

## EDITORIAL

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A big portion of heavy metal studies has been brought together in this book of proceedings. It includes the research papers to be presented at the conference in the MHM Paper Sessions. They are organised under 14 titles that follow the logic of the paper sessions at the conference. Preceding them, you can find pieces written by the MHM Conference keynote speakers.

The MHM paper process started with the release of the Call For Papers (CFP) on 31 March 2014. By the first deadline (31 August 2014), in total 106 abstracts from over 30 different countries were received. The variety of topics and approaches was already apparent at that time, and such a wide interest also provided a firm ground for the conference planning. By the deadline of 31 December 2014, 70 full papers were submitted to review. A double-blind review process was conducted by our international review committee (members listed below) during January and February 2015. The overall quality and relevance of the papers was regarded as very high, and despite numerous comments and revision recommendations addressed to the authors, we did not need to exclude many papers. Finally, 57 papers were received and included in this book.

The MHM conference contains the word “Modern” within its name. The idea can be traced to the historical period beginning with the rise of Romanticism, the Industrial Revolution, and French and American revolutions. Modernity is generally thought of as ambivalent, something fluid, referring to our experiences of living in the restless 20th and 21st centuries, with utopias and dystopias alike shaping those experiences. The key idea is that popular culture, and thus heavy metal also, are first and foremost products of modern mass media and modernity, and that there indeed remains a trace of Romanticism in the multitude of transgressive metal genres and associated styles.<sup>1</sup>

Acknowledging this idea of heavy metal as something rooted in history, we certainly cannot ignore the idea of postmodern metal styles, the genre defying efforts to go post-metal, or to play with a variety of hybrid music forms. This book contains many efforts to understand and enrich our perception of what metal can be. Hence, we are at the interesting crossroads of tradition and future, where heavy metal can be seen as a form of public history, but also as something that evolves into something perhaps yet unimaginable. The potential richness is similar to all studies of human activity.

So it is obvious that modern heavy metal expands in multiple directions and forms. This also becomes very evident by looking at the collection of papers in this book. Metal studies, if that is what we call this widening collective of people interested in metal as a context and subject matter for academic research, is undoubtedly a global and extremely interdisciplinary field.

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<sup>1</sup> On mass media, see Negus, Keith: *Popular Music in Theory. An Introduction*. Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press 1996, passim. On modernity, see Bauman, Zygmunt: ‘Modernity and Ambivalence’. *Global Culture. Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. Ed. Mike Featherstone. Sage: London 1990; Berman, Marshall: *All That is Solid Melts into Air. The Experience of Modernity*. Sixth Impression. Verso: London 1991.

This is in line with what we wanted the MHM Conference to become. In the CFP, we deliberately invited paper proposals from different fields of academic study, being particularly interested in contributions shedding light on the markets, practices and cultures faced by the metal practitioners and fans in the current multifaceted and global expression of heavy metal and its countless forms and sub-genres. Moreover, the underlying idea was to make the event open and welcoming not only for academics but also for practitioners. By looking at the collection of speakers and presenters, we think we succeeded very well in accomplishing this goal.

Our principle was also to be inclusive in terms of “academic age” of the presenters: to get both established scholars and new PhD students to present their views. Alongside more traditional research papers, novel and creative approaches to research were strongly encouraged. As such, you can see this variety in the book. There are theoretically sound reviews, practical case studies, conceptual studies, methodological papers, ethnographic reports, analyses of music, lyrics and visual artefacts.

In the conference, the keynotes by definition set the underlying tone and address the key themes of the conference. We will hear very personal accounts from great speakers, reviewing both the past and the current status of the heavy metal and related genres and scenes. The MHM paper sessions, the backbone of the conference, then shed light on a number of heavy topics:

- Heavy metal fans and community;
- politics, power, and social processes in heavy metal;
- national identity, history and cultural roots of heavy metal;
- visual culture of heavy metal;
- global issues in heavy metal;
- heavy metal and gender issues;
- race and ethnicity in heavy metal;
- heavy metal history and sub-genres;
- heavy metal and philosophy;
- heavy metal music analyses;
- transformation of heavy metal scenes and genres;
- heavy metal and religion;
- heavy metal business and industries; and
- heavy metal sounds and lyrics.

In addition to academic diversity, the papers and presentations highlight the diversity, extent and obscurity of forms and styles in heavy metal and hard rock. It may have never been easy to fully agree on the characteristics and manifestations, nor the boundaries, of the genre and its sub-styles. And today, the modern metal landscape is more colourful and dynamic than ever. Many of the old styles prevail and evolve, while new interpretations, experiments and cross-overs are constantly being generated, in every corner of the world. This, if something, is a fertile ground for many more research attempts to grow. And more than that, it means an interesting future for the friends of great and challenging music.

To conclude, what becomes clear is the success of the newly-flourishing interdisciplinary project of Metal Studies. If we see it as falling into the continuum of Cultural Studies, metal research can be seen as defying the rigid forms of institutionalised scholarly divisions, and as such, are part of yet another revo-

lution. In the middle of the neoliberal changes within the global academia, it is extremely important to create all kinds of pockets of resistance. It is us who set the spirit free.

We hope that the diversity of the studies presented within the book gives an idea of the explorative free spirit, indeed the freedom, to look at and listen to heavy metal from all imaginable research positions. Enjoy the MHM Conference and reading these great papers! And crank up some great tunes while doing it!

***International paper review committee:***

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