

UNEXPECTED METAL HEADS – THE MANIFOLD OF METAL SCENE IN THE MODERN WORLD

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I'm eagerly looking forward to the Modern Heavy Metal conference in Helsinki. It's a great honor to be a keynote speaker and a representative of Metal Academia. I plan to begin by discussing the elevation of Hard Rock/Heavy Metal conversation, from lowbrow to blue-collar sports/talk style to the more recent scholarly approaches of the metal studies community.

Following the introduction, I will relay a personal story about a rebellion against academia being a catalyst toward my being drawn to heavy metal music as a youth. Ironically, as an adult, I'd feel equally isolated by some of my metal friends' limited interests (metal, horror/action films and sports) while the same intellectual materials of my parents that had scared me away (New York times Op-Ed pieces, National Public Radio, The New Yorker etc.) would become like a savior - greatly valued in adulthood on my own terms.

Next, I plan to discuss the fact that large segments of the US population - including a disturbingly large number of heavy metal fans - are drawn to simplistic, anti-intellectual television programming. I'll ponder the merging of metal and higher learning and whether this alliance might influence some fans of heavy music to become less dependent upon baseless entertainment and instead become entertained and enriched through genuine science, cultural studies and other worthwhile, fact based ideas.

This will be followed by a segment entitled "Unexpected Metalheads". Today, a modern metalhead can be found behind a desk in a real estate brokerage or law firm, in a classical orchestra pit (as oppose to a mosh pit), a medical lab and many previously unlikely places. Portraits of several unexpected metalheads - interviews and photographs - will be unveiled.

The final segment, "Louder Education Redux" will feature a condensed version of my presentation from MACI, "Louder Education" which explored the concept of hard rock and heavy metal being built upon images of disenchanting youth rising up against parents, teachers and educational institutions, while in truth, education and rock'n'roll (metal or otherwise) needn't be mutually exclusive.