

# Heavy Metal Music and Culture in Rapidly Changing Global Markets

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Abstract <p>Music industry has undergone major transformations widely influenced by music digitalisation and rapid popularisation of online streaming services, subscription models and social media websites. Heavy metal music, being a part of the global music industry, has also experienced the impact of such rapid changes, and it is constantly evolving and reshaping its cultural representation. The development, common practices and innate traits of the heavy metal genre have become an object growing scholarly interest in the last decade and especially with the emergence of international academic conferences and societies dedicated to heavy metal music research.</p> <p>The objective of this study was to illustrate the current standing of heavy metal music in terms of markets and culture and its most distinctive mechanisms of development which differentiate it from other popular music markets in 2015. The thesis was implemented in co-operation with the Modern Heavy Metal Conference, an international academic research conference, which aims at exploring the current specifics of the heavy metal genre. The research was executed in the form of a case study relying on qualitative data acquired from professional field researchers and scholars by using semi-structured interviews. The pool of interviewees was selected with the assistance of a co-operation partner, Dr. Toni-Matti Karjalainen.</p> <p>As a result, the acquired data shows that heavy metal markets exhibit traits of globalisation, shifting importance from regional to transnational markets, yet preserving regional communities. A number of emerging regional markets have swiftly expanded with the help of tools, such as the Internet, direct fan engagement, cultural capital usage and industry understanding. Furthermore, heavy metal music fan base loyalty is ranked strikingly high, accommodating grounds for community formation, appreciation and eagerness to support the artist. While the sub-genre segmentation of both mainstream and extreme metal styles continues, it ensures the overall evolvement and creativity sustainment of the genre.</p>		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Musiikkiteollisuus on kokenut suureksi osaksi internet-palveluiden nopeasta kehityksestä ja kasvavasta suosiosta johtuvia huomattavia muutoksia. Heavy metal musiikki osana musiikkiteollisuutta kehittyy jatkuvasti ottaen uusia muotoja pysyen mukana muutoksessa. Tyyllilajin kehittyminen on viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana herättänyt akateemista mielenkiintoa heavy metal musiikkiin ja kulttuuriin luoden aiheeseen pohjautuvia kansainvälisiä konferensseja ja yhteisöjä.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön tehtävä oli esittää heavy metal musiikin paikka kulttuurin ja markkinoiden näkökulmasta vuonna 2015 sekä tyyllilajin eroavaisuudet verraten muiden tyyllilajien markkinoihin. Opinnäytetyö on tehty yhteistyössä kansainvälisen heavy metal musiikin ja kulttuurin nykyisten ominaisuuksien tutkimiseen tähtäävän Modern Heavy Metal -konferenssin kanssa. Työ on toteutettu tapaustutkimuksena luottaen alan ammattilaisilta ja tutkijoilta haastatteluissa kerättyyn asiantuntijatason tietoon. Haastateltu ryhmä kerättiin yhteistyössä konferenssin järjestäjän, tohtori Toni-Matti Karjalaisen kanssa.</p> <p>Heavy metal tyyllilajin kehitys on osoittanut, että markkinoiden kansainvälistyminen on jatkuvasti suuremmissa osassa huomioiden silti paikallisten markkinoiden merkityksen. Uusien markkina-alueiden määrä on kasvanut merkittävästi verrattain lyhyessä ajassa erinäisten apuvälineiden, kuten internetin, kulttuurillisen pääoman ja musiikkiteollisuuden ymmärryksen ansiosta. Heavy metal -fanien lojaalius on luokiteltu äärimmäisen korkeaksi. Tämä luo vahvan pohjan yhteisöjen muodostumiselle, musiikin ja kulttuurin arvostukselle sekä artistin tukemiselle. Valtavirta- sekä äärimetallin alatyylilajien jatkuva kehittyminen ja uusiutuminen auttaa säilyttämään heavy metal musiikin luovuuden samalla kehittämällä tyyllilajin laajuutta.</p>		
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## CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 External co-operator .....	2
1.2 Research objectives.....	3
2. THEORETICAL BASIS.....	4
2.1 Fluctuations of music markets and recent technological impact .....	4
2.2 Development of metal music markets worldwide .....	8
2.3 Cultural development .....	11
2.4 Metal genre dynamics and ability to evolve .....	14
2.5 Segmentation of heavy metal music .....	16
3. METHODOLOGY AND INTERVIEW RESULTS .....	19
3.1 Research methodology .....	19
3.2 Interviewing field researchers and scholars .....	20
3.3 Interview results .....	22
4. RESULTS.....	35
5. CONCLUSION.....	40
REFERENCES.....	42
APPENDICES .....	46
Appendix 1 - Interview questions .....	47
Appendix 2 - Interview answers .....	49

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The following study focused on the current state of the heavy metal musical genre and its most common attributes as observed during the first half of the year 2015. Rapid changes in the global music industry have been witnessed to influence the development of the genre in terms of distribution, common practices, culture and markets. The study includes a brief history of the heavy metal genre and its segmentation into sub-genres, suggests persistent patterns of evolution and cultural development over the years while also focusing on a number of international markets and their developing metal scene and export. Furthermore, the study addresses the problem of the ongoing evolution of the genre and outlines a number of changes that it is currently undergoing relying on collected data and identified tendencies in its development over the years.

As heavy metal has already become a subject of growing research, five renowned field researchers were interviewed for this study in order to provide their professional opinion and observations on the above-stated topics. The interviewees had diverse backgrounds and a wide experience in the field of research. In addition, they have closely observed the development of the heavy metal scene. Accordingly, their opinions were analytically processed and compared in order to draw the final results of this study.

## 1.1 External co-operator

Fundamentally, the following study was arranged, constructed and finalized in close co-operation with Modern Heavy Metal Conference, an international academic research conference, which will transpire in Helsinki, Finland, between 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2015. The conference is hosted by Aalto University School of Business in collaboration with the International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS) and co-hosted by University of Helsinki, University of Turku, Sibelius Academy, Åbo Akademi University and Finnish Jazz & Pop Archive. The main

co-operation partner for this study was the Head of Organising Committee, Toni-Matti Karjalainen, Ph.D.

Further detailed information on the Modern Heavy Metal Conference can be found on their official website following the link:

<http://www.modernheavymetal.net/> .

## **1.2 Research objectives**

The main objective of this case study was to define the current standing of heavy metal music as reflected through past and the ongoing fluctuations of its practices and culture, international and domestic markets and progression of sub-genres. Furthermore, the study examined the possible progressive changes and development of the heavy metal genre, based on recurring patterns and individual scholarly observations.

Primarily, the aim of the study was to answer the following research questions derived from the theoretical basis as well as the research objectives.

- How can the current state of modern heavy metal music be described in terms of markets and culture?
- What impact do ongoing changes in the music industry have on the development of heavy metal music?

This study focused to a great extent on the heavy metal genre itself, on its current standing in the music industry field, on its attributions, growth, decline and industrial practices. By defining the key points in the history of heavy metal music and its sub-genres, as well as determining how the past has influenced the present of the genre, the thesis also aimed at discovering possible algorithms of how the evolution of heavy metal music could affect its current state and ongoing development.

## **2. THEORETICAL BASIS**

Literature review is utilized as a resource in building theoretical basis. Both printed books and online publications and articles have been used in the process of building the case study.

Books in print are mainly referred to as a source of information on history of heavy metal music and existent patterns in its development, which have influenced the current standing of the genre. Printed books provide reliable data on patterns, repetitive practices and existent industry models.

On the other hand, online publications and articles provide more current information on the subject since they are generated on a more frequent basis compared to printed books. In this study online sources are used to theoretically define the current standing of heavy metal music in comparison with the expert opinions of professionals.

### **2.1 Fluctuations of music markets and recent technological impact**

Wall (2013, 130) conducted a study on the rapid changes in consumer behaviour, music formats and evolution in the record controlling entities, namely record labels, record companies and parent corporations within the music industry. He mentions that in the recent years, the unpredictability in consumer behaviour has increased due to the new formats and the drastic decrease in purchasing the older formats, thus creating distress within the deciding individuals of the record companies. According to Wall (2013, 134-136), different regions work in a different manner when it comes to strategies and consumption of musical genres. On a global scale, a unified marketing strategy cannot be implemented in order to reach the desired goal. This creates an apparent challenge for any new or small label trying to gain attention in a new geographical area.

In the past two decades the consumers' trend of listening to music has undergone drastic changes due to the presence of the Internet. The number of various online streaming services has brought the music easily accessible to its audience. On the other hand, music piracy has also become much easier. New technology has been said to be the death of the music industry. (e.g. Fleetwood, Nicks, 2013.) However, Stevens (2013) argues that this is not accurate and that most recent music revenue figures support this argument.

According to the 2015 issue of the annual Digital Music Report, provided by the international non-profit organisation IFPI, music is an ever-evolving portfolio business generating revenue through various channels, such as "music subscription services, CDs, vinyl LPs, downloads and performance rights licensing" (IFPI Digital Music Report 2015, 7), and the most notable current change in the industry is the increase of online music streaming at the expense of physical sales and download revenues (IFPI Digital Music Report 2015, 7). Online music streaming and subscriptions are now a vital part of the music industry, with strengthening positions as key trends in the business and notable potential for further growth, as suggested by the British Phonographic Industry (hereafter BPI). By analysing the annual data figures provided by the IFPI, BPI concludes that in 2014, for the first time so far, digital music revenues matched the physical sales on a global scale, constituting a total of 46% of all music sales. Furthermore, subscription services currently represent 23% of the digital music market, and the awareness and actual usage of licensed services is rising with the help of improved and evolving payment methods, bundled services and ease of access, to name some. It is also suggested that the popularisation of streaming services as a key music trend in 2014 and early 2015 is in a measure due to the habits and models of young consumers, particularly their lack of experience in actual 'owning' of music. (British Phonographic Industry 2015, see [www.bpi.co.uk](http://www.bpi.co.uk).)

Globally, the music industry has witnessed a decline of physical sales revenues, and, yet, a steady rise of digital revenues, as stated by the IFPI Digital Music Report (2015). To illustrate this, the total digital revenues on a global scale had



risen from 4.4 billion US dollars in 2009 to 6.9 billion US dollars in 2014. In addition, music service subscription revenues constituted 18% of the global digital revenues in 2013, while in 2014 its share reached 23%. Regarding regional music markets' fluctuations in 2014 as compared to 2013, the figures show that Europe and Asia suffered a decline in generated revenue (however, a decline smaller than 5%). Out of the larger European markets, the UK and France both saw decline and only Germany showed positive growth accounting to 1.9%. However, the smaller or developing European markets are seen to be on the rise, displaying figures of growth in countries such as Slovakia, Ireland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Steady regional growth following these criteria is also noted largely in Latin America (7.3%), making it the fastest-growing music sales region in the last four years, as well as in smaller markets such as South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore and China. (IFPI Digital Music Report 2015, 6-9).

The table below illustrates the share (in percentage), as well as the value change (in percentage) in the global music market revenues, based on format, comparing the figures drawn in 2013 to those in 2014. The data is derived from BPI (2015) and is based on IFPI Digital Music Reports (BPI, 2015).

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>Value change (%)</b>
<b>Physical</b>	49%	46%	-8.1%
<b>Digital</b>	43%	46%	+6.9%
<b>Performance rights</b>	6%	6%	+8.3%

<b>Synchronisation</b>	2%	2%	+8.4%
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*Table 1: Global music market revenues (Adapted from: Global Digital Music Revenues Match Physical Format Sales for First Time 2015, Editors notes)*

The above-mentioned models and channels are seen to constantly alter the music markets, and they have differentiated them from the decades when the channels for music exposure were clear and somewhat limited. In fact, Hirschorn (2007, 168) suggests that, for a music fan, the era of music digitalisation has been overwhelming, since in the past the only possibilities to acquire music were limited to CDs and the radio, while nowadays a fan could easily access music through numerous platforms, devices and services.

Radio held the ability to influence music markets to a great extent in the 1980-1990. For instance, in America listening to the radio as a secondary activity (mainly while driving, working or at home) increased "from 54 minutes per day in 1965 to almost 90 minutes in 1990", constituting about 10 hours of radio exposure per week for the general population, designating the media strongly influential (Robinson 1996, 60-63). Furthermore, swiftly following the birth of MTV (short for Music Television) in 1981, the music market changed drastically and music videos revealed their full potential for the artist, as Konow (2002) argues. While previously music videos had been aired mainly on television shows and late-night programs, MTV provided a fast-growing platform which revolutionized the creative development and promotion of various music styles. As a matter of fact, MTV strengthened its position in the music business so notably and quickly that radio stations would immediately rotate a song had it been aired on the channel. (Konow 2002, pp. 133-135.)

On the other hand, the situation for the artist may differ when compared to consumers' satisfaction with digitalisation. Nowadays, it is complicated for a niche

artist to acquire a mainstream commercial status, mainly because of the inexhaustible possibilities to generate content both on the Internet and via media, the grown popularity of 'do-it-yourself' models, and the general decline of limited distribution channels (Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013, 38).

Yet, the 'do-it-yourself' model has become the main channel for a number of artists and newly-launched bands to take their first steps towards larger audiences, especially in the social media websites, such as Facebook and YouTube. Professor Neilstein (2010) agrees that the strong presence of social media sites in the current metal scene has provided new dimensions in self-promotion, distribution and fan-engagement. This relatively fresh model can assist artists to reach international recognition in a matter of hours or days from the time of creating and posting an exceptional or original video blog or a blog entry, video, picture or any other sensational online download if implemented properly (www.mtv.fi. 2014; Heikkilä, Saikkonen 2013).

## **2.2 Development of metal music markets worldwide**

When it comes to heavy metal music culture and markets, they may have considerable roots and growth mechanisms in Europe and the United States. However, the practices and current form of the genre are widely influenced by its global multiplicity and diverse local contexts (Knopke 2014, 107).

Daniel Trilling (2007) suggests that heavy metal music has already gained popularity all over the world, especially after its quick expansion outside the borders of its birthplace in England. The genre relishes plenty of fans in Latin America, India, Jamaica and even in the Middle East. The majority of admirers in such areas consists mostly of open-minded young people who connect with heavy metal music on a cultural level and are strongly influenced by its message, or alternatively do not appreciate popular or conservative mainstream genres. (pp. 38-40.)

Likewise, in places such as Kenya, heavy metal culture is currently on the rise since the urban infrastructure allows such growth. However, rural regions are still being excluded in terms of communication, music distribution or production (Knopke 2014, 107). In Puerto Rico the heavy metal scene is strongly dismissed by the majority of population, and it has remained completely underground up to this day, thus leading to the cultural formation of strong bonds and a sense of community and unity between the metal scene members (Varas-Díaz, Rivera-Segarra, Medina, Mendoza & González-Sepúlveda 2014, 92).

In addition to the development of the scene in the above-mentioned countries, Indonesia has spawned a vast number of local metal bands up to this day. Wallach (2005, 17-18) links the growth of the popularity of the so-called 'underground music' in Indonesia to the country's movement towards democracy led mainly by the Indonesian youth in the 1990s and opening the scene for quickly evolving metal music. Currently, Indonesia has an "enormous metal scene [...], producing new variations of the metal genre" and is also quickly developing its metal export mechanisms (Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013, 120).

In the European countries, heavy metal culture still provokes controversial opinions although music export and markets have been seen to broaden. For instance, in France metal culture is still unconventional and less known, persistently straying from the mainstream, even though the expansion of the popularity of metal festivals, such as Hellfest, may very well be leading heavy metal slightly further away from the underground, at least on a national level (Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013, 98-99). Germany, on the other hand, has had a great impact on the development of metal music markets not only in Europe but also in the US and Japan. This major market influence is partially due to the abundance of metal artists originating from Germany and the well-branded open-air festivals. However, the main reason behind such an impact is the quick and steady growth of German record labels, such as Century Media Records, Metal Blade Europe and SPV, which have become major field leaders branching out worldwide and targeting new potential markets along with the

established ones. (Reesman 2000; 2002.) Eastern Europe has also established a thriving metal scene: countries such as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Romania have been witnessed to open new market possibilities, focusing primarily on the extreme sub-genres of metal (Sharpe-Young 2007, 426).

Furthermore, Serbia has strengthened its developing music market with the major assistance of the well-known EXIT summer festival. Ever since its first edition in 2000, the festival has drawn a total of over 2.5 million visitors from more than 60 different countries and it has won the title 'Best Major Festival' at the European Festival Awards in 2014, prevailing over nine other leading European festivals at the finals. The EXIT Festival is multiple-style oriented with a number of stages concentrating on different music genres. One of them is the Explosive Stage, which is dedicated solely to metal music and boasts with strong line-ups consisting of Serbian and international metal performers each year. (www.exitfest.org; Veselinovic for CNN 2014.)

Regarding Northern European markets, Sharpe-Young (2007) suggests that ever since the birth of heavy metal music, the dark nature of the style has fascinated the Scandinavian and Nordic countries. Norway has long been tightly associated with the outburst of black metal music, Sweden has led the way for innovative metal sub-genres, and Finland has become synonymous to an abundant high-quality metal scene. Above all, the aforementioned countries have been able to establish an extraordinarily strong image in this field of music and even create and assist the formation of sub-genres such as black metal and symphonic metal. (Sharpe-Young 2007, pp.198; 356; 390; 478). Thus, it is not without a reason that some of the early Scandinavian bands such as the Swedish "The Leather Run" and "The Nomads" have been included in the top 500 best heavy metal albums (Eddy, 1998, 93; 251).

Asian music markets adopted heavy metal early on, and the scene has developed significantly in terms of a vast increase in the international fan base (Sharpe-Young, 2007, 408). Japan is and has been the most active innovator in

the Asian metal scene spawning new sub-genres and changes, such as combining electronic music to heavy metal (Galsterer, 2006). Japan also has a notable amount of co-operation with other countries in order to expand their markets. One of such instances is Music Finland with the Finland Fest that has already been established as an annual event since 2005 (Häikiö, 2015; Creativeman, 2015).

On the other hand, nowadays heavy metal music is still censored and suppressed mostly in the Muslim world. Ever since the style's popularization in the late 1980s in countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Iran, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, fans and musicians from the metal scene have been repressed and even prosecuted on religious and political grounds. Yet, influenced mainly by the ongoing revolutionary activism and movement towards cultural democracy, a number of countries in the Middle East, North Africa and the Persian Gulf have begun to accept the metal style and culture, at least to a certain extent. (Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013, 6-7.)

### **2.3 Cultural development**

Ludwig (1992, 467) argues that there is a strong, yet complicated, relation between culture and creative expression because societies are able to set cultural norms and guide artistic development. However, in each society there are certain individuals who surpass the traditional limits and defy the norms, thus reshaping culture. Moreover, Cassidy (1991) supports Hebdige's idea that culture is not universal in its essence, but it is defined differently by individuals. Hence, larger groups of people are entitled to creating various forms of culture. In this sense, subcultures often come to existence in order to contradict certain traditional cultural styles or, more specifically, certain customary beliefs and norms of society. Since these styles and norms evolve constantly, so do subcultures. (Cassidy, 34-39.)

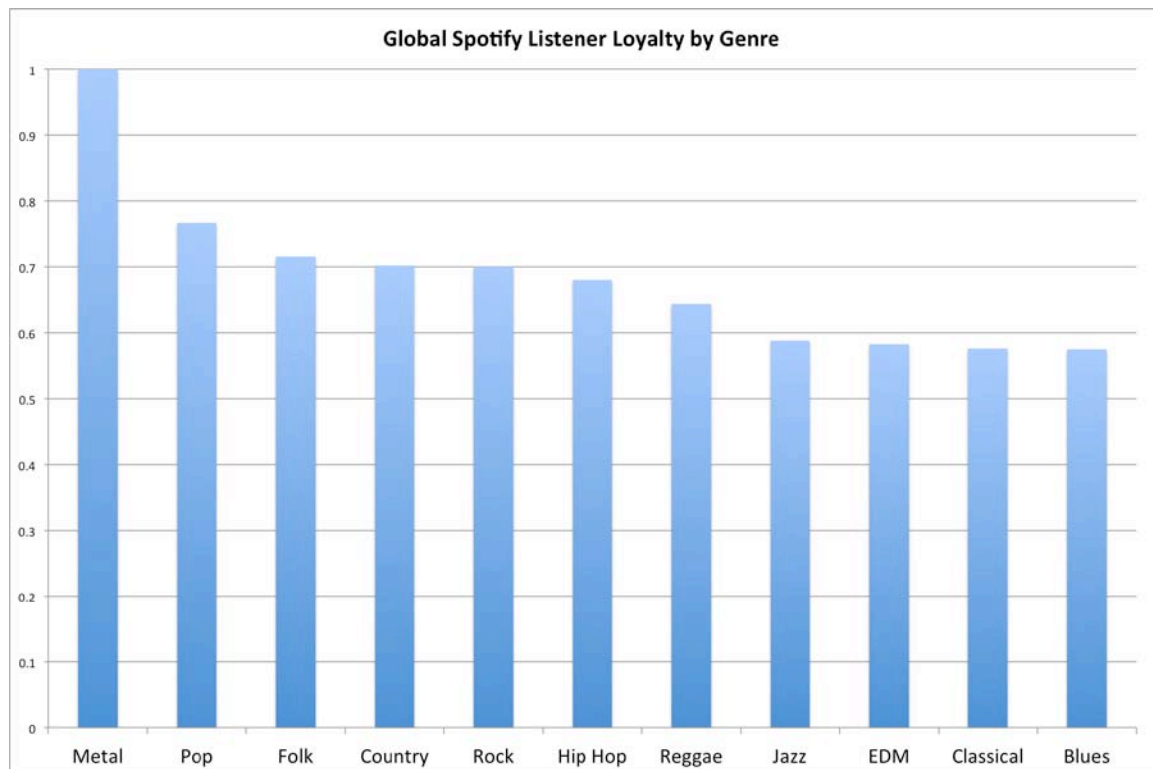
Lewis, Gonzalez and Kaufman (2011) conducted a four-year-long study on the correspondence of college students' habits of listening to music, watching movies and reading books. This study showed that regarding each of the three chosen genres' fan bases, namely pop music, jazz/classical music and indie/alternative music, the researched group's behaviour differed to a great extent. The results showed that those who listened to the most mainstream pop music also tended to watch the most popular movies and read the most popular books, whereas especially those listening to indie/alternative music had the tendency to distance themselves from the most popular trends.

In terms of heavy metal culture, one of the vital elements found in its core is controversy. Ever since its emergence, the genre has frequently been perceived "as counterculture simply by existing" (Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013, 10).

Still, the pioneers of heavy metal music, for example Black Sabbath, emerged in the golden era of music, at a time when bands had strong individualities and when the music admirers were supportive and dedicated and music was equal to culture (Rosen 2002, 17). Nonetheless, it is widely known that over the years heavy metal music has received vast criticism and rejection by the general public, the media and even by the music industry itself, forcing plenty of musicians to distance themselves from the genre in the 1990s. Yet, regardless of its rise and decline, metal music has always relied on its strong fan base forming a consolidated and lasting culture. (Konow 2002, xii.) Nowadays researchers are starting to analyze the actual benefits of such a strong culture and sense of community detected in the heavy metal scene (Varas-Díaz et al. 2014, 91).

As mentioned above, heavy metal music tends to form lasting cultural traits and a communal sense amongst its admirers. As far as loyalty towards the genre is concerned, metal fans have already gained distinction, as shown by a current data analysis provided by the leading music streaming service Spotify. The analysis shows that out of all Spotify users globally, metal fans remain most loyal to their genre of choice (see Figure 1). As explained in research, this does not

imply that metal listeners do not occasionally explore/listen to other styles of music, but it indicates essentially that they return to the metal genre, making them the most loyal fans on a global level. Nationally, home-grown genres are seen to dominate the charts of fan loyalty. However, in a vast number of countries, such as Australia, Brazil, Great Britain, Greece, Mexico, Philippines, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, the metal genre in the top five in terms of loyalty (Van Buskirk, 2015).



*Figure 1: Global Spotify Listener Loyalty by Genre (Van Buskirk, 2015)*



## 2.4 Metal genre dynamics and ability to evolve

Heavy metal as a music style emerged over forty years ago and even though it has always incorporated diverse musical, stylistic and cultural tendencies, nowadays it still carries its original and distinctive 'set of basic metal characteristics' (Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013 ,1). Over the years heavy metal markets and culture have suffered times of decline due to various reasons on more than one occasion. Although some suggest that the metal scene has already passed its summit, Parker (2011, 40) disagrees by using the argument that metal music has the ability to evolve and renew itself.

According to Rosen (2002), the pioneer of heavy metal music, Black Sabbath, formed its identity in the late 1960s and early 1970s, namely in the golden age of music. Their compositions took an experimental leap towards a sound heavier than that of any other band at this time, and the reasoning behind the creation of such music was the post-war horror and anger. The musicians were born in Aston, a suburb of Birmingham, England, which had been heavily bombed, left in ruins and uncertainty. Thus, music became an outlet for repressed emotions. (pp. 16-17.)

Following the study of lyrical themes and musical patterns found in the songs of Black Sabbath and Judas Priest, as well as the musicians' own statements, Harrison (2010, 145-146) suggests that working-class frustrations and the industrial geography of Birmingham were a vital factor in the formation of the genre. He claims that even though heavy metal music sporadically spread around the world and nurtured numerous sub-genres as early as a decade after its birth, the industrial post-war Birmingham remains the main influence behind the formation of two bands initiating and defining the heavy metal genre, namely Black Sabbath and Judas Priest.

Heavy metal markets extended their overall development largely with the birth of a genre known as the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (hereafter "NWOBHM") in 1979, as stated by Sharpe-Young (2007). The NWOBHM is one of the most

significant sub-genres of metal that has not undergone any major changes during the years of its existence since it formed a distinctive culture. Even though by 1979 punk had already been established as the new defining culture for rebels, the media considered heavy metal to be older generation's music. Actually, punk contributed to the birth of NWOBHM with the 'do-it-yourself' mentality and the attitude not to embrace the existing genre so much as to take it as an example when creating one's own art. A number of new-born labels, such as Bullet Records and Neat assisted in establishing the term as a new sub-genre for metal in the United Kingdom and the surrounding countries, and shortly bands, such as Def Leppard, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden became notable pioneers. NWOBHM was not only evolving the scene in the UK but bore influence to metal music on a global scale. (Sharpe-Young 2007, pp. 66-88.)

After experiencing a peak of demand and recognition in the 1980s, heavy metal music abruptly lost its popularity in 1990s and plenty of musicians felt discomfort when associated with the genre, as Konow (2002) indicates. The blame for this decline of the genre was placed upon plenty of factors, including, but not limited to, record labels, the Seattle scene, MTV, the arrogance of musicians themselves. All factors combined, the fact remains that heavy metal music suffered a downfall for nearly a decade. Market deterioration of metal music was nonetheless discontinued already in the late 1990s by a new generation of musicians fusing folk, hip-hop, grunge and other music genres into the core of metal music. (pp.383-385.) Not only were new metal sub-genres born, but the traditional metal sound also started regaining its glory: a good number of heavy metal pioneers from the 1970-80s made a comeback with extensive worldwide tours, band reunions and new record releases, relying heavily on the stable support of independent record labels and the newly restored trust of major record labels (Flick 1999, 4).

However, debates on the authenticity of modern heavy metal compared to old-school metal continue currently, as plenty of established artists decide to alter their initial musical style or sound. From the audience's point of view, plenty of fans do encourage the occasional change of direction musicians may want to

take, as long as there is proper balance between musical adventurism and certain consistency, as suggested by Puri (2014). In his research, he compares two essentially different approaches to artistic development in heavy metal: the experimental and adventurous approach adopted by Metallica and the conservative yet consistent musical manners of Iron Maiden. The study clarifies that each method hides opportunities as well as threats for the artist, neither approach is straightforwardly superior but both can lead to creative development if not taken to extremes. It is only natural that musicians evolve as personalities and so does their music, therefore neither approach is fatal to the genre's ability to evolve. It is thus concluded that heavy metal musicians are in their full right to draw inspiration from other musical genres, for this practice further assures the flexibility and development of heavy metal music. (pp. 81-82.)

## **2.5 Segmentation of heavy metal music**

According to the findings of Sharpe-Young (2007), heavy metal as an entity bears distant traces of blues, jazz, skiffle and folk music created in Britain in the 1960s. He argues, however, that those early influences cannot define the genre known today as heavy metal since musicians draw inspiration from a wide range of sources making the genre ever-evolving. Even though metal music is diverse and has spawned a variety of sub-genres, it must not be seen as an offspring of other music styles but rather as an individual genre. (pp. 8-10.)

The following table illustrates the evolution and segmentation of metal music by presenting its most notable sub-genres, listed in chronological order by the first released album. The timeline begins with the formation of Black Sabbath and enlists the name of the sub-genre in question, its country of origin and the year which marked its beginning. All data illustrated in the table is derived from the findings of Sharpe-Young (2007; 2009).

*Table 2: Table of notable metal sub-genres for the period 1970-1997 (adapted by Sharpe-Young 2007;2009)*

<b>Subgenre name</b>	<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Year of birth</b>
Heavy Metal	United Kingdom	1970
Doom Metal	United States of America	1972
NWOBHM	United Kingdom	1979
Thrash Metal	United States of America	1981
Neo-Metal	United States of America	1983
Death Metal	United States of America	1984
Power Metal	United States of America	1984
Black Metal	United Kingdom	1984
Progressive Metal	United States of America	1984
Speed Metal	United Kingdom	1985
Grindcore	United States of America	1985
Gothic Metal	United Kingdom	1990
Folk Metal	United Kingdom	1991
NWOAHM	United States of America	1995
Symphonic Metal	Finland	1997

What could have possibly led to such swift segmentation and division of one seemingly monolithic music genre? Assertedly, even though a vast number of heavy metal artists choose to remain true to their traditional musical roots, there are also plenty of musicians and bands which venture beyond the well-established metal genres thus creating innovative sub-genres (Sharpe-Young 2007, 478.) However, there are controversial opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of such genre division and transformation.

For instance, after studying several specific heavy metal sub-genres and interviewing young metal fans, Rowe (2012, 9) insists that very few admirers would use the term 'heavy metal' as such nowadays; instead, they would rather refer to their music of choice by classifying the specific sub-genre (e.g.

thrash/black/death doom metal), or furthermore indicate the exact niche of the sub-genre using several prefixes or suffixes.

Yet heavy metal sub-genre categorization is not so universal nowadays: in an attempt to develop an automatic sub-genre classification of heavy metal music, Tsatsishvili (2011) encounters the following problems in terms of metal genre taxonomies:

- When labelling different sub-genres, semantics vary from geographical location, historical event or instrumentation, to specific features of the style;
- Different databases classify bands/albums under diverse or interchangeable sub-genre labels;
- There is no universal way of systematically organising and naming sub-genres, which leads to inconsistency;
- Certain databases use solely umbrella terms to classify genres, while others do not use this practice. (pp. 4-7.)

Nevertheless, it has been suggested that the continuous division of heavy metal music into sub-genres may be harmful to its general development and discourage admirers. For instance, in an interview, one of the founders of the Australian Rock and Metal Institute Christian Broome expresses the opinion that there are too many sub-genres under the umbrella term of metal music. He also indicates his viewpoint that such labelling straightforwardly designates separatism and may lead to disengagement of fan base. (Besanko 2014.) Moreover, as noted by Puri (2014, 82-83), development of heavy metal music is not necessarily achieved by creating new sub-genres but it could be rather attained by well-established artists experimenting with their musical style, taking a step beyond their original sound hence sustaining creativity.

### **3. METHODOLOGY AND INTERVIEW RESULTS**

It is apparent that, over forty years after the birth of heavy metal as a genre, a pioneer generation of heavy metal researchers and scholars are now focusing on the scene, analysing its attributes, development and politics of identity (e.g. Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures 2013, 12-13; Varas-Díaz et al. 2014, 88-89). Moreover, Hickam (2014) insists that currently there is an enormous amount of articles, documentaries, dissertations and works in general which examine metal music. Yet heavy metal studies have actually reached their peak not earlier than six years ago when the first international scholarly conference on metal music took place. What followed is extensive scholarly communication, periodic conferences and panels, journals and archives of existent studies and, above all, the emergence of the International Society for Metal Music Studies. (pp. 5-6.)

#### **3.1 Research methodology**

The thesis was built in the form of a case study. The main methodology adopted for the process of data acquisition and thesis creation consisted of semi-structured interviews with professional field researchers and scholars, as well as the use of reliable literary publications, online sources and articles. This particular approach provided the opportunity to focus on acquiring qualitative data on the defined subject.

#### **Case study methodology**

As opposed to quantitative research, qualitative case study methods serve the research objectives and provide fewer but strictly professional assessments of the matter. For instance, in their research on the advantages of using qualitative case study methodology, Baxter & Jack (2008, 556) conclude that a case study approach is highly beneficial for novice researchers hoping to gain information on

complex phenomena and furthermore achieve their research objectives by using various sources of information.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

Being the main data source, each semi-structured interview comprised ten open-ended questions. The themes incorporated into these questions revolved around the current practices and standing of heavy metal music, the growth and decline of its markets, as well as predictions on its future development based on existent patterns. The interview questions were structured in a way which provoked the interviewees' to express their personal opinions, attitudes and observations relying on their background experience, current involvement in the industry or conducted research.

The pool of the interviewees was selected with the assistance of the co-operation partner Dr. Toni-Matti Karjalainen. It consisted of industry professionals and researchers, whose papers had been approved for presentations at the Modern Heavy Metal Conference 2015, or, in addition to this, who would deliver the key note speeches at the conference. These specific professionals were targeted especially for their ability to provide and communicate the most competent and up-to-date information on the subject.

### **3.2 Interviewing field researchers and scholars**

Five carefully selected heavy metal music studies professionals were interviewed with ten main questions in order to gather most accurate and current information on the state of heavy metal markets from the academic point of view. All interviewees have diverse background, interests and current occupations, however the strong link between them lies in their considerable contribution to the recent growth of heavy metal research, their knowledge and personal experience in the field of heavy metal industry and, additionally, findings and observations on the development of the scene based on years of involvement. The short

introduction provided below may act as a contextual setting and further expression of the motivation behind the choice of these exact contributors.

The first interviewee is **Deena Weinstein**, Ph.D., a Professor of Sociology at DePaul College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences in Chicago (see <http://las.depaul.edu/departments/sociology/faculty/Pages/deena-weinstein.aspx>). Deena is a long time heavy metal enthusiast and an experienced professional in heavy metal studies. She has written various articles and reviews in multiple relevant releases and is best known for her book *Heavy Metal: A Cultural Sociology* (1991). Secondly, **Keith Kahn-Harris**, a senior heavy metal scholar focusing largely on extreme metal and its development, shared his observations and findings on the metal scene and its development on a global scale as well as in his home country, the United Kingdom (see <http://www.kahn-harris.org/about/>). Kahn-Harris is one of the founding members of the International Society for Metal Music Studies and, like Weinstein, has written multiple publications. He has been working as a sociologist, editor and lecturer. The third interviewee is **Karl Spracklen**, Ph.D., a Leeds Metropolitan University Principal Lecturer from the United Kingdom (see <http://www.karlspracklen.com/>). Karl is a notable contributor and editor of *Metal Music Studies* (2015) and also a board member of the International Society for Metal Music Studies. **Brian Hickam** is a faculty member and researcher at the Benedictine University in Illinois (see <http://ben.academia.edu/BrianHickam>). He was involved in the founding of the International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS), the extensive Metal Studies Bibliography and last but not least, the Heavy Metal & Hardcore Punk Archives. The final interviewee is Associate Professor Jeremy **Wallach** from Bowling Green State University, Ohio. Jeremy is the author of *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World* (2011). He has notable experience in teaching and writing numerous articles and other publications.

Each of the above-mentioned field professionals was first contacted via e-mail. The initial e-mail provided details on the study and offered the possibility to contribute by sharing opinions and findings on specific topics. After mutual



agreements, suitable interview appointments were made. The interviewees were given the option to choose their preferred way of executing the interviews, for example in a written form (via e-mail) or in a conversational form (via Skype or telephone). In the end, one interview was done via e-mail and all the rest transpired as a Skype conversation since it was the common preference: the program provides quality and free of charge possibility for long-distance calls and all responders reside in countries other than Finland.

All Skype interviews were executed separately and were fully recorded. The total time of interview recordings all together comprised 2 hours and 13 minutes. As a next step, each interview was transcribed onto an individual document. The interview questions can be found as an appendix to this document (see: Appendices). The interview answers aside from Deena Weinstein's are provided as an appendix due to decline from the interviewee.

In order to analyse the results of these interviews, the essential research objectives were assigned to separate thematic divisions. Afterwards, the answers to the semi-structured interviews were reviewed in order to extract the vital information and statements most relative to the research objectives. Then, the thematic findings and observations provided by the interviewees were critically compared in order to draw qualitative data and applicable interview results. Finally, the main outcome of the semi-structured interviews was examined in comparison to the executed literature review (see: 2. THEORETICAL BASIS) and conclusive results of the study were presented (see: 4. RESULTS).

### **3.3 Interview results**

#### **Fan engagement and impact of the Internet on metal music markets**

In today's society, social media websites and services as well as other internet communities are critical tools for an artist to be able to reach and communicate

with their fan base. All of the interviewees shared the same opinion that social media websites have replaced the older and more traditional formats such as magazines when a potential fan is seeking for new bands to follow or receive updates from their current favourites.

Spracklen stated that “social media is the only way any band can make any connection to fans”. Hickam, Kahn-Harris and Weinstein argue that the older models of fan engagement such as ‘meet and greet’ work more with heavy metal fans than other genres’ fan base. Weinstein also brought up the point that the heavy metal-concentrated websites, magazines and peers are a great source for a fan to learn of new acts but there is not an exclusive channel for all of the fans to obtain information about the recent developments. Hickam said the following: “I still think face to face meet and greet is what a lot of the metal fans want” thus presenting that there is still a need for the traditional ways of engagement. According to Kahn-Harris, the importance of traditional activities such as writing letters between the fan and the band has diminished to almost non-existent.

The social media however, has brought the music instantly accessible to the fans and has eased the workload with distribution. Wallach indicated that heavy metal fans in the most part still prefer to buy the physical album with which all of the other interviewees agreed on. Since the time the internet has been accessible by the general public, people have found easier ways to obtain the wanted pieces of music instead of just sticking to the traditional physical album or vinyl-LPs. Kahn-Harris presented that the main effect of the outburst of social media and the internet has killed the concept of demo tape. In the past nearly every unsigned heavy metal band created demo tapes in the format of c cassette in order to obtain a recording contract.

The immense grow of piracy was brought up by Hickam. Piracy concerns metal music audience to a certain extent but as he presents it, to a less significant amount than some other genres’ fan base. Wallach agreed stating the following: “it is also true that metal has been less vulnerable to their corrosive effects than most music genres”. Strengthening the position of heavy metal and its sub-

genres among the followers and not letting the variety decrease. In a sense, social media and the internet have helped in maintaining the legacy of heavy metal whilst presenting new sub-genres to the field. Aside piracy, there are negative sides to services such as YouTube due to the possibility to download and utilise the songs and the music videos.

Hickam suggested that the bands gain more exposure through the social media thus making international breakthrough easier. This presents a difficulty to distinguish one's own act from the overwhelming diversity of the ever-growing scene. The key to gaining the biggest possible benefit according to him was to be actively present in services such as YouTube or SoundCloud.

Spracklen introduced another viewpoint from the extreme metal bands whose ideologies or beliefs prevent them from joining this trend thus engaging their fan base strictly at live performances also making sales more difficult. This begot that the fans most of the time need to obtain their information about upcoming events from either mouth to mouth, underground magazines or from the band's posters or flyers.

## **Development of regional markets and metal export**

In terms of market development and globalisation, the interviewees were asked to share their observations on the evolvement of regional metal markets, the growth of metal music export practices and, furthermore, the mechanisms behind such developments.

Both Kahn-Harris and Spracklen named Finland as a country which has remarkably developed as market and thus improved its metal export globally in the last decade. Spracklen insisted that "Finland has made a huge impact globally" and moreover, Kahn-Harris observed that "Finland has always had a thriving metal scene but in the last 10 to 20 years it has become a major metal exporter, particularly in the more mainstream forms of metal, as well as in the underground". Other Nordic Countries, such as Norway and Sweden, were also

accounted for, mainly when it comes to popularisation of black and death metal markets. The immense growth of Indonesian metal scene was indicated by Wallach and Hickam. According to Wallach, “Indonesia has had a massive metal scene for over 25 years but is only just now gaining international recognition, thanks mostly to YouTube”, similarly to China, “whose metal scene was miniscule 10 years ago, [but] now has a number of world-class bands that have been recognized on the world stage”, although “neither country provides state support for metal music as a cultural export”. Moreover, Spracklen named emerging metal markets, such as the Asian one, as “interesting markets where new bands are being created every day and more and more of these bands are getting known to the wider public”.

Kahn-Harris, Spracklen and Wallach all insisted that metal markets are currently experiencing the process of globalisation and a movement from regional markets towards worldwide recognition, thus crossing borders. Wallach suggested that Asia and Latin America are rapidly strengthening their positions in the global metal scene, Kahn-Harris mentioned Israel as growing market and Hickam indicated the potential of Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Following the examination of current trends and persistent patterns of globalisation, Wallach suggested that ‘if present trends continue, by 2040 the majority of major active metal bands will be from outside the Anglophone world’.

The table (Table 3: Current state and potential of metal music markets) below illustrates collective data gathered from the interviewed scholars in terms of current state and growth potential of regional metal music markets.

*Table 3: Current state and potential of metal music markets*

Well-established metal music markets	United Kingdom United States of America Norway Sweden
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	Germany
Metal markets with notable export growth during the last decade	Finland Indonesia China Russia Brazil Australia New Zealand Israel
Emerging metal markets with vast growth potential (continents)	Asia South America

Additionally, the interviewees were requested to identify certain practices and patterns which led to the aforementioned market growth. All scholars agreed that the Internet has contributed greatly to the globalisation of metal music and culture and also “levels the playing field” (Kahn-Harris) for musicians worldwide. Digitalisation of music, as well as social media and music streaming websites, such as YouTube, Facebook, SoundCloud and Spotify, were singled out as crucial channels for metal market growth.

Wallach suggested that “the opportunity to listen to [music] almost instantly is what has done it, in my opinion. A lot of bands have never played outside their countries.” He also enlisted several other channels through which regional metal music markets are able to evolve and eventually globalise: metal conferences, festivals, word-of-mouth, magazine/online reviews, automotive recommendation system of music streaming services. According to Wallach, these are the factors which add up when it comes to popularisation of regional markets worldwide.

With respect to the importance of metal music as a market, Spracklen expressed firm confidence that metal music is and will be a part of the music industry in general, and metal artists need to adopt understanding of the way music markets work nowadays in order to sustain a proper globalised metal market. His description of current music market mechanisms and the spot of metal music in the business were the following:

*People need to understand that there is a market. I think there are still musicians who get into music because they are passionate about music and they want to play, but then they do not understand how to get people to listen to it. The only way to get people to listen to it is to understand that this is a business and you are in the market where you have to kind of sell yourself. You may not be necessarily trying to make money, but you want people to listen to the music, you want people to recognise that you have some legitimate voice on the scene. – Karl Spracklen*

Furthermore, Spracklen addressed the current gaps in the metal music market and the need of cultural capital and industry understanding on behalf of the artist in the metal field: “You need to have a lot of cultural capital, need to understand how contracts work, how technology works, how to sell things online. So it is kind of a learning skill gap between the musicians and the demands of the modern music industry”.

## **Funding the underground scene**

While interviewing the academics on the subject of funding a heavy metal band’s career, day job, live performances and selling merchandise were somewhat above other options in the answers. Kahn-Harris claimed that there is not one dominant model to fund a metal musicians’ career, which was also made clear by the rest of the interviewees, because there is no trust in a single model of funding a metal band.

However, a diverse variety of options for funding was brought up by all five academics. The following ways were mentioned: crowdfunding, active live performances, selling merchandise and exclusive products, signing a record deal,

subscriptions, selling digital products and day jobs. Aside from funding, the usage of the 'do-it-yourself' model, in order to limit expenses, was mentioned by Kahn-Harris and Spracklen.

As insisted by Kahn-Harris, Hickam and Spracklen, continuous live performances are a way to earn money not only by ticket sales but also by selling merchandise, such as t-shirts or vinyl LPs in the shows. Hickam suggested that the bands can also interact and present additional value such as exclusive digital singles or albums and photographs with the band members' signatures in order to gain additional funds. Merchandise and products with added value, such as the aforementioned, are useful for both online sales and in record stores. Digital and physical albums releases are still perceived as one way to earn money among others.

Wallach, Weinstein and Spracklen agreed that crowdfunding is either too new of a model or insufficient for heavy metal as a genre, to be able to become a standard model for funding any metal band's endeavours. Kahn-Harris and Hickam believed that crowdfunding has a fair chance of being one model, amongst others, for bands to fund their new releases, such as a live DVD or an album, but is hardly a strategy that would work as a sole model of funding their career. Kahn-Harris added the following on the topic:

*I think it works largely for bands with an existing following. I think it is much more erratic for the bands that are less well known so I don't think it can become a standard model for the metal industry or the music industry generally. I am not even sure that, even for well known bands, it would be necessarily the dominant model. It's quite a time consuming and complicated process but I think it will be one strategy among others. -Keith Kahn-Harris*

Weinstein mentioned that many metal artists she personally knows are funding their career with their day jobs. Kahn-Harris and Spracklen granted that signing to a record label is a way a band can share their costs and, at the least, partially fund their careers and endeavours. The 'do-it-yourself' model was also mentioned as a way to decrease money consumption of the bands' efforts, since

currently home-recording software is sophisticated enough and furthermore the Internet allows artists to pursue and successfully apply a 'do-it-yourself' practice, as suggested by Kahn Harris.

## **Evolution, segmentation and current originality of the metal genre**

It is remarkable how heavy metal has evolved and created new subgenres. While discussing this with the interviewees, the general opinion by all the academics was following a line that regardless the musical style there has always been a model of taking advantage of already existing music and creating innovations based on that. Kahn-Harris stated that heavy metal is expanding to multiple directions making it impossible to talk about an overall trend where segmentation and evolution will lead the genre in the future. Spracklen presented his viewpoint on this and stated that heavy metal is already more easily accessible and acceptable to the general public. Kahn-Harris argued that the evolution of heavy metal sub-genres is much faster than it was at the time when heavy metal as a genre was born. As a closing note, he added to the answer that while dividing the audiences to various sole sub-genre followers, the innovations will also extend the metal fan base and create a strong sense of unity within the scene. The statement was agreed on by Spracklen.

The incredible number of different styles is constantly spawning new bands and more variety in the scene. Weinstein explained the following: 'Modern metal is what I'm calling the third era of metal starting somewhere around -98. One thing about modern heavy metal that must be said is that there are the tens of thousands of bands today you have access to'. She mentioned the latest influential sub-genres for her to be Folk Metal and Symphonic Metal both formed in the third era.



Kahn-Harris and Hickam shared the opinion on the growing number of various mixtures and the multiple different directions heavy metal is taking. Both said that there are no longer noteworthy breakthroughs for individual sub-genres as it was in the early years of heavy metal. Both of them mentioned that between 1970s and the 1990s every major sub-genre was created and established in an extremely strong manner. Kahn-Harris thinks that “nothing ever takes over it either in the way that sort of black metal came to dominate in the 90’s, the death metal came to dominate in the late 80s and early 90s”. Due to the fact that there is such segmentation as today, it is highly unlikely that there would be a new major established sub-genre.

Spracklen presented that new genres of music attain more mainstream attention by day also bringing heavy metal closer to the mainstream genres. With the vast amount of sub-genres created by segmentation, the fan base of heavy metal has come to have an immense variety of single style followers as indicated by Kahn-Harris, Hickam and Spracklen. This creates a barrier for old school heavy metal fans to start listening to a new style they do not understand while also bringing the traditional metal to the new listener. Hickam mentioned that it is quite challenging for the older metal fans to adapt to a new sub-genre wherein the new fans will with great probability eventually find the traditional sub-genres. Hickam said that this trend is nearly exclusive to metal music since the pop music fans rarely remember any bands from a relatively short time such as a decade ago. Wallach stated the following:

*Those who despair of ever encountering new, exciting metal music in the present have an insufficient appreciation of the genre’s capacity for self-renewal and the enormity of its global fan base. Metal is needed now more than ever around the world and its continued stylistic development is virtually assured.*

Kahn-Harris indicated that due to the combination of mixing different genres the presence of the social media the corrosion of any sub-genre has almost stopped. What he meant is that different musical styles have had the tendency to be

almost forgotten. In his opinion this would no longer happen, at least not so easily.

When inquired whether there is still original modern metal in the era of digitalisation and fluent informational flow, all scholars answered affirmatively. Kahn-Harris concluded that “art always copies from itself - that is the nature of artistic development”. Even though there are plenty of bands which “just copy other bands” (Spracklen) and “are not necessarily groundbreaking” (Hickam), Weinstein constitutes that “every style of music has some innovation and lots of copying” and this is perfectly normal for metal music as well. Wallach defended the observation that the metal genre “holds on to traditional notions of artistic originality and musicianship” and still “the regular listener enjoys having choices” under the umbrella of their genre of choice.

According to Hickam, deriving influence from other artists in the metal scene is completely acceptable, as long as skills and passion are detected in the music. Moreover, he is assured that if the artist follows an existing musical trend but adopts a “novel take”, it could very well lead to innovation. In the end, originality is influenced by the ability to maintain certain balance: “you have to have boundaries, but you have to have an open mind” (Hickam).

### **Heavy metal as culture: sense of community and fan loyalty**

All interviewed scholars were inquired about the specifics of heavy metal as a culture and its persistent patterns, found in either metal musicians or fan base. First of all, a question was posed regarding an estimation of importance of live performances in the metal scene, examined especially in contrast to other music genres. Moreover, the scholars were asked to share their findings on the cultural development of metal audiences in recent years, as well as the monetary potential of live concerts for the artist.

As a result, all five interviewees agreed that live performances are vital in the metal scene for both the artist and the fan. Several distinct traits, indicating

importance, were noted: for the artists, it is a way to gain recognition and exposure, it is a “proving ground” (Wallach) to showcase talent and it is a revenue stream. For the fan, it provides a “more direct experience” (Kahn-Harris), it grants the chance to meet like-minded individuals, it creates a communal culture (Weinstein) and is “central to metal’s ideology of authenticity” (Wallach). Three of the scholars expressed the firm opinion that festivals provide the best setting for the above-mentioned positive characteristics to flourish. Even in the case where smaller-scale metal artists need to actually invest money to play live, “festivals play a huge role for bands in terms of getting recognition, so if you are an unknown band, you can make your name by having a successful festival performance” (Spracklen).

It is in the culture of metal fans to be loyal and eager to see a favourite band perform live and as Hickam suggested, plenty of people would even resort to spending more money or travelling to another city for a concert. The crucial advantage of festivals in this sense is that they provide a greater experience “in an affordable setting” (Hickam). Hickam explained further that metal audiences differ from the general popular music audience in terms of cultural talent recognition, so concerning both younger bands and established household names, “if you put out a good product, you can find a fan base somewhat quickly in metal”.

With this said, both Wallach and Hickam supported the idea that metal fan base differs, compared to the fan bases of more popular styles, in terms of fan loyalty. Loyalty of metal fans was ranked high by both interviewees, in contrast to lower loyalty levels found in other audiences, and was said to be closely connected to the subcultural status of metal. Wallach straightforwardly linked this observation with music consumption habits of heavy metal fans and their persistent customs of purchasing physical copies and recordings, even in the digital peak. He constituted that although metal audiences do use the Internet and often seek new artists online, “metal heads still buy physical albums, which they prefer for reasons having to do with subcultural loyalty, sound quality, and subcultural capital. They are willing, even eager, to purchase albums by bands they like”.

Furthermore, Hickam suggested that plenty of metal fans are still purchasing physical albums, because they appreciate the high fidelity or, additionally, “understand the need to support the bands”.

*I think there is more loyalty to bands in metal. I know from people I've spoken in rap and in hip-hop and in pop music and they don't even care about bands from ten to fifteen years earlier. In metal I think it's true to say that if you're truly a heavy metal fan, you come to terms with Black Sabbath, probably Judas Priest, hopefully Iron Maiden, Motörhead [...]. I think there is an appreciation of history that is there. - Brian Hickam*

To further illustrate fan loyalty, it was suggested by Hickam and Weinstein that plenty of metal fans go to great lengths to find, read and understand the lyrics of their favourite metal artists. Based on this, the fans are eventually able to sing along during live performances, no matter how incomprehensible vocal may appear. Even though all interviewed scholars agreed that in the case of heavy metal, music is the most vital part and it is perfectly influential without understanding the lyrics. Both Wallach and Hickam added that lyrics can be very important to the metal fan, especially if they hold deeper meaning or a storytelling pattern.

### **‘Quick fame’ model: relevance to the metal scene**

The question considering television formats such as Idols’ and X Factor’s effect on the heavy metal scene was presented to the interviewees. The question aimed to obtain information about possibilities of heavy metal’s growth and whether these formats have affected the scene in any way, since they have influenced popular markets. When answered, it became clear that four out of five academics did not believe in these formats currently bearing any noteworthy significance in the heavy metal scene.

When asked the question, Spracklen as the only conflicting respondent stated the following: “I think it is inevitable that the reality TV-shows are going to see that heavy metal is a part of the music industry and it is also a big part of the music industry with a big audience that is spending money”. Spracklen indicated his

belief in the possibility that in the future there will be a format such as metal-idol. While opposing the other interviewees with his opinion, he also declared that within heavy metal community there will be some dissatisfaction from the extreme metal sub-genre groups such as black metal. Spracklen supposes that this will happen because of the specified group's politics and ideologies. He still considers the main part of heavy metal community to accept this possible development due to music industry's commercialization affecting all genres in existence.

Kahn-Harris, Hickam, Wallach and Weinstein all shared the same view of the future development of these mass formats. All of the aforementioned also agreed on the standpoint that heavy metal or any other underground genre or culture has never really had a "quick fame model". Unlike this, in the presence of media, popular music has always been under the influence of the fast exposure to the wide public. Weinstein stated that since the 1990s, record labels have had a great effect on the pop acts attaining worldwide or national attention within a short period of time. She continued to clarify that this pattern partially explains why pop music is much better represented in a global scale than heavy metal.

Hickam and Kahn-Harris both gathered that there are a few exceptions. Both of them presented the example of the 2006 Eurovision winner, a Finnish heavy metal act, Lordi. A case as such creates a slight variation in perception of the event in which similar oddity happens in a local scale. In this case, the variation of perceiving the Eurovision song contest only happened in Finland. Hickam also suggested that new generation bands seeking fame might choose to make a cover of a metal song that is famous. In most cases however, the cover itself is not heavy metal but a different genre thus the 'quick fame model' not benefitting the original song or its musical style to a remarkable extent.

## 4. RESULTS

By comparing the findings from all semi-structured interviews in contrast, the following observations on the current heavy metal markets, culture and attributes were noted. The table below illustrates the essentials of all five executed interviews and the analysed qualitative data gathered from the interviewed field scholars, in order to define the most current standing of the heavy metal genre.

*Table 4: Summarised results from interviews with researchers*

Impact of the Internet on heavy metal markets	<p>Crucial for the movement from regional markets towards globalization</p> <p>Positive impact of music streaming services on the channels of metal music distribution</p> <p>Helping tool for more direct fan engagement via social media websites</p> <p>Ease of access to metal music databases</p> <p>Current lack of central (exclusive) media mediator</p> <p>Lesser impact on extreme metal markets</p>
Models of funding heavy metal	<p>No standard current model of funding metal music</p> <p>Wide usage of a combination of funding models</p> <p>Crowdfunding has potential to become one funding strategy (amongst others) for new releases</p> <p>Main current funding models: signing a record deal, selling merchandise, physical albums, vinyl records and exclusive products with added value, subscriptions and digital sales, investing own funds</p>
Effects of evolvement and segmentation of	<p>Metal music evolves constantly</p> <p>Metal markets are affected by radical changes in the music industry have</p>

heavy metal music	<p>Sub-genre division and fragmentation is beneficial for the evolvement of the metal genre</p> <p>New sub-genres ensure creativity in metal music</p> <p>Extreme metal markets are not as commercialised and influenced by music industry fluctuations as mainstream forms of metal</p>
Aspiring regional heavy metal markets	<p>Country-based aspiring markets: Finland, Indonesia, China, Russia, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Israel</p> <p>Continent-based aspiring markets: Asia, South America</p>
Reasons behind metal market globalisation	<p>The Internet</p> <p>Immediacy, easy access and availability of metal music, as offered by music streaming services</p> <p>Expanded word-of-mouth marketing and ease of recommendation, as mediated by social media websites</p> <p>Wider exposure for young artists, provided by festivals worldwide</p> <p>Usage of cultural capital and industry understanding</p>
Current heavy metal culture traits	<p>High fan loyalty</p> <p>Strong sense of community</p> <p>Eagerness of the audience for authentic metal experience (via festival, live performances face-to-face meetings)</p> <p>Appreciation of history in the genre</p> <p>Will of fanbase to actively support artists</p> <p>Culture traits of metal music vary for different generations</p> <p>Audience validates musicianship, skills, originality, ability to perform live, lyrical significance</p>

Relevance of 'quick fame' models and mass TV-formats to heavy metal	Currently irrelevant to a large extent Potential for relevance in the near future granted the commercialisation of music industry
Originality of heavy metal music	Original metal music is currently being generated on frequent basis Plenty of metal musicians start their career by copying existent music A novel take on existent genres often leads to the creation of a new sub-genre Innovation in metal is easier nowadays The metal genre exhibits vast capacity for self-renewal

To summarise, ever since its birth in 1960s, heavy metal music has been evolving and is still expanding in various directions currently. There is a strong link between the growth of metal music markets, both domestically and globally, and the immense popularisation of online services: music is easily accessible online and geographical boundaries do not limit the artist as much any longer. In this sense, the immediacy of music is a major contributor to the expansion of metal markets worldwide. Social media websites allow more direct fan engagement and strengthen the connection between heavy metal artists and their existent fan base, as well as the opportunities to reach new audience. Additionally, festivals, metal conferences, word-of-mouth and online recommendations have also contributed largely to the development and globalisation of metal markets and culture.

The metal scene and international markets were initially dominated by artists from the United Kingdom, USA and Scandinavia. Nowadays however, globalisation of metal music is strong and there is a movement from regional



markets towards worldwide recognition. Previously smaller or closed regional markets, such as Indonesia, China, Japan or Finland are now becoming renowned metal exporters. Furthermore, a growing number of Asian and Latin American countries are currently strengthening their positions, in terms of heavier music, globally.

Fan loyalty in metal music and culture has ranked higher than the loyalty of the audiences of any other style and this fact is linked to the subcultural status of metal, communal patterns and strong unified culture. Metal audience appreciates the authenticity and ideologies of their genre of choice, as well as the opportunity to communicate with like-minded individuals, either face to face or online. In terms of music consumption, metal fans still purchase physical copies of albums and other recordings and are, to a large extent, eager to support favourite artists in various ways regardless their stand in society.

Even though the genre segmentation, forming various sub-genres, has a binary effect by nature, it is mainly beneficial to metal music as an entity since it ensures its ability to evolve and develop further. The segmentation is likely to create controversy within the existing metal fan base as they will not necessarily understand the new development. With the increase in the number of sub-genres, the metal fan base will grow and the heavy metal community is brought closer to the mainstream music scene as well as uniting the new generation with the already existing fans and traditional heavy metal sub-genres.

Funding of the heavy metal scene has always been and is currently still complicated and not straightforward, even regarding well-established markets. Divergent funding models or combinations of such are used by different metal artists, and all the while those models are influenced by the scale of popularity, the targeted market, the ideology of both the artist and the intended audience.

On a larger scale, 'quick fame' models and reality TV-formats seeking musical talent, which have recently generated interest in the popular music markets, are

still irrelevant to metal music. However, their potential has not been yet realised fully within the music industry.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Heavy metal has witnessed a quick progression of interest in terms of scholarly research in recent years. Furthermore, the music industry has begun to realise the potential of metal music as a swiftly growing market. The emergence of organisations such as the International Society of Metal Music Studies and conferences like Modern Heavy Metal Conference shows the steady movement towards expanding academic research related to heavy metal music and culture, on both regional and international level.

While rapid changes in popular music markets have also affected the evolvement of global heavy metal markets, the genre has exhibited slightly different mechanisms of evolvement mainly due to its subcultural and controversial ideology and status. On the one hand, the metal genre, similarly to other music styles, has recently witnessed changes in music distribution, fan engagement, channels of exposure, funding practices and regional markets' importance. On the other hand, cultural traits such as fan loyalty, communal sense, genre controversy and appreciation of musicianship seem to have remained considerably constant and less influenced by music industry transformations.

The current evolvement of both popular music industry and the specific case of heavy metal music is sure to influence the future development of the metal genre. One possibility is for the underground music scene to follow the trend of music industry commercialisation and partly lose its subcultural status in exchange for a more mainstream one. However, these global changes could very well have the opposite effect and propel metal music into becoming even more controversial and strengthen its position as an extreme genre.

The presence of internet and social media has had both negative and positive effects on heavy metal and its sub-genres. It is significantly easier for new bands to distribute their product and engage fans. As a result of the vast variety of heavy metal, sole sub-genre fans tend to completely rule out other distinct styles

and focus on only one. The range of different sub-genres and mixture of other genres helps new forms of heavy metal not to go out of date wherein with other genres this still tends to happen.

Considering persistent patterns of development and the rapid current changes in music markets, the likelihood of consistent and straightforward future predictions, regarding the music industry and particularly its heavier genres, significantly lessens. Essentially, one shared observation stands out: even though global music industry and markets are experiencing fluctuations and may cause heavy metal to change or take various directions in the future, metal culture is persistent and the genre does have a future.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Interview questions

Appendix 2 - Interview answers

## **Appendix 1 - Interview questions**

1. How can metal musicians engage fans and communicate with their audience most effectively nowadays? What are the most successful practices and channels? Are there particular traits of metal music which make it different from other genres in terms of fan engagement?
2. Crowdfunding has become a trendy practice of funding artists' endeavours. What is your opinion on its potential and further development in the metal scene?
3. Metal music has been seen to evolve quickly over the last decades. What is your personal prediction for the direction it is taking, what is 'modern' metal going to be in the future?
4. What is your viewpoint on certain artists' practices of mixing metal music with other styles (classical, electronic, folk etc.)? Is the division of metal music into numerous sub-genres beneficial or harmful to the genre and will such segmentation continue in the future?
5. What is the importance of lyrics for the general perception of an artist's music in the current metal scene?
6. Out of your own observations, can you name any particular countries that have remarkably improved their metal export and worldwide recognition during the last 10 years? What practices led to this development?
7. In what way have social media websites and services such as Spotify, SoundCloud and YouTube changed the music market? How significant is their role regarding metal music markets and would they act as helping tool or a threat in the future, in your opinion?
8. Live performances have been described as both an experience for the fan and

a money-maker for the artist. How important are live performances in the metal music scene compared to other genres and do you have any particular observations on the development of metal audience in recent years? Is the live performance a future or a past for the metal music industry?

**9.** The music scene has experienced a leap from hard-working garage bands aiming at breakthrough to mass formats such as Idols or X Factor. To what extent is the 'quick fame' model relevant to the metal music market nowadays and is this model here to stay?

**10.** Do we live in a copy-paste era? What can be described as original metal music in times of artistic and informational oversaturation?

## Appendix 2 - Interview answers

While reading this, one must keep in mind that some of the interviewees gave their answer to multiple questions while asked for only one thus reducing the amount of questions with some of the interviewees.

### Keith Kahn-Harris (31.3.)

**How can metal musicians engage fans and communicate with their audience most effectively nowadays? What are the most successful practices and channels? Are there particular traits of metal music which make it different from other genres in terms of fan engagement?**

“Historically speaking, things have changed over time. I think certainly within the metal underground, this divide between the fan and the musician was much less in the sense that the underground metal always had a much more collective ethos rather than it doesn't have stars for the same extent. So you have to sort of distinguish here between the sort of bigger metal bands or mainstream metal bands and the more underground bands. But things have changed as well because the primary way which people, musicians and fans, engage with each other in the days of the metal underground was letter writing was hugely important and things like tape trading and stuff. And today that has pretty much died and it has been replaced by social media, email and so on. So most metal musicians have adapted to this. But it has created its own issues. On the one hand, it allows a very direct engagement but it also creates, certainly for the bigger bands, it creates an enormous mass of communication, it could be very, very difficult to keep hold of. So when you're getting hundreds of thousands of emails or tweets or whatever it becomes very difficult to deal with it. So there are new methods and new challenges.”

**In what way have social media websites and services such as Spotify, SoundCloud and YouTube changed the music market? How significant is their role regarding metal music markets and would they act as helping tool or a threat in the future, in your opinion?**

“I think it has changed radically. A new one thing is, for example, it pretty much killed the demo tape: in the last few years the MP3's replaced that as do things like YouTube and Soundcloud. They do undermine traditional music business institutions, there's no question about it. They made music much more available freely often, although not always, and make it much more immediate. And that has radically changed metal scene in my opinion in all sorts of ways, both

positive and negative. Having said that there is still a strong tendency particularly with those with a longer history in the metal underground scene sort of keep buying music and keep music as a physical product alive, keep record labels alive. In fact, it's quite astonishing how many traditional labels still exist, still doing things in a traditional way. So there's still a commitment to the old methods, which I think is recognition of the fact that they had that value as well."

**Metal music has been seen to evolve quickly over the last decades. What is your personal prediction for the direction it is taking, what is 'modern' metal going to be in the future?**

"I think metal is expanding in every different direction at once, I don't think it is possible to talk of an overall trend anymore. Because I'm not sure that's how musical development works anymore either within metal or elsewhere because of the radical changes that the internet and the social media are freely available, music has brought to it. I don't think anything ever really goes out of style anymore. But then again nothing ever takes over it either in the way that sort of black metal came to dominate in the 90's, the death metal came to dominate in the late 80s and early 90s. You don't have that process anymore. What you have instead is endless innovation going everywhere at once. I don't think metal has ever been more creative than it is now. The variety is quite astonishing. On the other hand I think we've lost something because there isn't so much of a shape in it isn't a much of historical progression that you could talk to in a way you could in the past. So it has paradoxical effects, some of them very exciting and some of them very problematic I think. It [metal music] couldn't evolve as fast as it can evolve today."

**What is your viewpoint on certain artists' practices of mixing metal music with other styles (classical, electronic, folk etc.)? Is the division of metal music into numerous sub-genres beneficial or harmful to the genre and will such segmentation continue in the future?**

"I don't, I mean it's paradoxical. On one hand metal is fragmenting and segmenting at an enormous pace. On the other hand these sub-genres are much more fluent than they ever were. So yes, there's segmentation and fragmentation. But what it means to be a sub-genre doesn't mean as much as it used to mean. It's a much more fluent situation. So on the one hand that creates more fragmentation, on the other hand it creates a greater unity under the sign of metal generally.

**What is the importance of lyrics for the general perception of an artist's music in the current metal scene?**

“I’m not sure, that’s one thing I’m not sure has changed radically to be honest. I think some bands and acts take enormous care of lyrics and some bands take very little care. Some fans are very interested in the lyrics; some fans are totally uninterested in the lyrics. I’m not sure; I think that’s one thing that’s remained more or less a constant. I think.”

**Crowdfunding has become a trendy practice of funding artists' endeavours. What is your opinion on its potential and further development in the metal scene?**

“I think it can work for some and not for everybody. I think it works largely for bands with an existing following. I think it’s much more erratic for the bands that are less well known so I don’t think it can become a standard model for the metal industry or the music industry generally. I’m not even sure that even for well known bands it would be necessarily the dominant model. It’s quite a time consuming and complicated process but I think it will be one strategy among others. Works for some and not for others. I think it’s worth remembering that certainly in the metal underground there was very, very little money available anyway. Yet, metal was still made in those circumstances anyway. There was a great degree of self-sacrifice there and only a very small minority of metal artists ever made their money back let alone made a profit. But it’s unquestionably even more difficult now than it was. I think there are a number of different models that could work. They won’t work for everybody, one of them as you said is crowdfunding, live music, playing live more often is another model. Selling merchandise is another model. Selling vinyl, that’s another model, subscription is another model. At least standard conventional model of signing to a record label well that’s another model too. So there are many different ways of which it could work but I don’t think there’s ever going to be one dominant model and against that it’s also worth remembering that whilst metal is actually cheaper to produce than it was since home recording software becomes more and more sophisticated. So you know, it works, again there are trends and counter-trends here.

**Live performances have been described as both an experience for the fan and a money-maker for the artist. How important are live performances in the metal music scene compared to other genres and do you have any particular observations on the development of metal audience in recent years? Is the live performance a future or a past for the metal music industry?**

“I mean it’s worth pointing out that in underground metal, live performance was never essential, as it has been in more mainstream forms of metal. I think there are contradictory reports about the states of live music within metal. On the one

hand, some bands more and more important because other revenue streams are lower, partly because the availability of online music has is seeking a more direct experience. On the other hand there are a lot of people saying it's even less economic than it was so again I don't think there is a standard model here."

**Out of your own observations, can you name any particular countries that have remarkably improved their metal export and worldwide recognition during the last 10 years? What practices led to this development?**

"Well I would probably say Finland. I mean Finland has always had a thriving metal scene but I think that in the last 10 to 20 years it's become a major metal exporter particularly in more mainstream forms of metal as well as in the underground so you would know better than I what has lead to that. I think certainly Finland has become more important now than Sweden and Norway although the nature of it has certainly changed. There's certainly difference in the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian scenes. There are standard stand-out acts coming from all around the world now. Although the course still remains American and European, there are certain possibilities from all around world. So Orphaned Land who I first interviewed at 1998 in Israel when I was doing research there and now a really popular band globally and they're from Israel, so to some extent the Internet levels the playing field."

**The music scene has experienced a leap from hard-working garage bands aiming at breakthrough to mass formats such as Idols or X Factor. To what extent is the 'quick fame' model relevant to the metal music market nowadays and is this model here to stay?**

"I don't think that things like Idol actually impact on metal very much at all, I don't think it's particularly relevant, no. But I think Finland in that sense is quite exceptional in that respect. The success of Lordi, I think, changed the game in Finland and elsewhere, to some extent, as well. Certainly, metal still defines itself in opposition to pop; I think that remains quite similar to what it used to be."

**Do we live in a copy-paste era? What can be described as original metal music in times of artistic and informational oversaturation?**

"Look, art always copies from itself. That is the nature of artistic development. There isn't anything particularly unusual about that today or yesterday I think what is happened though is that the speed at which that happens is very different. The possibilities and the ease, with which it could be done, are very different but it's also true that innovation is easier as well, so I don't think that it's a particularly difficult thing.

## **Karl Spracklen (7.4)**

**How can metal musicians engage fans and communicate with their audience most effectively nowadays? What are the most successful practices and channels? Are there particular traits of metal music which make it different from other genres in terms of fan engagement?**

I think the Internet is the only way any band can make any connection to fans. Social media is clearly a place for bands to generate interest, to get people to listen to their music, to download music and hopefully buy merchandise. Some extreme metal bands are reluctant to use social media because particular ideologies. Sludgecore and grindcore bands might be reluctant to use the Internet because they see everything as capitalist conspiracy but metal bands might be reluctant to use the Internet to sell themselves because the whole point in being true BM is to be anti-commercial, not engaging with fans, not having things easy for people to come see them.

**Crowdfunding has become a trendy practice of funding artists' endeavours. What is your opinion on its potential and further development in the metal scene?**

I think it's still new and early days to come and see whether crowdfunding actually works as a model within heavy metal. It's certainly something for some BM-bands who could've played around with the idea of trying to source money from the people. Some people find the money, find the record deal, sell merchandise, so some people might be reluctant to get involved. Maybe not the punk or hardcore bands - they might be more up for it because that's what the original DIY [do-it-yourself] was all about.

**Metal music has been seen to evolve quickly over the last decades. What is your personal prediction for the direction it is taking, what is 'modern' metal going to be in the future?**

It's going to be more commercial & more mainstream. It's going to be a part of the music industry in lots of different countries around the world. I think that will have an effect on the extreme metal because, as more and more the mainstream gets commercialised, the extreme metal can go two ways. It can either join the trend or it can resist and fight back and retreat into obscurity and into elitism and extremism. So it can go two ways.



**What is your viewpoint on certain artists' practices of mixing metal music with other styles (classical, electronic, folk etc.)? Is the division of metal music into numerous sub-genres beneficial or harmful to the genre and will such segmentation continue in the future?**

Personally I find that it's sad that we no longer have the music scene where everyone in the scene knows every big band because there is so much hybridity and crossover. In the days of Internet people can navigate their way through the scene, knowing exactly what each subgenre is about. Maybe that is a good thing. I think hybridity is bad for coherence of the metal scene but it's probably good for a new fan or an existing fan, so if you like this particular type of black metal from China, well, here's some black metal from Indonesia. Now I think there are people who are entirely black metal or entirely death metal or deathcore or whatever you want to be. People don't read about each other, people don't talk to each other about different subgenres. Once upon a time all you had were music magazines and fanzines, critics and journalists were telling us which bands to listen to but nowadays people can just select whatever they like.

**What is the importance of lyrics for the general perception of an artist's music in the current metal scene?**

I think it's perfectly possible to listen to music without understanding the lyrics because for a lot of metal music anyway, you can't follow the lyrics. Because if it's black metal or death metal, the ways of the music makes it so hard to hear and understand the lyrics, outside of 'You need to understand the lyrics to appreciate metal music or to sell metal music'. Having said that, there are people and markets that only buy music that is produced in English. so if you're Finnish and you want to make an impact in America, you need to kind of bite the bullet and sing in English which is what loads of bands do.

**Out of your own observations, can you name any particular countries that have remarkably improved their metal export and worldwide recognition during the last 10 years? What practices led to this development?**

Well, Finland obviously is the home of heavy metal. You have so many bands that have made a huge impact globally. Other Northern European countries, such as Norway and Sweden particularly, are in BM and DM universes. Germany, I think, is still an important source of metal music. But in the coming years I think more and more we're going to see new countries emerging, countries from South America, countries from Southeast Asia. Those are kind of the interesting markets where new bands are kind of being created every day and more and more of these bands are getting known to the wider public. People need to understand that there is a market. I think there are still musicians who get into

music because they're passionate about music and they want to play it but then they don't understand how to get people to listen to it. The only way to get people to listen to it is kind of to understand that this is a business and you are in the market where you have to kind of sell yourself. You may not be necessarily trying to make money, but you want people to listen to the music, you want people to recognise that you have some legitimate voice on the scene. So I think a lot of bands around the world are just happy just to kind of share their music with their friends and their family and they never actually get to the next step. I think you need a lot of cultural capital to borrow. You need to have a lot of cultural capital, need to understand how contracts work, how technology works, how to kind of sell things online. So it's a kind of a learning skills gap between the musicians and the demands of the modern music industry.

**Live performances have been described as both an experience for the fan and a money-maker for the artist. How important are live performances in the metal music scene compared to other genres and do you have any particular observations on the development of metal audience in recent years? Is the live performance a future or a past for the metal music industry?**

I think festivals play a huge role for bands in terms of getting recognition. So if you're an unknown band you can make your name by having a successful festival performance. Festivals are a massive part of metal music and kind of rock & pop music. These are the important places for metal bands to prove themselves. Also, if you're a big band, you make a lot of money off it. I think if you're a small band, you don't make money, you might make money selling t-shirts but you don't make money selling tickets. So it's kind of tough business in the lower end of the scale. So if you're in a BM band from the North of England for example, you got to make a decision: do I spend money to put my band to a festival bill, because you have to pay to some festivals to perform, so do you invest your money because you're going to get some good return on merchandise, fans on Facebook or whatever it is. HM pretends it is all about an authentic live performance, if you are a proper musician, you have to demonstrate to the fans and to the world that you are proper musicians able to play their instruments.

**The music scene has experienced a leap from hard-working garage bands aiming at breakthrough to mass formats such as Idols or X Factor. To what extent is the 'quick fame' model relevant to the metal music market nowadays and is this model here to stay?**

I don't think they have much of an impact now but they probably will do on heavy metal in years to come, because the music industry is only going to get more

commercialized, the entertainment industry is only going to get more commercialized. I think it's inevitable that the reality TV-shows are going to see that heavy metal is a part of the music industry and it's also a big part of the music industry with a big audience that is spending money. Someone will just think "AHA, why don't we just create METAL-IDOL?" And all of a sudden you will get this you know, global franchise of metal-idol that will go around the world and young metal musicians will go all "This is a way we can transcend from the limitations of our local scene and make some money as musicians". So I can see it happening. Well, some extreme metal musicians will stand against it because of their ideologies and their politics but I think most of HM will be quite comfortable with being part of this.

**Do we live in a copy-paste era? What can be described as original metal music in times of artistic and informational oversaturation?**

Yes, I think we do, so many bands just copy other bands. You can see why people do it because you become a fan and you really grow to like death metal so you will form a death metal band with your friends and you want to sound like Carcass so all your riffs are based on Carcass' riffs and that's fine. People can do whatever they like. There's no kind of rule that says you're getting sent to prison if all you do is copy your favourite bands' riffs. I think it's depressing that so many people listen to music that's just derivative and we don't listen to new music.

**Brian Hickam 20.4.**

**How can metal musicians engage fans and communicate with their audience most effectively nowadays? What are the most successful practices and channels? Are there particular traits of metal music which make it different from other genres in terms of fan engagement?**

I'd say it still depends if the band is able to tour, I still think face to face meet and greet is what a lot of the metal fans want. You know whether it is getting a picture taken with one or the entire band. Having a beer with them or just talking with them. You know, some fans like to talk about drums or guitars or lyrics. So I think if you have a chance to meet the band, the relationship is stronger and then you can maintain it via email or messages on Facebook or whatever website. I think it depends on the metal fan. A lot of us really like to follow bands wherever they come from. You're maybe going to develop an interest on bands that are maybe never going to tour your country or your continent. In those cases the bands need to be aware of the different options. You can't try to be everywhere, in different websites. Then you've got people that get old and get comfortable with only certain websites & they're not going to keep on following the latest whatever. I

watch YouTube but I don't bother generally with SoundCloud and the other ones and I still buy CDs for the most part if I can. There are going to be cases where you aren't able to meet face to face and I think bands need to find some way to connect with fans in a way that it's interactive to certain degree. Whether it's being online for questions or something, at least here and there, I'm not saying they need to dedicate their lives to it. But I think metal fans especially really appreciate an opportunity to sort of connect beyond the recorded CD or DVD and beyond just going to an occasional concert. I think both fans and the musicians appreciate that connection so however you can do it virtually or in person.

It's hard to judge. I'm one of the few people that I know that gets into most genres. And then I don't have time to go to too many shows and usually metal is my favourite so I can speak about Jazz and Bluegrass and see similar things there. The passion, the interest in meeting the musicians.. It's hard to say but I would think that it's not so much there with pop music but who knows. I think there's more loyalty to bands in metal. I know from people I've spoken in rap and in hip-hop and in pop music and they don't even care about bands from ten to fifteen years earlier. In metal I think it's true to say that if you're truly a HM fan, you come to terms with Black Sabbath, probably Judas Priest, hopefully Iron Maiden, Motörhead, you know, whoever but especially Sabbath. I think there's an appreciation of history that's there. So I can't as much compare it to other genres besides Jazz and Bluegrass where I think there's also an appreciation of history, the stylistic development from years ago and the new ones. I think you can find fans from all of these three genres that don't keep up and fans that do. When I say keep up I mean you're still looking for albums from 20-30 years ago that you don't have or didn't ever have and you're still following the new development. I would at least say that metal is up there. The passion & the interest of the fans and the time that we'll spend. I mean, look at the Metal Archives website, it's amazing. I don't know any other genre that has anything comparable to that.

**In what way have social media websites and services such as Spotify, SoundCloud and YouTube changed the music market? How significant is their role regarding metal music markets and would they act as helping tool or a threat in the future, in your opinion?**

I'd say helping tool for the most part. You're going to have your fans that don't buy the MP3's or the CD that will just find it on YouTube or get it illegally. I think there are enough fans that want the high fidelity or they understand the need to support the bands. I'd say if you're not on SoundCloud or YouTube, you're missing out on exposure and you're missing out on connecting with your fans. Even the fans that buy all your stuff. So I'd say you'll need to find ways to be there and develop your business model to where you can at least stay a band.

You know you might have jobs in the daytime. I just can't imagine not having that visibility.

**Crowdfunding has become a trendy practice of funding artists' endeavours. What is your opinion on its potential and further development in the metal scene?**

I think that if it is raising funds to put out a new album, more people would be responsive and it depends on the band. I've supported a guy that I did meet face to face in one of the metal conferences. and he's in Germany & he's in a very good band. it depends. Sometimes I don't need anything in return, other times it's kind of nice to get whatever. Autographed picture, you get the CD if you give them enough money or download. I would be hesitant to give money to a band that just wants to go on tour or other things. I mean I understand that a lot of them don't have or don't make money, even the bigger ones. With my limited funds I'd rather purchase a concert ticket and a t-shirt than give them money in hopes they come somewhere within a few hours from me. I would support a recording whatever that may be. A video, EP, full album, a release of a live album. If all the bands went to that, it would really stretch things thin with the fans.

**Metal music has been seen to evolve quickly over the last decades. What is your personal prediction for the direction it is taking, what is 'modern' metal going to be in the future?**

with websites like write your music and the metal achieves & others. I think you can look to them and see if there has been new development even if you don't otherwise see them coming or hear about them one or 5 years later. You know for the most part we haven't had the development that we did have in the 70s, 80s and 90s. Most of it was in quick succession. If you go from speed metal to what they used to call power metal to thrash and death and black and Swedish, we really haven't had those kind of developments in 20 years. there are bands out there that have done interesting things you know, mixing genres. I've seen quite a bit of development related to gothic metal. Then you've got bands like Australia's band Portal seeing harsher elements. I think that's an avenue for metal to go, mixing the noise genres if metal is to become once again brutal or challenging, harsh. There's only so much you can do with the existing genres. Folk metal was a development. A lot of that folk metal and pagan stuff. I think a lot of fans are looking for a new development meaning that a new style, subgenre whatever that may be. I like a lot of the mellower stuff but I'm looking forward to what's the next really heavy development. I guess I've been looking for a long time. I'm still optimistic, the music industry has really become commercialized

and that started in the early and mid 70s and I think it's only gotten worse but I think the internet is helping. I'm hoping there's a development. even if there's not, there's so many bands to get into from the styles that you like, band's that you've never had or albums that you've never had. I thoroughly enjoy that too. I'd like to see both too, I'd like to see some bands live that I've never seen before. Some of those festivals that bring the bands together. And I'd really like to see a new development 'cause to me that's fascinating. And so you know, there's several things in play. one's that you get older and it's more difficult to stay in touch. Then if you're exposed to it, will you like it, will you understand it? There's metalcore that I don't consider metal continues to be popular and marketed as metal I think there'll be a reaction to that similar to the way there was a reaction to 80s hair metal which I do consider metal. In some ways that helping to lead to thrash and death, some of those bands were trying to up the ante (trying to raise the stakes), they weren't satisfied with the metal that was out there. and that's fine, sometimes when the music is coapted it can lead to a reaction, that says that's not what it should be, here's what it should be says the new generation. You really can't get away from the music industry. There could be a upstart label and it's a lot easier to distribute your music now & we're getting to the point where some bands aren't even putting out a physical item. Then you've got labels that kind of sell out. They're still playing out some good bands but they also put out a lot of crap. Labels that have been around 20-30 years were more impressive with what they did years ago than now. I don't mind the label making money as long as they put out some good bands too. It's a Catch 22. I don't mind if the label puts out stuff I consider crap as long as they put out some good music. I don't think you can get out of the music industry totally, especially if you're touring. Depending on what aspect of the music industry are we talking about. If you put out a good product, you can find a fan base somewhat quickly in metal. The word spread amazingly quickly before the internet, within a year or so. Through the magazines, letters, tape trading, word to mouth really.

### **What is the importance of lyrics for the general perception of an artist's music in the current metal scene?**

Lyrics are always interesting because there are times when the lyrics are understandable. Just to make certain I hear them correctly. Other times you really can't tell what the hell they're saying and sometime I Google it but other times I don't bother. I think lyrics can be very important because a lot of what metal is often about is storytelling or at least relating something where the lyrics are important. Lyrics don't bother me either if they're not politically correct. Doesn't mean that I'm going to go support that band live but if the music is good IMO... it depends. I don't really believe in censorship but I also believe in being fair, not racist and cruel to other people. It's a case by case thing whether the lyrics

matter to me. There are times... I mean I'm not going to play it to certain friends or recommend it to other people without a warning or at all. I would say as a whole I could go without knowing the lyrics beyond what I can hear throughout the song. The music is the most important and the vocals are part of that but if I can't understand them it doesn't necessarily matter.

**Out of your own observations, can you name any particular countries that have remarkably improved their metal export and worldwide recognition during the last 10 years? What practices led to this development?**

I've seen a number of bands out of Russia, Indonesia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, most of that I would say that it's hard to say how you find about a band or a scene. Sometimes you've heard of something and then it's at a conference, a comment online or a magazine review that makes me actually take the time and go listen to that band that I've heard about. Then you realize that there is a bunch of bands in addition to that 1 or 2 bands and since I generally want to play something fresh, innovative if I like what a particular band is doing and I'll see what I can find. Usually I'm looking for 6-10 other bands that I have time for. I don't necessarily go find everything even though ideally I would but I can't. A lot of how I find these is simple things like Facebook or YouTube. It could be a recommendation from a friend I mean I've got friends who recommend music but I've never met face to face. The opportunity to listen to it almost instantly is what has done it IMO. A lot of these bands have never played outside their countries.

**Live performances have been described as both an experience for the fan and a money-maker for the artist. How important are live performances in the metal music scene compared to other genres and do you have any particular observations on the development of metal audience in recent years? Is the live performance a future or a past for the metal music industry?**

A lot of new fans want to see a band in an affordable setting. Some people actually drive some hours to another city. They live for metal. I find that a festival is more useful to me than going to 4-5 concerts to see the same number of bands. It comes down to cost to a large degree. I want to see these bands so I'm thankful people are putting up these festivals. [...] It depends on how much time you have and what kind of lifestyle you have. I think you're a metal fan if they're not old, they're still metal. They will still go to shows even if it's only once a year.

**The music scene has experienced a leap from hard-working garage bands aiming at breakthrough to mass formats such as Idols or X Factor. To what extent is the 'quick fame' model relevant to the metal music market nowadays and is this model here to stay?**

I don't see the connection. I have watched American Idol and X Factor & it's pop music. Even though the big thing whatever it was, Lordi who won the Eurovision, it's still pop music. Or Grammys here or even Rock'n'roll hall of fame.. They might have a great library that is good for metal research and hardcore and punk and other things, but the induction process, it's a similar thing. I don't think your average metal band is looking to these things. The bands that make it there aren't metal for the most part. When a young band looking to become famous covers a metal song, it's not usually a metal version of it. In my definition of metal fan I don't see any of them looking into Idol or X factor. I would still think that it's similar to that garage band metaphor. If a band comes out and they're just totally doing something impressive. If they're blowing people's minds, I think they're quickly becoming popular. I don't see it being mediated through something like these contests.

**Do we live in a copy-paste era? What can be described as original metal music in times of artistic and informational oversaturation?**

The reason I detest metalcore is that it's copy paste without passion. It's like What's popular, okay let's do that. I say that because you can take a band like the doom band witchcraft from Sweden. you can take a band doing old style like doom or thrash like municipal waste. if they do it well, I love it. I don't care if it's not necessarily groundbreaking. It might be a novel take on it I think witchcraft have found their own sound. and you can tell. even if the production sounds like it's from the 70s. They're paying homage to an old style and doing it very well. and you can almost tell that it didn't come from the 1970s but it's really impressive they made it sound like that the same time so you can take any style of metal that's been around a long time and a younger band comes along and works within that style. As long as they do it well that's ok with me. as long as the passion is there that is. I'm still looking forward to something new. I've been following metal for 37 years. Trying to define metal, what is it, is going to be different versus just the mixture of existing things. Why we then look back on it and say that this is a new subgenre. I lived through the emergency and then..... I started following metal in -81. When things came out, we didn't necessarily view it as different. You realize they're calling it something and categorizing it to a new subgenre and that's fine. Sometimes when things happen, you don't necessarily realize it's leading to something different. So then when other bands copy that thing, which has always happened. It comes down to are they doing it with passion and are they giving it their own take. They're going with something that is something really innovative. Even though they didn't come up with it I'd like to see how this band would do it. Sometimes it just comes down to great vocalist or a production technique. You have to have boundaries but you have to have an



open mind. I'm more than happy to tell some young kid that Metallica hasn't been metal in decades & Avenged Sevenfold is not metal.

### **Jeremy Wallach (23.4.)**

**How can metal musicians engage fans and communicate with their audience most effectively nowadays? What are the most successful practices and channels? Are there particular traits of metal music which make it different from other genres in terms of fan engagement?**

Metal has a long history of active musician-fan correspondence, with a concomitant fan expectation of accessibility to even the most famous artists. I lack the expertise to know what the most "effective" channels for this ongoing communication are, though it's hard to imagine late-twentieth-century-style email has been truly superseded.

**Crowdfunding has become a trendy practice of funding artists' endeavours. What is your opinion on its potential and further development in the metal scene?**

This method of funding music has shown tremendous potential for solo artists, particularly for touring singer-songwriters. I think it is less useful for metal bands. Put succinctly and somewhat bluntly, if a band is not good enough to sell enough merch to fund a demo or get signed to a label, they are unlikely to get enough people to crowdfund the recording of a CD. I suppose crowdfunding could be used to circumvent labels entirely, but other than a larger share of any eventual profits (and without a good distribution network, there is unlikely to be much), it is unclear why this is advantageous if having a label is a possibility, since labels handle distribution and marketing.

**Metal music has been seen to evolve quickly over the last decades. What is your personal prediction for the direction it is taking, what is 'modern' metal going to be in the future?**

Metal will continue to evolve in unforeseen ways, and the hegemonic position of the UK and US will continue to weaken. Folk metal from a number of world regions will gain international attention, and Asian and Latin American groups will start becoming regular fixtures in the global scene rather than novelties. If present trends continue, by 2040 the majority of major active metal bands will be from outside the Anglophone world.

**What is your viewpoint on certain artists' practices of mixing metal music with other styles (classical, electronic, folk etc.)? Is the division of metal music into numerous sub-genres beneficial or harmful to the genre and will such segmentation continue in the future?**

Beneficial of course. These “cross-cutting” genres add new vitality to the genre and are likely to grow in variety and number as metal continues to globalize. Often these cross-fertilizations leave marks on standard metal practice, such as the use of symphonic-metal-influenced keyboards in melodeath or addition of folk instruments in the Finnish prog-power-metal of Nightwish.

**What is the importance of lyrics for the general perception of an artist's music in the current metal scene?**

This varies tremendously depending on the listener. While many metalheads claim that they don't listen to lyrics, many pay exceedingly close attention to them, especially if they write lyrics or poetry themselves. This appears to be the case across subgenres—in no subgenre are lyrics completely insignificant to everyone. Even if you can't hear or understand them they're supposed to mean something.

**Out of your own observations, can you name any particular countries that have remarkably improved their metal export and worldwide recognition during the last 10 years? What practices led to this development?**

A number of countries have done so. China, whose metal scene was miniscule 10 years ago, now has a number of world-class bands that have been recognized on the world stage, such as Mongolian folk metal band Nine Treasures and black metallers Ghost Bath. Indonesia has had a massive metal scene for over 25 years but is only just now gaining international recognition, thanks mostly to YouTube. Their most celebrated bands include Burgerkill, Deadsquad, and Seringai. Neither country provides state support for metal music as a cultural export, though maybe Indonesia will start now that they've elected a metalhead for president!

**In what way have social media websites and services such as Spotify, SoundCloud and YouTube changed the music market? How significant is their role regarding metal music markets and would they act as helping tool or a threat in the future, in your opinion?**

That's a pretty broad question. I can only really answer in generalities: obviously these new avenues of distribution and consumption have been revolutionary and also calamitous to the music industry. But it is also true that metal has been less vulnerable to their corrosive effects than most music genres. Metalheads still buy physical albums, which they prefer for reasons having to do with subcultural loyalty, sound quality, and subcultural capital. They are willing, even eager, to purchase albums by bands they like, and while they often encounter new bands through the internet, a lot still read magazines and listen to the radio also.

**Live performances have been described as both an experience for the fan and a money-maker for the artist. How important are live performances in the metal music scene compared to other genres and do you have any particular observations on the development of metal audience in recent years? Is the live performance a future or a past for the metal music industry?**

Live performance will remain a proving ground for metal bands. It is central to metal's ideology of authenticity regardless of subgenre. The genre is unimaginable without it.

**The music scene has experienced a leap from hard-working garage bands aiming at breakthrough to mass formats such as Idols or X Factor. To what extent is the 'quick fame' model relevant to the metal music market nowadays and is this model here to stay?**

This model has never been relevant to metal; all successful metal bands have quite deliberately built up their following slowly through constant touring and multiple albums. This is as true of old standbys like Iron Maiden as it is of newer bands like Amorphis and Dark Tranquility.

**Do we live in a copy-paste era? What can be described as original metal music in times of artistic and informational oversaturation?**

Heavy metal is a conservative genre. It holds on to traditional notions of artistic originality and musicianship. As stated above, in order to be accepted as a legitimate metal artist, a group must be able to perform live. Consequently, while contemporary studio technology allows all manner of "cheating" on a recording using copy-paste digital editing and prerecorded samples, because live performance is still a proving ground, these methods have inherent limitations for the aspiring artist. "Artistic and informational oversaturation," in my experience, is mostly a problem for burned-out critics, overwhelmed scholars, and artists trying to get heard amid the noise and chaos. The regular listener enjoys having choices, and knows what she likes. With more choices, she's more likely to find

what she likes. (This actually makes critics and scholars more important, not less, because while non-experts may know what they like when they hear it, many have no idea where to start.) Those who despair of ever encountering new, exciting metal music in the present have an insufficient appreciation of the genre's capacity for self-renewal and the enormity of its global fanbase. Metal is needed now more than ever around the world, and its continued stylistic development is virtually assured.