

Metal Music as Critical Dystopia:
Humans, Technology and the Future in 1990s Science Fiction Metal

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Abstract

Metal Music as Critical Dystopia: Humans, Technology and the Future in 1990s Science Fiction Metal seeks to demonstrate that the dystopian elements in metal music are not merely or necessarily a sonic celebration of disaster. Rather, metal music's fascination with dystopian imagery is often critical in intent, borrowing themes and imagery from other literary and cinematic traditions in an effort to express a form of social commentary. The artists and musical works examined in this thesis maintain strong ties with the science fiction genre, in particular, and turn to science fiction conventions in order to examine the long-term implications of humanity's complex relationship with advanced technology. Situating metal's engagements with science fiction in relation to a broader practice of blending science fiction and popular music and to the technophobic tradition in writing and film, this thesis analyzes the works of two science fiction metal bands, Voïvod and Fear Factory, and provides close readings of four futuristic albums from the mid to late 1990s that address humanity's relationship with advanced technology in musical and visual imagery as well as lyrics. These recorded texts, described here as *cyber metal* for their preoccupation with technology in subject matter and in sound, represent prime examples of the critical dystopia in metal music. While these albums identify contemporary problems as the root of devastation yet to come, their musical narratives leave room for the possibility of hope, allowing for the chance that dystopia is not our inevitable future.

Dedication

To the memory of Denis (Piggy) D'Amour
and Asbestos, the large white cat

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Introduction: Approaching the Study of Science Fiction Metal

Metal music is a genre of contradictions. Incurring fanatical appreciation and virulent attack, encompassing chart-topping hits and underground obscurity, expressing graphic brutality and intellectual interrogation, metal is home to a diverse collection of forms, messages, audiences and intents—characterized, at the most rudimentary level, by loud, distorted guitars; wailing or growled vocals; a powerful, low-frequency rhythm section; and extreme tempos. Not the “brutishly simple, debilitatingly negative and violent” noise its detractors describe, metal, in actuality, is a complex artistic reflection of a complicated world (Walser 24-25). Robert Walser suggests that “what seems like rejection, alienation, or nihilism” in metal may be more productively viewed “as an attempt to create an alternative identity,” the impulse arising out of “dissatisfaction with dominant identities and institutions” and a desire to come to terms with something that makes more sense (xvii). Metal is both willing to respond to hegemonic norms and capable of imagining alternate possibilities.

This is also the role of science fiction. The science fiction genre offers commentary on the existing world through descriptions of other planets, parallel universes, alternate histories and potential futures, speculating on what could or might be—interpolations of how society got where it is and extrapolations of where present attitudes and practices might lead us. According to Darko Suvin, science fiction has become “a diagnosis, a warning, a call to understanding and action, and—most important—a mapping of possible alternatives” (12). More specifically, science fiction can provide the means to examine life in an age of rapid scientific and technological development (Sobchack 8). Emphasizing science, empirical method and rationality over spirituality and mysticism

(Sobchack 63), science fiction offers the “appropriate language” for addressing issues such as the changes wrought by science and technology and the impact of technology on “the [human] self” (Telotte 12).

Our anxieties about these issues—concerns about the increasing ubiquity of technology, our growing reliance on technological systems, the encroachment of technological interventions into the human body and identity, the ecological devastation wrought through technological developments, and the political power of those who control our technology, for example—tend to surface in science fiction’s darker expressions. Yet darkness does not necessarily imply hopelessness, and in recent decades, scholars have identified a form of dystopian writing and filmmaking that tempers fearful concepts with utopian possibilities and open-endedness (Baccolini 16-18) or depicts dismal futures as the direct result of contemporary mistakes or “causes” (Penley 126). Labelled *critical dystopias*, such works are not simply indications of our culture’s inability to imagine its own future or demonstrations of our willingness to “revel in the sheer awfulness of The Day After” (Penley 126); rather, this literature and cinema represents a “strongly, and more self-reflexively ‘critical’” body of texts that retrieve and rework the “progressive possibilities inherent in dystopian narrative” (Moylan 188).

My argument in this thesis is that metal music, despite its stereotypical associations with negativity, nihilism and unsophisticated noise, can also take the form of the critical dystopia, using science fiction frameworks, themes and images in its sounds, lyrics and visuals to point to contemporary problems as the root of dystopian futures and possibilities. Metal’s own “darkness” lends the genre to dystopian themes, and although there is nothing inherently critical or progressive in metal’s turn to science fiction for

inspiration, the critical dystopia in metal represents one speculative strain of this musical genre's broader social conscience, which manifests itself in songs about political oppression, social justice, and the destruction of the environment, among other issues. As my analysis makes clear, the impulse of some metal musicians to voice social commentary in the vocabulary of science fiction finds precedence and inspiration in several sources—literature, cinema and other forms of popular music, including psychedelia, progressive rock, and industrial music.

In the 1990s, metal music's harsh guitar-based aggression, its social critique, and its explorations into the potential sounds and high-tech themes of contemporary science fiction merged most tangibly in the music of two bands, Voïvod and Fear Factory. Sometimes dubbed by press or publicists as "cyber metal"—a term I have adopted for the purposes of analysis—the mid to late 1990s albums by both bands offer extended conceptual narratives examining human life in highly technological societies, sharing a willingness to turn to samplers and other digital technologies for music-making and effects production, the use of more stripped-down, mechanical rhythms and a movement away from displays of virtuosity. Their songs and albums do not simply feature science fiction lyrics—they also address anxieties about humanity's relationship with technology by incorporating those concerns into the sound of the music itself, sampling industrial machinery, computerized equipment, urban life, or high-tech movies and evoking the mechanized power and momentum of technologized systems but also the positive potential of technological advancement.

While these works focus on the issue of human existence in a technologically-advanced society, they emerge from and respond to a complex web of events and cultural

developments, including the end of the Cold War and its constant threat of nuclear annihilation, new Western military engagements in the Middle East and weapons of mass destruction, as well as a decline in metal's mainstream popularity and the rise of new hard music phenomena such as grunge. Several songs also offer a stream of veiled commentary on specific contemporary affairs, such as the Los Angeles riots of 1992 and the United States' Alaskan-based HAARP surveillance project. Nevertheless, the dominant concern fuelling and linking these albums together is the impact of technology and technology-dominated thinking on autonomy and individuality, human nature (and the nature of humanity), and on the survival of our species.

The notions of autonomy, individuality and humanity conveyed by these works and the anxieties about the relationship between humans and technology that they express belong to a specific sociocultural moment and place. While an in-depth exploration of identity politics is beyond the scope of my thesis, it is important to acknowledge the social positions these musicians occupy and to recognize the impact of gender, ethnicity and other identity issues on their creative output. For example, the members of Fear Factory and Voivod (and nearly all of their collaborators) are men working in a male-dominated music genre, which may explain why the albums examined here focus on male characters and do not challenge gender politics as part of their social critique. The artists' lack of engagement with issues of ethnicity and nationality may be less straightforward—Dino Cazares of Fear Factory was born in Mexico and drummer Raymond Herrera's background is also Latino, and both Denis D'Amour and Michel Langevin are Quebecois—however, it is still not particularly surprising in a music scene where English is the predominant language and American and British Anglo-Saxons have

been the predominant players. In the worlds envisioned on the albums examined here (and on many other metal albums) there are basically three kinds of people—those who are part of the dominant system of control, those who are oppressed by the system, and those who resist—a construction that erases differences of gender, sexuality, nationality and ethnicity.

The fact that Fear Factory and Voivod avoid addressing identity politics is not simply a matter of genre conventions; it is also tied to dominant constructions of subjectivity that define humans as unified, coherent beings with stable identities. The way in which these artists emphasize autonomy and individuality as essential human qualities that make us distinct from machines and other living creatures, and their consequent suspicion of conformity and ‘group mentality,’ also resonates with the bourgeois liberal humanism that has played such a dominant role in post-Enlightenment Western ideology, and which sees “‘man’ as rational, autonomous, unique, and free” (Simon 4).¹ When these musicians suggest that we may rise above contemporary problems by transcending our human forms or evolving toward a new human-machine hybridity (as Fear Factory does on these albums) it undermines the emphasis on individualism but simultaneously contributes to the erasure of differences that might be celebrated by other artists coming from other social places.

The idea that we may find a solution to injustices and inequality in the union of human and machine is closely related to another notion that comes through on these

¹ Many metal and rock artists (and some of their critics) emphasize individualism; see Robert Walser on Guns N’ Roses (165-168), Durrell S. Bowman on Rush, and Harris M. Berger (*Metal* 267-268) and Natalie Purcell on death metal (48-49). Purcell also notes that the metal fans she surveyed tend to value individualism and “thinking for themselves” (126).

albums—that it is possible to fight back against the oppressive systems that exploit technology’s potential for control and destruction by subverting technology and manipulating it as a tool for ‘good’. Laura Bartlett and Thomas B. Byers find a similar liberal humanist outlook in the science fiction film, *The Matrix* (1999), which suggests (invoking an old capitalist myth) that human liberation can be achieved through “self-actualization and an assertion of autonomy” and that technology is “the liberating medium” (44). One of the difficulties with such a narrative is that it constructs the technologically adept individual as the ‘master’ of ‘his’ own destiny and frees ‘him’ from any responsibility for the welfare of others, and as Bartlett and Byers observe, this perspective makes “radical change” and the “destruction of the [oppressive] system” unnecessary (44). The fact that similar ideological constructions can be found in science fiction cinema and science fiction metal (and much sf literature, for that matter) is not surprising; like metal, science fiction film and literature has also traditionally been the realm of white, Western males. It is this qualified notion of ‘human’ and ‘humanity’ that I refer to throughout my analysis.

Science fiction literature and sf cinema have been the object of much theoretical and critical work, and there is a small but growing body of texts addressing science fiction and music, but the intersection of metal music and science fiction has, as yet, received little critical attention. Deena Weinstein has examined Rush’s futuristic *2112* album (1976) as a “serious” dystopian text (*Serious Rock*), Walser’s *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* includes brief analyses of a few songs that could be classified as ‘science fiction metal’ (although he does not use the term) and metal receives passing mention in discussions of science fiction and popular

music by Mark Dery and Ken McLeod, but examinations of metal's engagement with science fiction end there.

I do not wish to claim that science fiction metal or cyber metal are genres or subgenres of metal music. Science fiction metal is a scattered accumulation of musical texts linked with science fiction through concepts, imagery, lyrics, and/or sounds, and the metal bands that have turned to science fiction for inspiration are musically diverse. Science fiction music, in general, is an ungainly group of texts lacking any kind of generic coherence; therefore, as Philip Hayward notes in the introduction to *Off the Planet: Music, Sound and Science Fiction Cinema*, there is no “musical genre of SF as such” (3). Certainly genre classifications from literature and film do not move easily into musical discourse, which has its own generic categories that tend to privilege sonic and performative conventions over subject matter. Yet the terms *science fiction music*, *science fiction metal* and *cyber metal* can serve as useful analytic classifications, and they are certainly not the only labels to come up for debate—even the existence of a film genre of science fiction has been questioned by sf literature buffs in the past (Landon xvi; Sobchack 20).

Science fiction stories rely on the written narrative and the printed page (unless translated to ‘ebook’ or ‘audiobook’ form), but science fiction films emphasize spectacle over story (Landon xvii) and can, through special effects, “reflect the technology that makes them possible” (Telotte 25). Like much popular cinema, most popular music—through amplification, multi-track recording and electronic effects—also exercises the potentials of technology. And while science fiction songs emphasize sound over spectacle, like movies, popular music provides sensory stimulation—even more so

when accompanied by the visual enhancement of videos, live performance, album artwork and, more recently, band-sponsored websites, which all serve to provoke the senses as much as they contribute to meaning. While it is important to recognize these differences, and to acknowledge the sensory impact of science fiction cinema—as has Susan Sontag (1965)—and music—as have metal critics Friesen and Epstein, for example—the distinctions between the different media do not negate their common thematic ground or the usefulness of applying the term *science fiction* to works in music and film as well as literature.

My analysis of albums by Voïvod—*Negatron* (1995) and *Phobos* (1997)—and Fear Factory—*Demanufacture* (1995) and *Obsolete* (1998)—and examples of science fiction metal that predate them involves a reading of the sonic, verbal, and in some cases, visual dimensions of the musical texts. While I owe these categorizations, and many references, to Deena Weinstein's important examination of the metal scene, *Heavy Metal: The Music and Its Culture*, my interpretations rely on a sonic semiotics of heavy metal derived largely from the metal criticism of Robert Walser and Ronald Bogue and Karen Collins' study of industrial music, on basic practices of textual analysis, and on my own experience as a metal critic, musician and fan. Although I am not a musicologist, my examination of these texts involves some musicological as well as literary analysis, and my readings are inevitably informed by my experience and position as a young, white, female metalhead.

In recognizing these albums as the work of specific artists, and in relation to the artists' larger bodies of work, my analysis also gives a nod to auteur theory, the usefulness of which for the study of popular music has been demonstrated by Barry Grant

("Frank Zappa"), among others. I recognize the pitfalls associated with the intentional fallacy and privileging authors' intent, but when attempting to argue for metal's legitimacy as a significant form of cultural production, it is important to acknowledge that the 'critical' nature of these dystopias is not by accident, or my reading "into" the texts, but rather the result of the artists' own critical intentions. However, while this thesis pursues its textual analysis of science fiction metal within a broader sociocultural context, listener response studies were beyond the scope of the project, which does not investigate or make claims about how fans actually do understand these works and the genres to which they belong, but rather focuses on what a close reading of these texts can reveal about their place in and relationship with the surrounding world.

While Voivod and Fear Factory's dystopian narratives run through lyrics, sounds and visual imagery, the visions conveyed by words, sound and image do not always match up, and this analysis aims to look at the disjunctions as well as correspondences, proposing a reading that considers the musical text as a whole, and the album as a complete musical text—a "definitive" recorded performance (Grant, "Frank Zappa" 25). In an age of multiple pressings, easily procured imports, and downloadable tracks, determining which particular recording deserves definitive status can be a tricky process, and I have had to draw lines, including some recorded texts and not others. I have not considered bonus tracks in my analysis of Voivod and Fear Factory's work because of the tracks' exclusivity—they were not available in all geographical areas or on many original issues of the albums and tend to be extraneous to the albums' main concepts (or, in some cases, are remixes of album tracks). I do make reference to the videos both bands released for these albums because the videos have received some television airplay; nevertheless, the

videos generally were not conceived by the original artists as part of the conceptual package, and most involve some performative conventions of the metal genre that have no direct bearing on the bands' engagement with science fiction, dystopian concepts, or social criticism.

Before examining the critical dystopias of Voivod and Fear Factory in detail, this thesis must lay some groundwork. The first chapter, "Generic Foundations," provides more in-depth definitions of metal music and many of its subgenres, and a brief overview of some of the key academic literature on science fiction and dystopian cinema and writing. With reference to other genres of popular music such as progressive rock and industrial, this chapter establishes the semiotics of metal music that will form the basis of my later analyses. The following chapter, "Science Fiction Meets Metal, and Fears of High-Tech Systems Gone Awry," traces the musical lineage of science fiction and dystopian metal throughout the 1970s and 1980s and examines the traditions of technophobic and dystopian writing and filmmaking and their relationship with major sociopolitical and technological developments of the past century, particularly its final decades. The third chapter, "Science Fiction Metal: The Emergence of Voivod and Fear Factory," discusses the 1980s and early 1990s works of Voivod and Fear Factory, as well as the musical and cultural contexts of the time period, providing the necessary background for my analysis of the bands' later albums.

The next chapter, "Cyber Metal as Critical Dystopia: Reading *Negatron*, *Phobos*, *Demanufacture* and *Obsolete*," examines these four albums by Voivod and Fear Factory in depth, discussing their key thematic concerns as expressed in music, lyrics, and visual representations, and supplementing my analysis with references to published reviews and

interviews and to my own interviews with some of the original artists involved in the creation of these works.² This thesis then concludes with a reconsideration of metal's longstanding relationship with science fiction and dystopia and the potential, within that relationship, for social critique. My conclusion also situates this study within the broader and ongoing critical discourse in popular culture and popular music studies, and suggests potential avenues of further research.

Just as the broad category of *science fiction* crosses boundaries between different media, this thesis aims to bring together several different disciplines, combining concepts and techniques from popular music and metal criticism, science fiction literature and film studies, utopian and dystopian studies, and cultural studies in an examination of science fiction-inflected popular music texts. Within this framework it is possible to examine the recorded musical text as part of a larger network of artistic traditions, as the product of a specific culture and time period, and as the work of particular artists operating within these artistic modes and culture. By studying science fiction metal through this interdisciplinary approach, I hope to add weight to the argument, expressed by scholars such as Robert Walser, that metal is culturally relevant and that it is not inevitably negative and nihilistic. I also wish to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which generic traditions function in multiple media and in response to the society from which they emerge.

² See Appendix A for explanation of interview methodology and process.

Generic Foundations

Before this thesis can begin to investigate the sociocultural significance of a category of popular music described with the genre labels *science fiction* and *metal*, and of a subcategory of music termed *cyber metal*, it is first necessary to explain my approach to genre analysis and to establish what such labels generally mean. Science fiction metal is an intersection point between two genres of popular entertainment—metal music and science fiction—and it is necessary to look at some of the basic similarities between metal and dystopian science fiction and metal’s relationship with other genres of popular music in more detail. Turning to some of the key academic works on metal music, science fiction literature and film, utopian/dystopian studies, industrial music, and progressive rock, I establish working definitions of these genres and forms, and identify the primary connotations associated with particular musical conventions—outlining my method of reading metal’s musical texts.

The difficulty and hazards of defining particular genres of cultural production have been addressed by numerous academics (see, for example, Altman, Buscombe, Telotte). Genres are constructed categories (Frith 88) that are always subject to change (93), evolution, decay (Miller in Gunn 34) and exhaustion (Byrnside in Weinstein 43). As Simon Frith observes, “genre maps” also shift “according to who they’re for” (77); the inherent instability of genre taxonomies owes itself not just to the passage of time but to the different actors participating in genre discourse and to the use of genre labels to offer condensed sociological and ideological arguments about the works they name (Frith 86). While popular music genres do exhibit considerable stability, it is necessary to acknowledge genre categorization as a system of discourse and meaning making for

several groups—artists, fans, media, the entertainment industry; genre labelling is a popular practice as well as a tool for scholarly analysis (Frith 88-89, Gunn 35, Neale 19, Wall 146, Weinstein 22).

The impact of forces such as audience and industry expectations or the critical role of the popular press helps to ensure that generic works (and often their audiences) conform to established rules or conventions that dictate form and technique, ways of conveying meaning, behaviour; the type of images and ideas expressed, and modes of production (Fabbri in Frith 91-93). Nevertheless, it is also important to recognize the capacity of individual artists for subverting genre rules or for finding outlets for personal concerns within those constrictions (Buscombe 22). I will address the efforts of individual artists in the following chapters; this chapter seeks to outline some of the common conventions of metal and science fiction, dystopias and critical dystopias, and related genres of popular music that provide insight into the meaning of generic texts, regardless of how slippery genre labels themselves can be.

Metal Music

The birth of metal music has been attributed to several sources, British and American, and to a period spanning the late 1960s and early 1970s (Berger, “Practice” 467). However, metal journalist and chronicler Ian Christie proposes a precise birth date—February 13, 1970, the day on which a group of musicians known as Black Sabbath emerged out of England’s blues revival scene with “the first complete heavy metal work by the first heavy metal artists,” its sound distinguished by an “ominous presence,” creeping tempos, “immense volume” and “sustained feedback” (4). In the introduction to Martin Popoff’s *The Collector’s Guide to Heavy Metal Volume 1: The*

Seventies, Rob Godwin lists several blues, rock and psychedelic artists commonly cited as metal pioneers, including Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, Cream, The Yardbirds, MC5, The Kinks, The Who and Iron Butterfly, but Godwin ultimately supports Popoff's assertion that metal, as a distinct genre, emerged with the release of three particular albums in 1970—Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*, Deep Purple's *In Rock*, and Uriah Heep's *Very 'eavy Very 'umble* (5)—and their prominent guitar riffs (“huge,” “galloping” “fire-breathing”), powerful percussion, and dark atmospheres (45, 84, 300-301). David Konow begins his history of metal with Black Sabbath and Deep Purple as well, but cites Led Zeppelin rather than Uriah Heep as co-founders of the genre.

Academic histories of metal tell similar stories. Will Straw notes that key stylistic traits of the metal genre can be found in the fringes of psychedelia—Blue Cheer, The Yardbirds and Iron Butterfly, for example (97). Deena Weinstein asserts that metal culture has tended to favour either Led Zeppelin or Black Sabbath as originating figures (*Heavy Metal* 14-15), but Harris Berger's interviews with scene members indicates that, at least in Ohio, metalheads tend to give the credit to Black Sabbath (56-57). Andy Bennett remarks on the contestable nature of metal's precise origins as well but, citing Robert Christgau and Steve Waksman, implies the metal “phenomenon” emerged with Led Zeppelin's “heavily amplified blues-rock” (42). Weinstein identifies metal's formative years as 1969-1972, with the fusion of blues rock and psychedelic music that would crystallize into many of the genre's conventions in the mid-1970s (14-16), while Robert Gross situates metal's beginnings a few years earlier, 1967-1969 (120). Robert Walser traces metal's genealogy further back to African-American blues (8), but proposes a similar metal triumvirate to Popoff's, substituting Led Zeppelin's *Led*

Zeppelin II for Uriah Heep and remarking on characteristics such as the bands' speed and power; the "heavily distorted crunch" of their guitars; their "emphasis on the occult"; and their use of blues-influenced riffs, wailing vocals, contrasting dynamics and, in the case of Deep Purple, classical influences (Walser 8-10).

While the various arguments situating metal's emergence as a distinct genre of popular music each have merit, for the purposes of this thesis I draw the starting line at the release of Black Sabbath's self-titled debut album. It is not my intent to argue in favour of a precise origin; however, it is necessary to establish generic boundaries to proceed with a concise and coherent analysis, and of the early metal bands, Black Sabbath is most strongly associated with the genre's dystopian character, as will become more apparent in the next chapter. Several authors have described Black Sabbath's deliberate efforts to challenge the utopian ideals of the 1960s counterculture (Christe 8-9; Harrell 97; Konow 3; Weinstein, *Heavy Metal* 33); this cynicism and desire to confront brutal realities has become a common convention of the metal genre and is metaphorically expressed through metal's relationship with dystopian science fiction.

What I refer to here as *metal music* is often termed *heavy metal*. Within the metal scene, the shortened form, *metal*, has evolved as the broader label, encompassing a wide range of styles and heavy music practices (see Weinstein, *Heavy Metal* 7-8)—subgenres whose names are usually compound variants sharing "metal" as the common denominator. *Heavy metal* has become a more specific term, referring to early forms of metal or contemporary music that is classic in form and sound, or is used to express particular emphasis. The words "heavy metal" evoke science and technology—firepower, warfare, and environmental pollution—and have been used to describe, by Steppenwolf,

the roar of a motorcycle or, by William Burroughs, inhabitants of Uranus (Christe 10; Walser 1, 7-8; Weinstein, *Heavy Metal* 18-20). Application of the term to a style of music implies recognition and reinforcement of the genre's enduring relationship with the sounds and imagery of power and technology, and the potential dangers of both.

Walser observes that rock journalists employed "heavy metal" as a descriptive phrase in the 1960s, before the term "became a noun and thus a genre" (7). In the 1970s that genre included sounds as diverse as Ted Nugent, Rainbow and Blue Öyster Cult (Walser 10), and early academic work on metal demonstrates a similar inclusiveness, considering Humble Pie and Journey as generically united with Black Sabbath, Uriah Heep, Deep Purple and Led Zeppelin (Straw). Rock critics often used the term "heavy metal" interchangeably with other labels like "hard rock" (Brackett 267) and even "progressive" (Popoff, *Seventies* 5) at this time, although Weinstein notes that "hard rock" was more common in the United States because of the stigma attached to heavy metal music and the relative dearth of actual metal bands in the U.S. during the 1970s (*Heavy Metal* 20-21)

In the following decade the metal genre began to follow a trajectory of expansion and fragmentation (Walser 13; Weinstein, *Heavy Metal* 44-45). New genre labels began to emerge, identifying "thrash metal, commercial metal, lite metal, power metal, American metal, black (satanic) metal, white (Christian) metal, death metal, speed metal, glam metal" (Walser 13). Academics have tended to filter these newer variants into two main categories, one representing the more popular forms of metal that received mainstream airplay and press and high record and concert ticket sales, the other representing the harder or heavier forms of metal that proliferated through an underground scene (Brackett 376; Walser 13-14; Weinstein, *Heavy Metal* 43-52), although these distinctions became