of colonial rule and absent the great power conflict of the Cold War, marking a turning point in the struggle against colonial legacies and the quest for self-determination.³⁷⁷ A wave of late decolonization occurred as former colonies and minority rule states in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean gained independence from European powers. The decline of colonialism fundamentally transformed the global map, leading to the emergence of new nation-states and reshaping the dynamics of international relations. Indigenous peoples' struggles for national liberation and independence movements accompanied decolonization.³⁷⁸

While Heavy Metal has its roots in Western musical traditions, it became a global phenomenon that transcends cultural boundaries, finding resonance with this new milieu as well. In post-colonial societies, Heavy Metal intersected with globalization, cultural exchange, and hybridization processes, resulting in diverse and hybrid forms of music that reflect local and

³⁷⁶ Joel Rose and Jacob Ganz, "The MP3: A History Of Innovation And Betrayal," *NPR*, March 23, 2011, sec. The Record, <https://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2011/03/23/134622940/the-mp3-a-history-of-innovation-and-betrayal>.

³⁷⁷ Jessica M. Chapman, *Remaking the World: Decolonization and the Cold War* (University Press of Kentucky, 2023), 205, https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/remaking-the-world-decolonization-and-the-cold-war_jessica-m-chapman/37434399/.

³⁷⁸ Leslie James, *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating Independence* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 217, <https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/decolonization-and-the-cold-war-negotiating-independence/14285393/>.

global influences. In the context of post-colonialism, Heavy Metal music reflected a complex interplay of cultural dynamics, identity politics, and socio-political commentary.³⁷⁹ Heavy Metal music often critiqued power structures, hierarchies, and injustices, which are particularly relevant in post-colonial contexts where issues of power, privilege, and inequality persist. It is outsider music for outsider culture, so a space for criticizing and resisting previously enforced social and political norms in these decolonized regions was a hole that Heavy Metal filled for some.³⁸⁰

Bands and musicians used Heavy Metal as a platform to critique colonial legacies, challenge dominant narratives, and express solidarity with marginalized communities. Heavy Metal is aggression put to melody, which makes it the perfect channel for channeling frustrations and outrage in a non-violent, peaceful, but proactive way. Where Indigenous cultures have been marginalized or suppressed, Heavy Metal music provides a space for their voices and perspectives. Indigenous Heavy Metal bands incorporated traditional instruments, languages, and themes into their music, asserting their cultural heritage and challenging colonial hegemony.³⁸¹ Bands addressed themes such as imperialism, racism, capitalism, and environmental exploitation in their lyrics and music, drawing attention to ongoing struggles for social justice and decolonization. Nowhere is this more apparent than Brazilian-based band Sepultura's entire "Chaos A.D." album released in September 1993. The record excoriates colonialism with tracks such as "Slave New World," "Propaganda," and "Territory." However, it is their anthemic track "Refuse/Resist" that explicitly attacks colonist powers with, "Chaos A.D. Tanks on the streets Confronting police Bleeding the plebs Raging crowd Burning cars Bloodshed starts Who'll be

³⁷⁹ Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and LeVine, *Heavy Metal*, 179.

³⁸⁰ Edward Banchs, *Heavy Metal Africa: Life, Passion, and Heavy Metal in the Forgotten Continent*, 1st edition (Word Association Publishers, 2016), 90.

³⁸¹ Wiederhorn and Turman, *Louder Than Hell*, 103.

alive?”³⁸² Both the video and song referenced the civil unrest of the 1990s in the Third World with events such as the Tiananmen Square Massacre and Rwandan Genocide.³⁸³ Heavy Metal communities in post-colonial societies served as community-building, solidarity, and resistance spaces. The Late German Democratic Republic saw an unnamed, unorganized international youth movement utilize both Heavy Metal broadcasting and tape trading to open public political discourse, in which Industrial Metal band Rammstein rose to prominence.³⁸⁴ Argentina saw a unified front between bands such as Malon and Carajo organize protests of wars and conflicts in several Latin American countries.³⁸⁵ As during the Cold War, concerts, festivals, and online forums like those pushed for by Columbian bands Massacre and La Pestilencia to allow fans to connect, share experiences, and mobilize common causes, contributing to broader social and political movements.³⁸⁶

Heavy Metal emerged in Africa in the late 1970s and early 1980s as it rose to prominence in the developed West. Bands like Witchhammer from Zimbabwe and Voice of Destruction from South Africa were White pioneers of the genre on the continent and African countries have developed regional metal scenes, including South Africa, Egypt, Kenya, Botswana, and Morocco.³⁸⁷ This Heavy Metal scene in Africa faces various challenges, including limited access to resources such as instruments, recording equipment, and venues. Additionally, societal perceptions of heavy Metal as "Western" or "satanic" music have sometimes led to stigma and

³⁸² “Lyrics | Sepultura | Refuse/Resist,” accessed March 19, 2024, <https://lyrics.lyricfind.com/lyrics/sepultura-refuse-resist>.

³⁸³ *Sepultura - Refuse/Resist [OFFICIAL VIDEO]*, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ODNxy3YOPU>.

³⁸⁴ Wolf-Georg Zaddach, “Breaking the Law? Heavy Metal in 1980s Socialist East Germany,” no. 2 (2018).

³⁸⁵ “Heavy Metal Music as Decolonial Activism: A Latin American Case Study,” *Zapruder World* (blog), accessed March 19, 2024, <https://zapruderworld.org/volume-7/heavy-metal-music-as-decolonial-activism-a-latin-american-case-study/>.

³⁸⁶ Weinstein, *Heavy Metal*, 120.

³⁸⁷ Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, and Paul D. Greene, eds., *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011), 92.

discrimination against Metalheads.³⁸⁸ As in other developing regions, African metal bands often incorporate elements of traditional African music, folklore, and languages into their music, creating a unique blend of sounds and themes.³⁸⁹



Figure 27. Botswana Metal band Overthrust. (Left) Tshomarelo Mosaka, Shalton Monnawadikgang, Lepololang Malepa, Tshepho Kaisara. Gharib, Malaka. “‘Scream for Me, Africa!’: How the Continent Is Reinventing Heavy Metal Music.” NPR, August 7, 2022, sec. Culture.
<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/08/07/1114616272/scream-for-me-africa-how-the-continent-is-reinventing-heavy-metal-music>.

India's enthrallment with Heavy Metal in the post-colonial age is a more recent occurrence as regulations on criticism of their government and traditions have waned, giving Indian Metal an opportunity to capitalize on these liberalizations. Heavy Metal started gaining popularity in India during the 1980s and 1990s, primarily influenced by the global metal scene. Bands like Millennium and Brahma from Mumbai were among the early pioneers of heavy Metal in India, which led to the international success of bands such as Demonic Resurrection, Kryptos, Bhayanak Maut, and Skyharbor.³⁹⁰ The Indian metal scene is diverse, with bands exploring various Metal subgenres, this diversity reflects India's wide range of influences and cultural

³⁸⁸ Banchs, *Heavy Metal Africa*, 210, 216–18.

³⁸⁹ Frank Marshall, “Botswana’s Cowboy Metalheads,” *Vice* (blog), April 1, 2011, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/3b5pp3/atlas-hoods-botswanas-cowboy-metalheads>.

³⁹⁰ *Bloodywood - Dana Dan (Indian Folk Metal)*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a65A626Ed20>.

backgrounds. Different regions of India have Metal scenes, each with its characteristics and styles.³⁹¹ India hosts several Metal festivals and events, including Domination, The Deathfest, Bangalore Open Air, and the Great Indian Rock Festival. These events provide platforms for local and international Metal bands to perform and connect with fans. Indian Metal bands often draw inspiration from various sources, including Indian mythology, history, and cultural traditions. The Down Troddence from Kannur province paint themselves in Hindu and Veda inspired art to resemble deities acting as theatrical interpretations of the stories and scripture.³⁹² Bands such as Bloodywood achieved success and garnered attention in the global metal community. Bloodywood uses their platform to raise awareness of Third World issues such as child marriages, rape impunity, and political caste system corruption.³⁹³ Their song, “Machi Bhasad” discusses a call for revolution against the oppressive religious and social caste system crying, “Expect a riot, expect a riot Expect a riot in the middle of your street You’ve dug yourself an early grave Our patience runs dry, we’ve had enough Expect a riot, expect a riot Expect a riot in the middle of your street You’ve dug yourself an early grave Our patience runs dry, we’ve had enough!”³⁹⁴ More controversially, Bloodywood’s song Dana Dan calls for the violence against rapists throughout India demanding, “Watch as he lets the demon possess him Watch his civility turn to ash Watch how an apparent saint becomes a monster behind the curtains If words do not change them grab them by the neck and Bring the beatdown.”³⁹⁵ When asked why they chose Heavy Metal to infuse Indian folk music with, Roul Kerr responded, “We love Limp Bizkit, Rage Against the Machine, and System of a Down...[Metal] for us speaks

³⁹¹ Wallach, Berger, and Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, 211–12, 227.

³⁹² *The Down Troddence - Shiva (Official Music Video HD)*, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0jj37KEQofU>.

³⁹³ *I Went to India’s METAL FESTIVAL! Pure Mayhem!*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpxQFcSG11Y>.

³⁹⁴ *Bloodywood - Machi Bhasad (Expect a Riot)*, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gsy5sJy5_34.

³⁹⁵ *Bloodywood - Dana Dan (Indian Folk Metal)*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a65A626Ed20>.

beyond classes and nationalities but unifies the world through song. We just try to put some Indian spice in the mix to destroy commercial pop music.”³⁹⁶

Heavy Metal music in Japan is a direct result from American influence. This influence stems from the military presence the United States maintained after World War II. American soldiers stationed in Japan brought in records from home while bands toured in Japan for the military there, but also garnering a Japanese audience in the process. In turn, Japan began having its own Metal scene that gained traction through the 1970s and 1980s. Bands like Anthem were among the early pioneers of the genre in Japan.³⁹⁷ A Metal-proximate subculture, visual kei emerged in the 1980s as a musical movement in Japan that combines Glam rock, Punk, and Heavy Metal elements and is known for its elaborate and flamboyant visual presentation such as the band Dir en Grey.³⁹⁸ Japanese Metal culture is also influenced by anime and manga, with many metal bands incorporating themes from popular anime series and manga into their music and visuals. Anime has become one of the main tracks for Japanese Heavy Metal bands such as SiM and Maximum the Hormone to gain notoriety in pop culture by creating hit-opening themes for anime television shows.³⁹⁹ This trend began with the Japanese anime show Voltron which then turned into the Power Rangers show in the West with Heavy Metal being used in the theme songs and scores of both shows. There is an adaptive cross exchange between the United States and Japan when it comes to Metal. Japanese Heavy Metal has taken inspiration from the West to create an amalgamation of traditional Japanese art and calligraphy Kanji and meshed it with

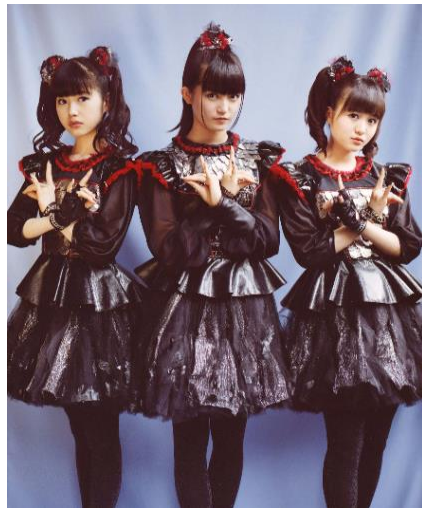
³⁹⁶ *Interview: Bloodywood Discuss Metal Scene in India, Debut Album, and More*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQk16Tct50g>.

³⁹⁷ Wallach, Berger, and Greene, *Metal Rules the Globe*, 270.

³⁹⁸ Metal Injection, “The Bands That Defined Japanese Black Metal,” *Metal Injection*, November 16, 2021, <https://metalinjection.net/scene-report/the-bands-that-defined-japanese-black-metal>.

³⁹⁹ Metal Injection, “The Gorefathers Of Death Metal In Japan,” *Metal Injection*, December 3, 2021, <https://metalinjection.net/scene-report/the-gorefathers-of-death-metal-in-japan>.

Japanese futurism to create a singular medium of art.⁴⁰⁰ FLOW and Orange Range encapsulate this trend by the fusion of synthesizers with Japanese folk instruments like the shamisen (or Japanese banjo as it is sometimes referred) with American rock n’ roll.⁴⁰¹ Japan has also created two subgenres of Heavy Metal known as Kabuki Metal and Kawaii Metal. Kabuki Metal bands such as Ningen Isu incorporate traditional Japanese opera and theater imagery and storytelling in their music, keeping this age-old tradition alive in the 21st century. On the other hand, Kawaii Metal takes inspiration from more modern trends of Kawaii culture, or “cute” culture that is particularly popular with young women in Japan with bands like Baby Metal.⁴⁰² Japanese Metal is a unique case of unusual success as there are very few examples of it being resistant to Western culture or military occupation. On the contrary, Japanese Metal has worked together with Western Metal by infusing it with other aspects of Japanese culture such as movies, television, and fashion.⁴⁰³



⁴⁰⁰ FLOW - Go!!! (Music Video), 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AE4b9jO1uB4>.

⁴⁰¹ OPENING 1 | BLEACH | Asterisk by ORANGE RANGE | VIZ, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW9TwZdWpjw>.

⁴⁰² BABYMETAL - ギミチヨコ!! - Gimme Chocolate!! (OFFICIAL), 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIKqgE4BwAY>.

⁴⁰³ About Japanese Metal, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smITCqrxZOk>.

Figure 28. Kawaii Metal band BABYMETAL, 2016. (left) Moa Kikuchi, Suzuka Nakamoto, Yui Mizumo. Chick, Zachary. Babymetal Japan's Best Fashion Export | Vogue. Photograph. Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.vogue.com/article/babymetal-japanese-band-fashion-style-harajuku>.

Heavy Metal in the post-Cold War and postcolonial world does more than make music and have various scenes. It has also been used to reclaim lost or threatened cultural identities and traditions. Some Māori Heavy Metal bands from Australia and New Zealand incorporate the Māori language (Te Reo Māori) into their music through song lyrics or song titles as a means of preserving and promoting the Māori language and culture.⁴⁰⁴ One of the prominent champions of this style is Alien Weaponry, whose members all have Māori ancestral heritage. The themes explored in Māori Heavy Metal music may include cultural pride, social justice, environmental issues, and preserving Indigenous culture and rights.⁴⁰⁵ Their hit song “Kai Tongata” retells the events surrounding Māori war chief’s Hongi Hika’s return to New Zealand after being in England. The chief returned with firearms and Christianity which Alien Weaponry express destroyed the Māori culture. They recount a reactionary battle between the Chief Hika’s tribe and a neighboring pagan tribe with “A mighty battle to avenge us Our ancestors gather to assist us Our priests prepare the incantations This is the work of Tūmataunga.”⁴⁰⁶ This phenomenon is also visible in Mongolia where bands like the Hu have fused traditional Mongolian language and folk music with Western Heavy Metal to share their culture internationally. Other bands that follow this pattern of Indigenous Folk Metal are Wardrunna of Norway, NiNi of Taiwan, and

⁴⁰⁴ *The Teens Saving Maori Language With Heavy Metal*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvbUSSoKCHA>.

⁴⁰⁵ *ALIEN WEAPONRY - Kai Tangata (Official Video) | Napalm Records*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kwIkF6LFDc>.

⁴⁰⁶ *ALIEN WEAPONRY - Kai Tangata (Official Video) | Napalm Records*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kwIkF6LFDc>.

Nytt Land of Siberia, among many more.⁴⁰⁷

Although spread initially as a facet of Cold War Western culture, in a new juxtaposition Metal is now embraced by those who turn to Metal to actively defend and reinvigorate lost indigenous cultures. The Black Metal of Scandinavia sought to do this militantly and, at times, violently. However, another Metal scene emerged by taking significant influence from the Black Metal scene but acting out peacefully resistant instead of hatefully nihilistic. Rez Metal (Reservation Metal) the Heavy Metal scene that began in late 2003 on specific Native American reservations across the United States was described by Navajo resident of Window Rock, AZ, Myron Lee as, “a bunch of crazy Indians getting wild.”⁴⁰⁸ These bands fuse Native American attire with Black Metal-inspired corpse paint regalia to adopt personas emanating their ancestors’ war paint and religious dress. The lyrical content of these bands falls into one of two categories. The first are recounting of oral histories or mythological stories passed down within the tribes which are sung in Native languages that do not translate into English well. However, one song by Mutilated Tyrant, “Ho’díchííich Dóó’ Sáji” which roughly translates to “Birth to Old” discusses Navajo ideas of reincarnation and oneness with the “world spirit.” The second category deals with reservation life and the Native experience in the United States. I Don’t Konform’s “Fuck Your Face” gives the band’s attitude about white America’s involvement in “aiding” or “helping” the Natives. It is an unwanted gesture in the song that comes off as too little too late. The song also screams, “Fuck your face To all you motherfuckers Who hate our race Say it to our face We’ll put you in your place,” which demonstrates an anger towards racism felt by

⁴⁰⁷ *The Hu Interview - Coachella Curated 2022*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJHSVhY6P78>.

⁴⁰⁸ Ashkan Soltani Stone and Natale A. Zappia, *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 10, 14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14rmptb>.

Natives past and present.⁴⁰⁹

The Rez Metal movement has gone largely unrecognized by much of the Heavy Metal world due to lack of exposure; many of the Native musicians intentionally separate themselves as they do not wish their music and culture to be absorbed or appropriated.⁴¹⁰ Kyle Felter, of Rez Metal band I Don't Konform, stated, "The dark imagery in Heavy Metal is something we identify with, as it isn't too great [on the Reservation] around here. It takes you somewhere else."⁴¹¹ These Rez Metal bands write about the struggles, frustrations, boredom, and struggles found on these dilapidated and impoverished reservations that outsiders cannot fully relate to. The lack of opportunity on reservations is comparative to the broader cultural environment of the 1970s. Deindustrialization, job loss, and lack of education were felt on the reservations even more so, however, than the rest of America as those opportunities were limited to begin with. The Native response however was infinitely less racist and inflammatory, as they were already self-reliant and sufficient to deal with these issues.⁴¹² The DIY ethic of Heavy Metal fits well with the Rez Metal bands due to their lack of means. The notable unique attribute of these Rez Metal bands is the lack of competition between bands for success or recognition as Rory James of Mutilated Tyrant put it, "We are all one big family with the same problems. We are trying to work together to make something to honor our heritage that is beautiful as well as powerful."⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁹ *I DONT KONFORM "F**K YOUR FACE" OFFICIAL MUSIC VIDEO*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFN2hcnh1rI>.

⁴¹⁰ Ashkan Soltani Stone and Natale A. Zappia, *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (University of Nebraska Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14rmptb>.

⁴¹¹ *Metal From the Dirt: Inside the Navajo Reservation's DIY Heavy-Metal Scene*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3AnyzzkDzA>.

⁴¹² Ashkan Soltani Stone and Natale A. Zappia, *Rez Metal: Inside the Navajo Nation Heavy Metal Scene* (University of Nebraska Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv14rmptb>.

⁴¹³ *Rez Metal | Full Heavy Metal Documentary | I Don't Konform*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RrfLrUCrI7k>.



Figure 29. Members of Navajo Black Metal band, Mutilated Tyrant, 2018. (Left Lardel Tsosie, Rory James, Laurence Tsosie. Tolton, Clarke. Navajo Metal Bands Featured in Durango Independent Film Festival's Native Cinema Program. Photograph. Accessed March 24, 2024. <https://www.durangoherald.com/articles/navajo-metal-bands-featured-in-durango-independent-film-festivals-native-cinema-program/>.

The decolonization process was not unique to the Cold War, but the emergence of Heavy Metal was. Whether in the Cold War West or the decolonizing Global South, Heavy Metal music explores themes such as rebellion, alienation, societal critique, and individualism, which resonate with audiences across different historical periods and cultural contexts. Through the universality of these sentiments, Heavy Metal has profoundly impacted global culture and continues to inspire musicians, artists, writers, and filmmakers across generations.⁴¹⁴ Its influence can be seen in various forms of media and artistic expression, indicating its enduring relevance and cultural significance beyond the Cold War era in film, television, video games, and other forms of media. Heavy Metal has fostered a strong sense of community and identity among its fans, transcending geopolitical boundaries and historical contexts well after the Cold War.⁴¹⁵ The genre's emphasis on authenticity, individuality, and solidarity has created a supportive and inclusive subculture thriving in contemporary society. Heavy Metal remains a commercially viable genre with a

⁴¹⁴ Watts, "Nothin' But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s," 180.

⁴¹⁵ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 185.

dedicated fan base and a global reach. While the industry landscape has evolved with technological changes and media consumption habits, Heavy Metal continues to attract audiences through live performances, streaming platforms, merchandise, and other avenues.⁴¹⁶

At the same time, the emergence of diffusion of Heavy Metal is unique to the Cold War context. The themes explored by Heavy Metal during the Cold War were unique to that period. These themes could only develop if the Cold War was present and influenced the music. Since the genre emerged out of these geopolitical realities, it would be fair to say that these same realities spawned the genre and its subsequent subgenres with which, without it, there would be no such genesis. The Cold War's experience and the social and cultural impacts it had are solely responsible for creating such a music form.⁴¹⁷ While the rebellious influence, attitude, and inspiration that Heavy Metal created speak to a timeless human quality of resistance towards authority, Heavy Metal's unique form of individual expression harkens back in perpetuity as a relic of Cold War issues specifically. It was a time of immense government control and oppression that has never been so widely discoursed publicly before nor since. The "heaviness" of industry and progress directly influenced the sound of Heavy Metal.⁴¹⁸ Distorted guitars and voluminous vocals are indeed not unique to Heavy Metal, but the excesses and extremes these Cold War artists took them to were singular, serving only to perpetuate the extremity of all forms of media of that period. Global cultural exchange was another Cold War phenomenon that Heavy Metal had a hand in and actively influenced. The underground and resistance structure of Heavy Metal allowed it to increase the cooperation and relationships of countries whose governments were, on the surface, at odds with each other. Even a thaw of the international conflict, at the

⁴¹⁶ O'Neill, *A History of Heavy Metal*, 228.

⁴¹⁷ Watts, "Nothin' But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s," 81–83.

⁴¹⁸ Christie, *Sound of the Beast*, 230.

very least, between fan citizens comes from the music and the culture of Heavy Metal that crossed boundaries globally and culturally.⁴¹⁹ Despite Heavy Metal's lasting commercial viability, it is nowhere near the same level as during the Cold War era. Heavy Metal's pop fall from grace has been noted and felt by critics and fans alike, with a form of creative stagnation and malaise setting in since the early 2000s. Those who remain are loyal, diehard fans either born into this pseudo underground subculture or raised by the second group alive during the Cold War and remember the joy and enthusiasm it brought them during their rebellious youth⁴²⁰.

That statement alone, "rebellious youth," encapsulates the entirety of Heavy Metal. As Lemmy Kilmister put it, "It's [Heavy Metal] a loud noise to get a reaction that will get chicks and piss your parents off."⁴²¹ This desire for the open rebellion of young people against those they felt were deciding their fate or oppressing their individualism stems from many young people growing disillusioned with mainstream politics and traditional authority structures. They questioned the values and policies of their governments and sought alternative ways of expressing themselves politically and culturally.⁴²² The threat of nuclear war loomed large during the Cold War era, especially during periods of heightened tension such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. The specter of nuclear annihilation fueled a sense of existential dread among young people, motivating them to challenge the status quo and demand change. Young people played a crucial role in social movements, advocating for racial equality, gender rights, environmental protection, and other progressive, egalitarian causes. These movements inspired a spirit of activism and resistance among young people, encouraging them to challenge authority

⁴¹⁹ Stingray and Stingray, *Red Wave*, 240.

⁴²⁰ Konow, *Bang Your Head*, 420.

⁴²¹ *Motorhead - Lemmy Explains Rock and Roll*.

⁴²² McParland, *Myth and Magic in Heavy Metal Music*, 107.

and fight for social change.⁴²³ Young people embraced new forms of artistic expression that challenged conventional norms and values. Rock and roll music, Beat literature, abstract art, and avant-garde cinema were just a few examples of cultural movements that captured the imagination of young people and inspired them to rebel against the status quo. Heavy Metal is the inherent conclusion to this change, as it encapsulates all these aggressive, rapid, and, at times, violent shifts led primarily by young people for better or worse.⁴²⁴

While, as shown in this paper, these changes were at times ill-fated or misguided, the heart and soul of rock n' roll is in Heavy Metal and its history as a unique Cold War movement. What that "heart and soul" is can have many meanings for different people. However, that is what is so uniquely singular about this music. It is appealing to everyone by appealing to no one. Heavy Metal emerged as an outlet during the Cold War for those who did not subscribe to a given ideology but rejected the ridiculousness of the political practices of the day.⁴²⁵ It offered an escape from "East versus West" mentalities in the form of a community that inferred they were underdogs or outsiders, but a family of misunderstood or outcast music lovers that stood for respect, integrity, and subjective artistic beauty.⁴²⁶ Lemmy Kilmister said Heavy Metal was "The scabby bastard child of 1950s rock n' roll. It is the natural conclusion to it. People don't like it or misunderstand it because it's not trying to be nice. It's trying to be badass which is what all good rock n' roll always was...And I think that in turn is why so many people who understand that fact enjoy it. Rock n' roll should be rebellion for its own sake, filled with all kinds of fun naked women...I don't really give a fuck if anybody likes it. I am doing this for me. But if some people like it, then that's great. The fans who have every inch of their body tattooed in our logo are the

⁴²³ Engelhardt, *The End Of Victory Culture*, 193–95.

⁴²⁴ Sarkisian and Gerstel, *Nuclear Family Values, Extended Family Lives*, 105.

⁴²⁵ Service, *The End of the Cold War*, 604.

⁴²⁶ Watts, "Nothin' But a Good Time: Hair Metal, Conservatism, and the End of the Cold War in the 1980s," 220.

ones who will tell us if we're doing our job right, and so far, we've heard no complaints."⁴²⁷



Figure 30. Motorhead pictured with fans at Mayhem Festival Atlanta, GA, 2011. (Left) Mickey Dee, Ian "Lemmy" Kilmister, Jaime Sibert, Shelby Sibert, Phil Campbell.

⁴²⁷ LEMMY 2005 Interview for *Headbanger's Journey* | Raw & Uncut.

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