



Brown, A.R. (2021) 'Heavy metal justice? Calibrating the economic and aesthetic accreditation of the heavy metal genre in the pages of Rolling Stone, 1980-1991: part two 1986-91', *Metal Music Studies*, 7 (2), pp. 257-276.

Official URL: https://doi.org/10.1386/mms_00048_1

ResearchSPAcE

<http://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/>

This pre-published version is made available in accordance with publisher policies.

Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Your access and use of this document is based on your acceptance of the ResearchSPAcE Metadata and Data Policies, as well as applicable law:-

<https://researchspace.bathspa.ac.uk/policies.html>

Unless you accept the terms of these Policies in full, you do not have permission to download this document.

This cover sheet may not be removed from the document.

Please scroll down to view the document.

Heavy Metal Justice? : Calibrating the economic and aesthetic accreditation of the heavy metal genre in the pages of *Rolling Stone*, 1980-1991: Part Two 1986-91¹⁰

Abstract: Given the genre name heavy metal can be traced to a negative adjective that emerges out of 70s rock criticism and which reflects a widespread *dissensus* among rock writers about its value and impact on North American rock music, how are we to explain the gradual or cumulative shift away from this majority aesthetic disapprobation, in the 1980-85 period, towards a widespread economic accreditation, particularly in the pages of leading rock magazine, *Rolling Stone*. Is it simply a belated recognition of the longevity of the genre and its resurgent popularity with majority audiences? If so, how are we to explain the subsequent shift, clearly evident in *Stone* coverage in the 1986-91 period, from economic to aesthetic approbation of selective bands, particularly those identified with a thrash metal underground, which is nevertheless seen to emerge from within the genre or to be an aesthetic development of some of its key musical features, while rejecting others. Drawing on a comprehensive sample, composed of album reviews, lead or feature articles and interviews, drawn from the *RS* archive, my research reports a definite shift in the critical reception of heavy metal, first to economic accreditation in the 1980-85 period, based not only on the genre's persistence and sustained economic success but also its ability to appeal beyond its core audience and therefore challenge the dominant rock and pop aesthetic. Secondly, in the period 1986-91, heavy metal acquires a notable level of critical or aesthetic legitimation which is conferred on particular bands and album releases, particularly those emerging from the thrash underground, such as Metallica and Megadeth. However, this aesthetic approbation is drawn *within* the wider genre, distinguishing between the newly emergent avant-garde and the more popular styles of the wider genre.

Keywords: economic accreditation, rock criticism, heavy metal, aesthetic approbation, critical consensus, thrash metal underground, Metallica.

When does the genre of heavy metal achieve some measure of critical legitimacy in rock writing? That is, when do rock critics, particularly those at *Rolling Stone*, not only recognize heavy metal as a distinct genre *in-its-own-right* but also begin to afford it some degree of praise or measure of worth? This is an important question, not least because many key writers argue that the heavy metal genre has been the most critically maligned of all rock-styles (Straw 1984; 1990; Weinstein 2004; Walser 2014), only latterly achieving genre-recognition and aesthetic-approbation with the rise of the 'metal press' itself (Brown 2007; 2010; cf. Brown and Fellezs 2012: xiii-xiv).

Drawing on the evidence gathered from a comprehensive search of the *Rolling Stone* archive, in the period 1980-1985, Part One of this article demonstrated that the chart success of heavy metal, as a resurgent, once-more commercially dominant genre is accorded economic accreditation by the majority of *Rolling Stone* critics; although this recognition is initially hard-won and surrounded by negative associations that refer back to its 70s pioneers and the connotations of 'a return' of the least admired of all rock genres. For some writers this resurgence suggests that the genre and its popularity had never really gone away, with newer fans clearly loyal to its genre

pioneers. But there is also the sense that such a resurgence underpins the sheer consistency of the musical template of heavy metal as a genre form, which this ‘new wave’ has further refined and consolidated, with some album releases viewed as definite statements of its sonic ‘art’ (Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, Nov 27 1980: 69; Christopher Connelly, *Rolling Stone*, April 12 1984: 58).

This judgment is also underpinned by a recognition of the key role played by a new wave of creative and collaborative record producers, working with new and established bands, who are able to refine the core musical features of the genre, producing state-of-the-art recordings that showcase the sheer power, technical virtuosity and audio-dynamics of heavy metal bands, but in a more consistent way with an emphasis on song-writing and studio-craft (J.D. Considine, *Rolling Stone*, June 24 1982: 41; David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, March 31 1983: 51; Kurt Loder, *Rolling Stone*, April 26 1984: 48; David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, Dec 17 1987: 186).

Along with this there is also a recognition, among key writers, that this resurgence involves a new wave of young British bands, such as Def Leppard, Iron Maiden and Motörhead, who are redefining the genre form in ways that suggest not only a reaction to the challenge of punk and new wave but also the development of stylistic elements that have absorbed some of its characteristics (J.D. Considine, *Rolling Stone*, June 24 1982: 41). Most notably an increase in speed and tempo but also a perceived sense of youthful ‘intelligence’ which further refines the genre form, even rejecting some of its more outdated or clichéd characteristics, in favor of a more modern, street-wise sensibility and image (John Swenson, *Rolling Stone*, Oct 2 1980; Bruce D. Rhodewalt, *Rolling Stone*, July 7 1983: 43). For some, this development lends these newer bands a greater sense of youth address and musical relevance, especially to the extent that they are seen to offer a viable alternative, even a welcomed challenge, to a ‘new wave’ movement that - *for all its promise* - has ended up becoming a rather safe and unchallenging pop mainstream (David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, March 31 1983: 51).

But, as I noted in the conclusion to Part One, the overwhelming commercial success of the genre and the praise afforded some bands and key chart-topping albums inevitably raises what Kurt Loder defines as the *Great Metal Question*: to what extent these bands can successfully translate the heavy metal genre template, with a more polished production or through a development of song-writing craft, into a popular music form that appeals well beyond the core metal audience; or indeed whether this is what the most successful metal bands aspire to achieve.

However, as I shall argue in Part Two of this article, it is the breakthrough to significant chart success, from 1986 onwards, of formerly underground U.S. bands, variously described as speed or thrash metal, of which Metallica are seen to be the key musical pioneers, who, along with Megadeth and Anthrax, are viewed as a genuinely new and innovative heavy metal *avant-garde* or underground, that are not only seen to refine the heavy metal music template, with increased speed and ensemble precision, but also to reject the perceived clichéd elements of the ‘traditional’ lyrical themes of the genre with longer, more complex songs that pointedly address contemporary issues and political themes.

Although there are growing clues to this shift in critical opinion to be found in the discursive structure of commentary, review asides and news reports from 1986

onwards, it is Tim Holmes' review of Metallica's *Master of Puppets* album (*Rolling Stone*, Jun 05 1986), that formally announces this shift:

Metallica has taken the raw material of heavy metal and refined all the shit – the swaggering cock-rock braggadocio and the medieval dungeons and dragons imagery – right out of it. Instead of the usual star-struttin' ejaculatory gestures and hokey showbiz razzmatazz, the members of Metallica pour out pure apocalyptic dread. Their version of heavy metal is the sound of global paranoia (p.52).

The newly conferred rock legitimacy and aesthetic approbation that is afforded these bands is symbolically signaled by the intervention of established rock critics, most notably veteran jazz, blues and Americana expert Robert Palmer, joining with the newer rock writers, such as David Fricke, J.D. Considine, Kurt Loder, Deborah Frost and Tim Holmes, and future grunge and alternative rock champions, such as Michael Azzerrad and Kim Neely, in penning key album reviews of Metallica and Megadeth, that clearly differentiate their success from the perceived musically formulaic, commercially successful hard rock and pop-metal bands, such as Van Halen, Mötley Crüe and Bon Jovi.

In summary then, although the economic accreditation of the heavy metal genre is clearly reflected in the quantity and prominence of largely positive (sometimes strongly rated) album reviews and key features in the 1980-85 period, as evidenced in Part One of this article, it is the overwhelmingly positive reception of a perceived breakthrough of formerly underground thrash and speed metal bands to chart success, from 1986 onwards, that signals a critical shift in register from economic to aesthetic accreditation; that is, bands such as Megadeth and Metallica, especially the latter, acquire an aesthetic distinction conferred on them by leading critics at *Rolling Stone*, affording them in Gendron's terms, 'the status of "artist[s]" as opposed to "entertainer[s]"' (2002: 161). But significantly this distinction is drawn – with the partial exception of Def Leppard and Guns N' Roses¹¹ – *within* the genre of heavy metal as a whole and in contradistinction to its overwhelming commercial success in this period. This is no more clearly signaled than in Michael Azzerrad's joint album review 'When things get heavy' of Bon Jovi's *New Jersey* and Metallica's *...And Justice For All* (Nov 03 1988), wherein Bon Jovi's album is judged 'so purely commercial that it's practically beyond criticism (it would be more appropriate to evaluate its sales potential)', whereas Metallica, by contrast, make 'challenging music worthy of considered analysis' (pp.111-112).

Significantly, as I will evidence in Part Two of this article, this critical consecration is signalled by Metallica making the cover of *Rolling Stone* in January 1989, under the strap-line: 'The Top Ten Band You Won't Hear on the Radio' and as the subject of David Fricke's four-thousand-word feature, 'Heavy Metal Justice' wherein the band are said to have *made-it-to-the-top* 'with their integrity intact' (p. 46). This period of critical consecration can be said to reach a symbolic plateau with Robert Palmer's **** reviews¹² of Megadeth's *Rust In Peace* (Nov 15 1990) and Metallica's 'black album' ('Metallic K.O.') in September 1991. However, there is some irony to this key summit of critical approval in that the latter album release (as its subsequent crossover success clearly demonstrates)¹³ is one that not only seeks a wider audience beyond the thrash underground of the band's origins but also by working with a more

'mainstream' rock producer, is able to achieve a more polished or precise production, with clearer more melodic vocals and shorter songs, including ballads, but without losing the heavy metal 'crunch' of their signature sound. In this respect, the Great Metal Question is ironically re-addressed at the key moment when it is viewed by rock critics as no longer relevant to the radical music palette and political-lyrics of the newly emergent thrash metal avant-garde, of which Metallica are seen to be the clear leaders.

Part Two (1986-91):

The Struggle Within: How the aesthetic approbation of select bands emerges from the wider economic accreditation of the HM genre field

It is Tim Holmes' review of *Master of Puppets* (*Rolling Stone*, Jun 05 1986) that first announces a critical shift to aesthetic approbation, conferred upon a select few metal bands led by Metallica. Holmes' opening claim is that Metallica have refined the genre template of heavy metal by jettisoning its most recognisable clichés - 'the swaggering cock-rock braggadocio', the 'star-struttin' ejaculatory gestures', the 'hokey showbiz razzmatazz' and the 'medieval dungeons and dragons imagery'; that is, rather than re-hash the 'tra-la-la music of escapism' Metallica 'pour out pure apocalyptic dread', offering listeners the 'sound of global paranoia' (p. 52). In this respect their 'fiery chomp-chomp-chomp' provides an 'aural analogue to the terrors their lyrics define' (p. 52). This focus on the scope and seriousness of Metallica's songs, such as "Leper Messiah," "Damage, Inc.," "Disposable Heroes" and "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)," including the quoting of lyrical couplets to illustrate the album's themes of drug addiction as a metaphor for enslavement, the rhetoric of false prophets, sinister institutional power, inescapable evil forces or escape into mental delirium, markedly contrast with the criticism of the usually deemed clichéd heavy metal themes and lyrical inadequacies, as for example those of popular bands, such as Def Leppard, Van Halen and AC/DC. On the evidence of this discussion, Holmes concludes that Metallica has both the musical 'chops' but also the 'subtlety to create a new [titanium] metal' (p.52).

But there is a suggestion - both in the review itself and elsewhere - that this shift in critical register, from economic to aesthetic accreditation, is less a distinction drawn *within* the burgeoning success of the genre as a whole and more a view that what is occurring is the emergence of a new kind of metal music, one which the existing term heavy metal is no longer able to adequately contain. By the close of the decade and the beginning of the next, the name for this new-metal will be identified as speed metal and then, cementing the success of Metallica and to a lesser extent Megadeth, Anthrax and Slayer, as *thrash metal*.¹⁴ The fact that this emergent distinction, clear by the end of the decade, is not entirely visible as an organizing narrative of the coverage on heavy metal in the pages of *Rolling Stone* is in large part due to the commercial logic that coheres that coverage, where lead album reviews, interviews and the like are determined by chart success. Indeed, it could be argued that the central critical dilemma of the magazine is how to reconcile artistic integrity with commercial success, critical opinion with audience popularity, which in the case of the burgeoning chart success of heavy metal in this period often meant seeking to differentiate, as we have seen, within a broadly conferred, occasionally nuanced, economic accreditation.

However, there is a residual thread of this terminology beginning to emerge as minor parts of - or footnotes to - larger reports; or as asides in reviews of other initially more successful artists, in evidence from at least 1985 onwards. For example, towards the end of the 'Music Yearbook 1985' (*Rolling Stone*, Dec 19 1985: 9-85) feature and coming at the very end of the Heavy Metal report, writers David Fricke, Merle Ginsberg and Tim Holmes, identify the 'seething sounds' of 'baby metal bands', Anthrax, Megadeth and Slayer, along with the 'ground-zero purists Metallica' bubbling-up from the 'underground' (p. 79). While, an aside by Fricke, in a review of new glam-metal success Cinderella's *Night Songs* album (*Rolling Stone*, Nov 6 1986) observes: 'Frankly, the members of Cinderella would get a lot more than their hair messed up in a head-on collision with thrash-metal panzers like Metallica, Anthrax or Megadeth. But love 'em or loathe 'em, these guys aren't wimps' (p.78). This emerging comparison of the 'soft metal' that can earn platinum sales and a tougher, uncompromising strain of new-metal surprisingly finds its way into an interview piece on the success of New Jersey 'pretty-boy' rockers, Bon Jovi: "We just want to have fun, " says Jon, "nothing more – and nothing less. We aren't U2, we aren't gonna change the world, but we ain't Metallica, you know what I mean?" (*Rolling Stone*, Nov 20 1986, p.35).

The next opportunity to comment on this 'new-metal band' comes unfortunately as part of the obituary notice for bassist Cliff Burton, (Kurt Loder, *Rolling Stone*, Nov 06 1986), killed in a tour-bus crash in Ljungby, Sweden, on September 27th. The piece goes on to comment that Metallica's 'combination of heavy-metal guitar power and punk-rock velocity – a fusion known as "thrash"' (p.22), had made them the 'biggest-selling group of its ilk'. Prior to this tragedy, the band was 'at a high point in its career' with its second album, *Ride the Lightning*, having sold more than 5000, 000 copies in the U.S., and its third and latest LP, *Master of Puppets*, selling over 750, 000 copies worldwide and 'still going strong' (p.22).

David Fricke, Kurt Loder and David Wild, in their commentary on 'The Year in Records: '86' (*Rolling Stone*, Dec 18 1986), again seek to note the significance of Metallica's 'Master of Puppets' album: 'Subtlety, musicianship, messages – this is a heavy-metal band? - Not exactly. Speed metal is the operative term – a souped-up, punk-conscious revitalization of classic Seventies HM with all the rhythmic sludge excised and the guitar solos left intact' (p. 184). Yet, despite zero airplay, the band has 'sold half a million copies of Puppets, their third LP', making it abundantly clear that 'a new grass-roots rock movement [has] taken hold' (p. 184).

However, while the commercial logic of the coverage in *Rolling Stone* meant that these largely sympathetic mentions of Metallica was mostly confined to the margins, this was no longer true of the heavy metal genre as a whole, which in this period was beginning to challenge the rock *mainstream* itself. Steve Pond, under the heading 'Full-Metal Racket' (*Rolling Stone*, Aug 13 1987), cites the evidence of the Billboard charts of June 13th as the 'tipping point' when the resurgent heavy metal genre – despite the misgivings of 'nervous parents, uneasy rock critics and the PMRC' – announced itself as a commercial force to be reckoned with:

Sure, U2 held down the Number One slot – but after that, things got pretty rough [...] Number Two was Whitesnake, a bunch of journeyman British pop metallers who sound like warmed-over Led Zeppelin [...] Then Bon Jovi, pretty-boy Jersey

hard rockers. Then Poison, four powdered and coiffed Angelinos determined to out-glam Mötley Crüe. Then Mötley Crüe itself, the newly de-glammed bad boys. Then Ozzy Osbourne [...] whose commercial clout had seemingly [not] faded' (1987: p.41).

However, as if 'this stranglehold on five of the top six chart positions' wasn't enough, the Top 200 also included: Cinderella, Ace Frehley, Tesla, Stryper, Anthrax, Night Ranger, TNT, Bon Jovi (again), Whitesnake (again), Megadeth, Deep Purple, Ratt, Iron Maiden, Montrose, Metallica, Gary Moore and Van Halen' (p.41). In addition, Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe, Europe and Poison also recorded success in the Top Forty singles chart, 'which rarely features anything harder than Bryan Adams' (p.41). On top of this, the 'biggest-grossing-concerts chart' included Bon Jovi and Cinderella (three each), Deep Purple and Bad Company (two), as well as shows by Night Ranger and Tesla, Anthrax and Metal Church and the 'formidable lineup' of Megadeth, Overkill and the Necros. Also, 'five of MTV's ten most requested videos were by hard rockers' (p.41).

The report goes on to suggest that changes in MTV policy, with more regular rotation of hard rock and heavy metal and the introduction of the weekly *Headbanger's Ball*, as well as the emergence of new formats in Album-oriented radio stations, has some of the answers to this surge in popularity. But it also has something to do with the strategy of bands and their management towards gaining more mainstream exposure, gaining new younger fans while retaining older ones. As a consequence, heavy metal has lost some of its 'sense of outrage and your-parents-are-gonna-hate-us defiance'; or as one industry commentator puts it:

"I don't think anybody listens to Bon Jovi or Whitesnake or Mötley Crüe to be rebellious [...] That's the province of Metallica, Slayer and others of the harder, tougher, punkier speed-metal bands that have surfaced in the past few years. Those bands may be the closest thing to a true underground that rock has today, but even they are beginning to break through commercially" (p. 58).

These reports of 'Metal Bands Dominat[ing] The Album Chart' continued until the end of the year (Rolling Stone, Dec 17 1987:27), while the Summer of the following year was dominated by the *Monsters of Rock Tour*, described by Steve Pond as a 'hard-rock juggernaut' featuring Van Halen, the Scorpions, Dokken, Metallica and Kingdom Come, offering up to ten hours of 'bone-crunching hard-rock music' and an estimated '100,000 teenage metalheads', a '10,000-square-foot stage' and '250,000 watts of sound' (Rolling Stone Jul 14 1988: 41). With an estimated 2 million likely to attend the event held in twenty-two stadiums across the U.S., the 'most expensive tour in rock history' is also likely to be the 'biggest-grossing tour of the summer' headlined by the 'biggest hard-rock band of our time' featuring the genre's 'most envied and emulated guitarist' (Eddie Van Halen) but who 'sometimes sound more like a Top Forty pop-rock band' (1988: 41).

But as *Rolling Stone's* end of year 'Heavyosity' report (Rolling Stone, Dec 15 1988) confirmed, while this was the year that 'metal ruled, for real' with the long scorned 'underdog of popular music' managing to bludgeon its way into the mainstream by 'frequently holding half of the Top Ten spots on Billboard's album charts', as well as earning its 'very own Grammy category at long last' (p.124), this was also the year in

which the burgeoning popularity of the genre, began to reveal a more *nuanced* pattern of fandom, along age, gender and sub-genre likes, which was also reflected in an emerging critical language that increasingly tended to differentiate between a melodic hard rock ('pop' or 'lite metal') commerciality and a more rhythmically complex heavy rock ('thrash' or 'speed metal') authenticity, with some exceptions, such as Guns N' Roses.

So, only a week after its chart debut, Van Halen's *OU812* album was able to knock George Michael's *Faith* (Number One for eleven weeks) of the top spot. However, the band's *Monsters of Rock Tour* 'didn't have the same impact' (p.124), with crowds divided in terms of *who* they wanted to see. Indeed, it was 'slam stalwart and *longtime* critic's favorite' (*emphasis mine*), Metallica who capped a 'show stealing slot' on an otherwise disappointing tour and then followed it up with an 'angry, political album ...*And Justice for All*', that entered the Top Ten 'without the benefit of airplay or a video' (p.124). Added to this, 'metal subgenres formerly relegated to underground status', such as thrash and speed metal bands, Anthrax and Megadeth, 'moved out of the closet and into the Top Fifty' (p.125).

In terms of chart domination, it was Deff Leppard's *Hysteria*,¹⁵ featuring a number of 'infectious' singles releases ("Pour Some Sugar on Me," "Women," "Animal" and "Love Bites") and the band's 'trademark melodic crunch', who went on to topple Van Halen's *OU812* from its 'Number One perch in July', while also outselling *Pyromania* (p.124). But it was LA hard rockers Guns N' Roses who were the biggest success story, despite retail chains refusing to stock their 'rambunctious major-label debut' *Appetite for Destruction*, because of its cover,¹⁶ the band's popularity subsisting on word of mouth until their 'network of fans became too widespread for industry sceptics to ignore', leading to *Appetite* reaching Number One in early August, a year after its release, and going on to sell '6 million copies' (p.124). Despite this it was the 'lite-metal' band Bon Jovi, who 'elbowed Guns N' Roses from the Number One spot in October' with *New Jersey*, the much-anticipated follow-up to the 'monster hit' *Slippery When Wet* (p.125).

This emergent division *within* the previously monolithic category of heavy metal is clearly highlighted in Michael Azzerrad's joint review of Bon Jovi's *New Jersey* (***) and Metallica's ...*And Justice for All* (***/2) albums,¹⁷ entitled 'When things get heavy' (*Rolling Stone*, Nov 03 1988: p. 111) [See Fig. 3].

Take a look at the charts: metal rules. And as the metal heap has gotten higher, it has also widened to the point that it can include such disparate bands as Bon Jovi and Metallica. Some might see no difference at all between the two bands, but to your average kid, they're as opposite as shirts and skins. It's the difference between the status quo and *something really radical*' (p.111: *emphasis mine*).

Thus Bon Jovi are a band for "the kids" (including 'oddly enough' a fair number of females) who make music that is 'calculated to please'. Hence their new album is 'so purely commercial that it's practically beyond criticism', rather it 'would be more appropriate to evaluate its sales potential'. Although the album opens with the 'relatively savage "Lay Your Hands on Me" it is 'sugar-metal outings like "Wild is the Wind," [...] veiled in a smoke screen of distortomatic guitars', that are the

album's 'true heart'. Bon Jovi's 'trick' is to deploy 'heavy-metal chords' and 'still sound absolutely safe'. Previous album *Slippery When Wet*, sold 13 million copies, so the 'temptation to repeat a tried-and-true formula evidently proved to great', thus *New Jersey* has all the 'virtues and drawbacks of a popular record', hitting all the right marks yet 'remaining thoroughly *unidiosyncratic*' (p.112).

Fig. 3. *Rolling Stone*, Nov 03 1988: p. 111

Metallica, by contrast, make 'challenging music' that appeals to 'critics and angry, pimply adolescents males' alike (p.111; *emphasis mine*). But it is also music 'calculated to annoy anyone over thirty' with its lack of 'verse-chorus structures' and collage-like compositions, made up of riffs and complex time-signatures. But *Thrash* is 'too demeaning a term for this metametal' featuring 'breakneck tempos and staggering chops' that would impress 'even the most elitist jazz-fusion aficionado', if they could live with its 'precisely channelled aggression' (p.112). The album is 'crammed with diatribes' about 'nuclear winter', the 'right to die' and 'judicial corruption', delivered in an 'aggressive bark' by rhythm guitarist James Hetfield, wherein the band draw the line in no uncertain terms: 'its world is a Zoroastrian duel of good and evil' (p.112). As a result, Metallica are as 'political' as any band out there' – but one 'speaking in more dire, melodramatic terms, which appeal to the dark

underside of the white-suburban-male psyche'. For example, "One" begins with lyrical acoustic guitars and works up to a ferocious rhythmic whirlwind, 'executed with the precision of a close-order drill'. The song is about a soldier with no arms, legs, sight, speech or hearing. Other songs have such titles as "The Frayed Ends of Sanity" and "To Live Is to Die" (p.112). Azzerrad concludes with a stark comparison, offering a clear distinction between economic and aesthetic accreditation: 'Rock & roll used to be rebellion disguised as commercialism; now so much of it is commercialism disguised as rebellion. Bon Jovi is safe as milk; Metallica harks back to the time when rock's bite was worse than its bark' (p.112).

This emerging critical distinction, drawn from within the burgeoning success of the heavy metal genre, which contrasts artistry against popular appeal, valuing authenticity over commercial strategy, is strongly echoed in Sheila Rogers' Random Notes: 'Metallica: A Thrash Above the Rest' (*Rolling Stone*, Dec 01 1988), where Metallica drummer, Lars Ulrich complains that the band are "not like the rest of the bullshit heavy-metal bands" who share its audience demographic. "It really surprises me when we get people that are [also] into Mötley Crüe or Bon Jovi and stuff like that". Describing them as the 'aptly named thrash-metal band' who are about to embark on their 'first arena tour as headliner' on the back of having 'sold 1.4 million copies' of their new album *...And Justice for All*, 'without the benefit of radio airplay or a video', Rogers goes on to point out that Guns N' Roses are not the only 'hard-core rockers' who have 'managed to top the charts with their integrity intact'. The suggestion here is that both bands share a similar 'underground' authenticity or credibility with 'the kids', which is translating itself into a justified success despite their differing metal styles.

Rolling Stone's End of Year report also features Metallica's *...And Justice for All* (Electra) and Guns N' Roses' *Appetite for Destruction* (Geffen) albums (*Rolling Stone*, Dec 15 1988):

There is nothing like success in the face of extreme prejudice, and no other bands this year, metal or otherwise, mocked the music establishment's utter lack of street cred and woeful misreading of fan psychology as well as Metallica and Guns N' Roses... (p. 201).

Again we here, *...And Justice for All* 'went platinum within days of release, with virtually no commercial airplay'. Meanwhile, Guns N' Roses T-shirts 'outnumbered' Springsteen and Bon Jovi 'at least two to one on Jersey boardwalks this summer'. So while AOR programmers procrastinated about whether to put 'Sweet Child of Mine' on rotation and critics 'yawned', the kids 'voted with their allowances' in the only election that mattered this year (p.201). And while some Metallica fans might be heard to complain that *Justice*, 'clocking in at over sixty-five minutes' was maybe 'too much art, not enough *aarrgh!*, the 'fury of [their] speed 'n' slam is compounded by the complexity of [their] attack' (p. 201). In comparison to other metal bands 'raving about the devil and their dicks', Metallica's James Hetfield addressed 'censorship' ('The Shortest Straw'), 'our dying planet' ('Blackened') and 'youth in anguish' ('Dyers Eve') with 'the imagination the music demanded' (p.203). By contrast, the Gun's 'appetite for sex and violence' recalls *Sticky Fingers* Stones and mid-Seventies Aerosmith, 'jacked up with punk raunch' making 'Welcome to the Jungle' and 'Out Ta Get Me' sound more like a 'late-model New York Dolls' (p.203).

The critical comparison here is telling and recalls the strategy of *Creem* in seeking a garage rock-punk pedigree for 'authentic' sounding heavy metal rock that allows it to be differentiated as 'artful noise' rather than formulaic heavy decibels.¹⁸

Fig. 4. Metallica feature, *Rolling Stone*, Jan 12 1989

However, it is the cover line (although not yet their first cover): 'Metallica: The Top Ten Band You Won't Hear on the Radio' which announces David Fricke's piece, 'Heavy Metal Justice' (*Rolling Stone*, Jan 12 1989), featuring pictures of the band behind bars and interviewed from the interior of a prison cell (Fig.4), while carrying the strap line: 'The Thrash Superstars Of Metallica Make It To The Top With Their Integrity Intact', that is finally able to reconcile the bands' commercial-clout with head-liner coverage in *Rolling Stone*. But importantly it is a success, while wholly justified, that has been achieved on the band's own terms, without the usual industry compromises along the way, argues Fricke.

For years the 'mainstream rock press' dismissed the band, in lead-guitarist Kirk Hammett's words as "ugly guys singing ugly things to ugly music." Yet with only 'the kids in their corner' and their 'proud refusal to play traditional industry tiddlywinks (make promos videos, keep songs to four minutes or less), they have against all the odds become one of America's biggest bands 'heavy metal or otherwise' who can 'boast platinum sales with zero sellout', and unlike the others, 'making records for themselves' while 'sating the collective hunger of America's metal militia': the kids (Fricke 1989: 46).

It is these same kids who have bought 'over a million copies of Metallica's latest album' ...*And Justice for All*, 'zooming it straight into the Billboard Top Ten'. The same kids who, via a 'word-of-mouth blitz' on this 'killer California band' who play everything 'faster than the speed of light' and eschew any 'jive rock-star airs', who

have put their earlier LPs, *Ride the Lightning* (1984), *Master of Puppets* (1986), and even their 'covers' EP, *Garage Days Re-Revisited* (1987), in the gold and platinum category. The same 'underground maniacs' who banged their heads to the band's 'legendary demos tapes' (1982) and 'bazooka-metal' debut, *Kill 'Em All* (1983) and which formed the majority audience that saw Metallica's 'roaring bottom-of-the-bill sets' at last summer's *Monsters of Rock* tour, while buying 'enough Metallica gear at the merchandise stands to embarrass the headliners' (Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, Jan 12 1989: 48).

A central reason for this, argues Fricke, is that the band's songs address the anxieties of this new generation, such as suicide ("Fade to Black"), drug addiction ("Master of Puppets") and spiritual isolation ('almost anything on Justice'). Guitarists Hetfield and Hammett 'spit out pithy serrated riffs' while the rhythm section of Ulrich and Newstead 'execute dizzying accelerated time changes with muscular aplomb', creating a 'monster' sound, topped by Hetfield's 'crude vocal howl' and the 'declamatory tone of his lyrics' that communicates 'how the members of Metallica feel about the world their elders have left them and where they can stick it' (Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, Jan 12 1989: 77).

Rolling Stone's survey of the '100 Best Albums of the Eighties' (*Rolling Stone*, Nov 16 1989: 53-130) reflects this discernible shift to *aesthetic approbation* for the first time afforded to a selection of hard rock and heavy metal bands by the magazine's editors. While the top twenty entries, featuring the Clash, Prince, Talking Heads, Paul Simon, U2, Tracy Chapman and older figures like Dylan, the Stones and Lou Reed, are predictable (p.54), no. 26 is awarded to AC/DC's *Back In Black* and even more surprisingly, 27 is given to Guns N' Roses *Appetite for Destruction* (p.86); both chart-topping but controversial albums. But most surprising of all is that 35 is given to Metallica's *Kill 'Em All*, originally released in May 1983 on Megaforce, and then re-released on Elektra, Feb 11 1988, eventually achieving a Chart Position of 120. This entry is significant, first because the original release was not reviewed by the magazine and second, given this, why this record, rather than *Master of Puppets* (reviewed *Rolling Stone*, Jun 05 1986) or*And Justice for All* (reviewed Nov 03 1988), was chosen.

The answer is that this choice of an initially relatively unsuccessful album signals a retrospective acknowledgement, by writers at *Rolling Stone*, of the origins of a new musical strand of heavy metal music that, in subsequent commercially successful major label releases, meets the critic's criteria of aesthetic quality in both musical composition and lyrical themes in ways that even the most successful heavy metal bands do not:

With their debut, Metallica rose up from the heavy-metal underground to establish a vital new subgenre, known as speed metal or thrash metal [...] a hybrid of punk and metal, distinguished by lightning speed, manic rhythm changes and a thoughtful if outraged approach to lyrics about suicide, religion, war and nuclear holocaust (Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, Oct. 22, 1987: 94).¹⁹

This perception of a definite aesthetic and artistic shift, *within* the genre of heavy metal, is also picked up by Kim Neely, in the five-album review, (*Rolling Stone*, Nov 15 1990) 'Wrap-Up', which argues that the phrase Burroughs, Steppenwolf and the

late Lester Bangs, 'slipped into the rock & roll lexicon' now ought to be 'retired' (p. 162).²⁰ The problem is that the 'musical boundaries of the genre have sprawled so far' rendering the name heavy metal 'ridiculously vague' and ultimately 'misleading' in continuing to 'fuel the misperceptions of rock & roll bigots' (162). She concludes that the genre (like the song) has not 'remained the same' and therefore 'neither, perhaps should the name' (162).

Although fellow thrash-metal pioneers, Megadeth do not receive coverage in *Rolling Stone* until their third LP, *So Far, So Good...So What?* (Rolling Stone, March 24 1988), Jim Farber's ****½ review places them, along with Metallica 'right at the top of the thrash-rock heap' (p.167). Drawing on the template of "Harder! Louder! Faster!" first suggested by Motorhead and Black Flag, the band pound out the 'most emphatic Eighties speed metal extant' (p.167). Like Metallica, even at their most anarchic, the band offer 'tricky tempo shifts' and 'deft rhythmic skill', with the only misfire on the album being their rather too faithful cover of the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy in the U.K.", where the speed metallers' pummelling sound 'embodies alienation and anger' but lacks the original punks' 'sense of transcendent exhilaration'. Despite this, amid the current 'narcoleptic pop scene', *So Far, So Good...So What?* offers a 'disruptive noise that's welcome indeed' (p.168).

Robert Palmer's entry into this emergent climate of critical approbation afforded the new thrash and speed-metal bands in the wake of the success of Metallica, is a **** review of Megadeth's *Rust In Peace* (Rolling Stone, Nov 15 1990), which begins by reminding readers that the groups' singer, songwriter, arranger and guitarist Dave Mustaine, was a founder member of Metallica and received song-writing credits on their first three albums. However, despite pioneering the 'from-the-gut speed-core guitar riffs' that link the two bands, the 'spectacular' *So Far, So Good...So What?* album demonstrated 'more than enough originality, versatility and sheer energy to make comparisons superfluous' (p.149). The central reason for this is that *Rust in Peace* takes Megadeth's individuality into a 'musical arena where nobody can touch them', namely 'nasty speed thrash with an almost jazzlike intricacy and drive' (p.149). For example, the playing of drummer Nick Menza (son of famed jazz saxophonist Don Menza) is described, alongside the rest of the instrumentalists in the band, as 'spectacular and innovative' rendering them a 'thrash-metal band that jazzbos can get into'; that's if the snarl of Mustaine's vocals and the 'sustained levels of anger and intensity don't send them running for the door' (p.149).

Thematically, main songwriter, Mustaine takes on war fever ("Take No Prisoners"), the greenhouse effect and looming ecological disaster ("Dawn Patrol"), organized crime's stranglehold on American society ("Holy Wars...The Punishment Due") and struggles with substance abuse ("Poison Was the Cure," "Lucretia," "Tornado of Souls"), while the arrangements employ 'multiple meters, multipart song structures, lightning-quick shifts in density, tempo and accenting', as well as a 'variety of guitar overtones and sonics' amongst the 'slamming, full-speed-ahead fervor' (p.149).

J.D. Considine's three-thousand-word feature 'Metal Mania' (*Rolling Stone*, Nov 15 1990) [See Fig. 5], is a retrospective piece, looking back over the period of the genre's greatest success, part of a special edition of the magazine that seeks to assess the 'fourth decade' of rock, the 80s: or the 'brutal superficiality and greed of the Gimme Generation' as the strap line reads. Despite the centrality of image

and the marketing of a brand, 'the look', the 80s was also the decade when rock rediscovered its conscience, in the form of *Live Aid* and a new kind of rock authenticity in the persona of Bruce Springsteen, who features on the cover. However, the strap line, 'Rap, Metal Mania & the Underground Explosion' makes the cover also, despite the sense that it represents a footnote to this wider picture, while the article itself occurs (along with the 'Kings of Rap') last in the order of special features devoted to Michael Jackson, Live Aid, Bob Geldof, Springsteen, The Top Twenty Five Albums, and Madonna.

Fig. 5. 'Metal Mania', *Rolling Stone*, Nov 15 1990

The fact that the article is concerned to address both the phenomenal resurgence in popularity of heavy metal but also the emergence of an *authentic* underground strain is also carried in the sub-title of the piece: 'For a lot of these bands, it's like Metallica's "Disposable Heroes" – there is no going home' (p. 100). But this piece is also significant in not only seeking to differentiate within the burgeoning success of the genre, identifying sub-genre strands and their key bands and performers, but also in attempting to explain its increased popularity with a widening core of alienated youth – a 'new generation' - who find in the music and their fandom a sense of camaraderie and belonging absent elsewhere in their lives.

How heavy metal earned its new relevance in the lives of American youth was in part down to album-oriented rock stations and MTV, which broke bands like Guns n' Roses and Living Colour, even managing to make Dee Snider (Twisted Sister) something of a household name. But for Considine 'what really sparked this heavy-metal explosion [...] was a reaction against punk rock' (p.103). But this was so in quite complex ways, first with the New Wave of British Metal, described as 'a spontaneous heavy-rock underground' that sought to revive and

revitalise heavy metal in the wake of punk,²¹ which in turn influenced the early thrash musicians²² who were alienated by the mainstream FM radio orientation of American rock, whereas for the nascent LA glam rockers, ‘street kids like Nikki Sixx’ of Mötley Crüe, what mainstream rock and the ‘new wave’ of “skinny tie” pop bands, like the Knack, most lacked was “attitude”: ‘the sound of life lived on the edge’ (p.103). For these bands, it was the punk-pop of the New York Dolls and the Sex Pistols that were key (p. 104).

Yet, for other bands trying to make it on L.A.’s notorious Sunset Strip, like Poison who took Mötley Crüe’s post-glam approach to such cosmetic extremes, it was about “living in the streets and trying to act like we weren’t dirty” as lead-singer Bret Michels puts it, “We were the kids without the money trying to look like we were glamorous. We wanted to be the jewel in the rough.” And, argues Considine, how different was this from the Sex Pistol’s claiming to be “the flowers in the dustbin”? (p.104).²³ This leads Considine to his major claim:

As forms of musical rebellion, punk and metal had a lot in common: loud guitars, heavy attitude, the utter disdain of society at large. But they parted company on where that rebellion should lead. Punk’s worldview lunged towards a gleeful nihilism of boredom and no future, but metal somehow clung to its underdog optimism. Sure, life sucked, the music seemed to say, but that’s not the whole story. Above all, metal reminded its listeners that, good times or bad, the bands and the fans were all in it together (p.104).

In the postpunk Eighties of Metallica and Anthrax, it was: “the music of people who grew up looking at the Vietnam war”, argued Vernon Reid (of Living Color), “For a lot of these bands, it’s like Metallica’s ‘Disposable Heroes’ – there is no going home.” (p.104). Given the accelerated disintegration of the American family, “no going home” was often the literal truth for young metal fans, and it was no accident that some of the era’s strongest bands – Guns n’ Roses in particular – ‘emerged from the ranks of L.A.’s street kids and throwaway teens’ (p.104); “Welcome to the Jungle”, indeed.

But the fact that heavy metal ‘not only spoke to the simmering discontent its listeners felt but provided an alternative source of personal pride and cultural identity’ did not go over well with the powers that be (p. 104). Thus, as metal’s ‘resonance among Reagan-era teens grew’ Reagan-era moms, such as the ‘parental advisory’ group the PMRC, began calling for a clamp down on: ‘dirty language and devil lyrics’. This elite-orchestrated campaign not only led to a voluntary agreement to label [metal albums] with an ‘Explicit Lyrics’ sticker, it also fuelled legal claims to indict the music of leading artists, Ozzy Osbourne and Judas Priest, of ‘inspiring teen suicides’ (Brown 2013; 2017). For lead singer, Rob Halford, this was not about assessing the evidence of ‘subliminal messages’, but the concerns of high-level political groups about “how much power was being generated by the acceptance of this music by millions of adolescent Americans”. Yet, Halford does concede that: “some of the more radical bands – Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer, Anthrax – certainly do have a stronger cutting edge that might be considered more of a threat by certain groups and organizations”, such that the “advent of these kinds of bands” has led to a “much stronger attack on us

from all quarters” (Considine, p.104). But, in point of fact, it was the most commercially successful heavy metal bands who were the main target of censorious political rhetoric, rather than the formerly underground bands, simply because of their greater chart visibility (Brown, op cit).

Yet by the following year, Mikal Gilmore was reporting the first national tour, *The Clash of the Titans*, exclusively devoted to the new, once underground bands, under the title ‘Heavy-Metal Thunder’ wherein, ‘Slayer, Megadeth and Anthrax storm America’ (*Rolling Stone*, July 11 1991).

For the better part of the last decade, Megadeth, Slayer and Anthrax have been working in rock’s margins, making extreme music for a fervid young audience that much of the pop world – including the *heavy metal mainstream* – would just as soon ignore. In fact, as far as MTV and rock radio are concerned, this whole scene may as well be invisible (p.52; *emphasis mine*).

In this respect, the *Clash of the Titans* tour is an attempt to assert that ‘these bands can attract a mass following’, one that is a ‘legitimate rock community’ in its own right; a community ‘that articulates the frustrations, desires and values of a youth population that has too often found itself without any other cultural advocate or voice’ (p. 52). In this manner, metal often works as music for outcasts: ‘kids who feel repressed or condemned by adult society, who feel despised or hopeless or angry and who need to assert their own pride and bravado’ (p. 52). Thus, ‘paradoxically’, a music that many view as a ‘form without redemption’ is actually a ‘music that can help powerless young people feel powerful – or at least feel like they have found a means to outrage or repel an increasingly cold hearted society’ (p.52). However, there is a concern, prior to the tour, that the ‘hardcore’ fans of the different bands will not get along, although this proves to be unfounded.

Despite the fact that the thrash metal bands appear to have risen to the top of the heavy metal touring roster, ushering in a new era of speed metal chops and conscious lyrics in tune with a grass roots heavy metal fandom, the next most significant review in the pages of *Rolling Stone* is Robert Palmer’s ***** lead-review of Metallica’s new album, ‘Metallica’ (Elektra) (Sept 05 1991), entitled ‘Metallic KO’.

This strap-line can be seen, in retrospect, as ironic (although not intended as such) in that the release of the bands’ eponymously titled album and its phenomenal commercial success – it went on to sell over 30 million copies worldwide, ushering the band into the global rock major league - divided fans down the middle with accusations of ‘sell out’, which only got louder as the band decisively moved away from their thrash metal roots, with each subsequent release (Pillsbury 2006; Brown 2015a: 264; Smialek 2016).

Although Palmer clearly notes that when a band ‘slaps an eponymous title on its fifth album’ then ‘some sort of redefinition is implied’ (p.90), he chooses to interpret the tell-tale signs of a heavy rock or metal band attempting to move into the mainstream – employing a successful producer (à la Def Leppard, Scorpions, Mötley Crüe and AC/DC),²⁴ shortening and simplifying the length and complexity of their songs, singing them more melodically and most telling of all, penning a ballad or two – in a positive manner. This seems puzzling in many respects, not least because of Palmer’s

previous championing of the thrash and speed metal bands as a new, virtuosic musical *avant-garde*, making challenging, abrasive music with a political edge. Yet while he acknowledges the band are no longer on ‘the cutting edge of metal’, they are still expanding their ‘musical and expressive range’ but on their ‘own terms’; that is, despite the notable changes in sound, the band retain a sense of authenticity and *artistic* integrity. Thus, for Palmer, the significance of the album is how it effectively ‘bridg[es] the gap between *commercial* metal and the much harder thrash of Slayer, Anthrax and Megadeth’ (p.90; *emphasis mine*). In this respect, Metallica are the first metal band to successfully answer the Great Metal Question, first posed in the case of the chart success of Def Leppard, of expanding their audience reach beyond the ‘metal ghetto’ by developing the clarity and quality of their song writing skills and mode of address.

Fig. 6. *Rolling Stone*, Sept 05, p. 89.

For Palmer, the improvement in production, compared to the last album is a revelation, offering a ‘dynamic clarity’ of ‘sonic texture’ and ‘audio depth of field’

(p.89). But this isn't simply a 'superspiffy engineering job', rather its 'detail and dynamics are essentially *musical* in concept,' as the first few bars of the opening cut, "Enter Sandman," reveal:

The song begins with the fade-in of a chugging guitar riff. As the riff rises to full volume, ushering in the rhythm section, an entirely different guitar texture, sounding like a phased, finger-picked, electric twelve-string, comes in under and *behind* the primary riff. All this subtlety draws the listener in, focussing attention. When drummer Lars Ulrich enters, the whack of his first snare-drum accent seems to jump right out of the record and into the middle of the room. (p. 89; *original emphasis*)

While Metallica's previous albums, Palmer argues, connected one song to another with related themes and riff structures, the twelve songs on *Metallica* 'stand on their own' (p. 90). However, this is not because the 'multipart musical structures' that 'paced' the former compositions 'have been abandoned', rather the forms have been 'telescoped into [shorter] songs in the four-to six-minute range' (p.90). However, Palmer does acknowledge that 'several of the songs on Metallica are downright gentle' (p.90); indeed, "Enter Sandman," might possibly be 'the first metal lullaby', with its 'delicately layered guitar textures' and the 'unmistakeable empathy' in Hetfield's vocals signifying an 'abiding affection' (p.90). "Nothing Else Matters" 'doesn't even pretend to tough it out', with its 'soaring vocal harmonies', 'delicate acoustic and electric-guitar interplay' between Hetfield and Hammett, and Ulrich's deft 'orchestral chimes', while hardly an 'MTV lite-metal ballad', 'make it a ballad all the same' (p.90). Hetfield's lyrics are also 'more personal', more 'directly emotional' when he sings: "Never opened myself this way/All these words I don't just say/And nothing else matters." (p.90).²⁵

At the same time, Palmer opines, several of the songs on *Metallica* 'seem destined to become hard-rock classics', For example, "Wherever I May Roam", which 'blossoms from a sitarlike opening into a stomping but lyrical power-chord rocker', with Jason Newsted's chordal bass 'voiced with the guitars', providing that 'unmistakable Metallica crunch' (p.90). In this song, Hetfield lyrics, "My body lies, but still I roam," echoes, 'perhaps unconsciously, one of bluesman Robert Johnson's most indelible images' and with this overriding transcendental 'melancholy' the song sounds 'like an anthem in the making, but an anthem kept to a human scale' (p.90). Likewise, "The Unforgiven," "My Friend of Misery" and "Sad But True" also seem likely to have 'a comparable staying power' but without 'any hint of radio-ready sweetening' (p.90). And, with the 'hard-edged and hard-driving' "Through the Never," "Of Wolf and Man" and the "Struggle Within", Metallica doesn't neglect the head bangers, 'the group's original constituency' (p. 90).

However, Palmer takes exception to one song, "Don't Tread on Me," describing it as 'unequivocally jingoistic' and something of a shock to behold after the 'impassioned protest against war and social injustice' to be found on their previous album. Palmer goes further in rebuking the band ('Message to Metallica'] for not doing enough homework on how the gulf war was sold to 'America's couch potatoes' by PR companies employed by 'Republican bigwigs', shuffling between top-level cabinet posts and key boardroom positions in 'oil-rich multinationals', concluding that the

both the music and the lyrics of the song “Don’t Tread on Me” ‘rings hollow’; ‘the only outright bummer on an otherwise exemplary album’ (p.90).

David Fricke’s end of year album round up (*Rolling Stone*, Dec 12 1991) describes *Metallica* as the ‘Bay Area thunder gods’ graduation day from Speed Metal U’, with the fastest stuff – “The Struggle Within,” “Through the Never” – not up to the ‘velocity’ of earlier work, like “Blackened” or “Whiplash” (p. 172). But the ‘textural depth and startling clarity’ of the production combined with the ‘inspired telescoping of melodic and rhythmic ideas into single, concentrated knockout riffs’ are ‘a heavy metal revelation’ (p. 172). After the ‘jaw-dropping slalom runs of searing guitar licks and time-signature change-ups’ of its last album, ‘Metallica’ goes for a much more dynamic ‘knuckle-sandwich effect’ with the brutal ‘martial cadence’ of “Enter Sandman,” the primal stomp of “Sad But True” and the ‘runaway-stagecoach gallop’ of “Wherever I May Roam.” While Hetfield’s ‘unabashedly romantic ballad’ “Nothing Else Matters” is certainly the ‘quietest entry in the Metallica repertoire’ there is nothing ‘sissified [sic] in his bold declaration of vulnerability and need’ (p. 172). However, for Fricke, like Palmer, ‘the band stumbles only once’ with “Don’t Tread on Me,” ‘a fuzzy expression of national ardour and defensive pride that, despite Hetfield’s protests that it was not inspired by or written about the gulf war, could not have been released at a more inopportune time’ (p.174).

Conclusion

What has been argued in Part One and Part Two of this article, is that the critical and aesthetic approbation that is afforded the work of the thrash metal band *Metallica* and others, emerges out of a decade long process, from 1980-1991, that I have traced through the pages of the leading rock publication *Rolling Stone*, via album reviews, lead features, notes and news commentary pieces. As I argued in Part One, this process can be divided into two halves, the first of which records a decisive critical shift amongst rock critics towards the once most derided of genres of the 1970s, heavy metal, affording it a growing economic accreditation in the wake of its commercial ‘return’ or resurgence in the period from 1980 to 1985, which not only acknowledges its phenomenal chart success but also the longevity of the genre style and its musical template; a success which is attributed not only to its sheer longevity but also the emergence of a new wave of bands who are able, in collaboration with a number of notably skilled record producers, to forge a more chart-friendly style of hard rock and heavy metal that is widely popular among the key North American youth demographic, while still retaining its signature guitar style, controversial song themes and rebellious imagery.

As I argued in Part One, while the axiom that ‘longevity in economic accreditation pays dividends in aesthetic accreditation’, is surely applicable here, the evidence of a shift to a full-blown aesthetic accreditation in the wake of widespread economic success, is still partial and selective, reflecting the best aspects and features of work that is able to emerge from such a widespread success, while tacitly acknowledging that such features would not necessarily be discerned or appreciated prior to that success. This suggest that the distance between economic and aesthetic accreditation is greater or lesser depending on the direction travelled, especially where economic success is seen as a reflection of artistic authenticity and integrity, a just reward for it so to speak, rather than its primary claim to critical recognition.

This logic clearly underpins the second half of the decade, covered in Part Two of this article, and how it is marked by a growing critical support for and eventual aesthetic accreditation of a group of bands, most notably Metallica, who arise from a musical underground which is broadly within the parameters of the metal genre, but which is characterized above all by the centrality of musical integrity and stylistic innovation, which are seen to reflect artistic, critical and above all a *political* intelligence. The fact that this widespread critical approval is not more clearly prominent earlier on in the coverage of *Rolling Stone*, is due to its own overriding economic rationale in reporting and reviewing the most successful rock bands and performers, which means that mention of the thrash and speed metal underground from which Metallica emerge is largely confined to occasional notes and commentary, only becoming fully emergent once the band and the best of their contemporaries, achieve a breakthrough via touring and chart impact.

Indeed, as I have shown, it is the breakthrough to significant chart success, from 1986 onwards, of these formerly underground speed and thrash metal bands, that signals a critical shift in register from economic to aesthetic accreditation; that is, bands such as Megadeth and Metallica, especially the latter, acquire an aesthetic distinction conferred on them by leading critics at *Rolling Stone*, affording them the status of 'artists as opposed to entertainers'. In this respect it is somewhat ironic that Metallica's release of their 'black album' at the end of the decade, is positively received by veteran critic and champion of the breakthrough of the thrash underground Robert Palmer, despite the fact that the album (as well as being politically suspect on one noted track) appears to bridge the gap between *commercial* metal and the much harder thrash sub-genre, with slower, more melodic songs, simplified musical structures and a more polished production, courtesy of bringing in an experienced rock producer.

Whether Metallica's 'black album' release does signal a reversal of the logic of the transition from economic to aesthetic accreditation, first gaining critical approval and then commercial recompense as opposed to the much more typical model of gaining economic accreditation based on overwhelming and consistent chart success, which may or may not lead to critical approval from rock critics in eventually or finally recognizing sheer persistence and longevity, what is clear in the case of heavy metal and the thrash metal sub-genre that begins to claim a rival or separate identity in the 1986-91 period, is that both strands of the metal genre achieve their success, whether decidedly economic or with some degree of aesthetic approbation, on their own terms and in contradistinction to the logic of the popular music industry and most, although not all, of the dominant conventions of the rock and pop aesthetic.

Bibliography

Brown, A.R (2017) 'Songs in the Key of Depression, Suicide and Death: How Metal Musicians Sustained a Dialogue of Community with their Fans in a Period of Moral Panic about Heavy Metal Music, 1984-1991', Paper presented as part of the Panel 'Back to the Culture: 80s Heavy Metal as a Community of Creativity, Resistance and Difference', to *Boundaries and Ties: The Place of Metal Music in Communities*, The Biannual International Society for Metal Music Studies Conference, University of Victoria, Canada, June 9-11.

Brown, A.R. (2016) 'The Ballad of Heavy Metal: Re-thinking Artistic and Commercial Strategies in the Mainstreaming of Metal and Hard Rock' in *Heavy Metal Studies and Popular Culture*, edited by G. Riches, B. Walter, D. Snell and B. Bardine, Palgrave, Macmillan, pp. 61-81.

Brown, A. R. (2015a), "'Everything louder than everyone else": The origins and persistence of heavy metal music and its global cultural impact', in A. Bennett and S. Wacksman (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Popular Music*, London: Sage, pp. 261–277.

Brown, A.R (2015b) "Metal for the masses": or, will metal ever be mainstream again? (and why we should want it to be...)" In: Karjalainen, T-M and Kärki, K, eds. *Modern heavy metal: markets, practices and cultures - International Academic Research Conference, June 8–12, 2015, Helsinki, Finland: proceedings*. International Institute for Popular Culture, Turku, pp. 454-464.

Brown, A.R (2015c) 'Metal Thrashing Methodology: Etymology vs. Genealogy approaches to the naming of the SF Bay Area style'. Paper presented as part of the Panel, 'Time Is At Hand: Placing San Francisco Thrash within Heavy Metal Culture', *Legion of Steel Metal Fest and Conference*, Berkeley, California, October 22nd – 24th

Brown, A.R. (2013) 'Suicide Solutions? Or how the Emo Class of 2008 were able to contest their media demonization, whereas the headbangers, burnouts or children of ZoSo generation were not ..' in T. Hjelm, K. Kahn-Harris and M. LeVine (eds) *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures* London: Equinox Publishing, pp. 17-35.

Brown, A. R. (2012), 'The speeding bullet, the smoking gun: Tracing metal trajectories, from Sabbath to Satyricon', in A. R. Brown and K. Fellezs (eds), *Heavy Metal Generations*, Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, pp. 3–13.

Brown, A. R. (2010) 'The importance of being 'metal': the metal music tabloid and youth identity construction' in *The Metal Void: First Gatherings*, N.W.R. Scott and I. Von Helden (eds) Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, pp. 105-134.

Brown, A.R. (2007) "Everything Louder than Everything Else": The Contemporary Metal Music Magazine and its Cultural Appeal' *Journalism Studies*, vol. 8 (4): 642-55. Special issue: Mapping the Magazine, Guest editor: Tim Holmes.

Brown, A.R. and Fellezs, K. (2012) 'Introduction', in A.R. Brown and K. Fellezs, (eds) *Heavy Metal Generations:(Re)generating the Politics of Age, Race, and Identity*

in *Metal Music Culture*, Inter-Disciplinary Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, pp. vii-xxvi.

Brown, A.R and Griffin, C. (2014) 'A cockroach preserved in amber': the significance of class in critics' representations of heavy metal music and its' fans', *The Sociological Review*, 62 (4): 719-741.

Gendron, B. (2002), *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Martin, L. and Seagrave, K. (1993), *Anti-Rock: The Opposition to Rock 'n' Roll*, New York: Da Capo Press.

Pillsbury, G.T. (2006) *Damage Incorporated: Metallica and the production of musical identity*, Routledge, New York.

Smialek, E. (2016), 'The Unforgiven: A Reception Study of Metallica Fans and 'Sell-Out' Accusations', *Global Metal Music and Culture: Current Directions in Metal Studies*, Edited by A. R. Brown, K. Spracklen, K. Kahn-Harris, N.W.R. Scott, New York: Routledge, pp. 106-124.

Straw, W. (1984), 'Characterizing rock music culture: The case of Heavy Metal', *Canadian University Music Review*, vol. 5, pp. 104–22.

Straw, W., (1990), 'Characterizing rock music culture: the case of heavy metal', in Frith, S. and Goodwin, A. (eds), *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, London: Routledge, pp. 97–110.

Waksman, S. (2009), *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Walser, R. (2014/1993), *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Weinstein, D. (2013), 'Just so stories: How heavy metal got its name – a cautionary tale', *Rock Music Studies*, I (1):1–16.

Weinstein, D., (2000/1991), *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, New York: De Capo Press.

Notes

¹⁰ Because of the large historical sweep of this investigation and the quantity of evidence amassed from the pages of the *Rolling Stone* archive, it was agreed with the editor of MMS, that once the article had passed successfully through the peer review process, because of its length it could be published in two parts. Hence this article is Part Two (1986-91); Part One covered the period from 1980-85.

¹¹ While Def Leppard are the band seen as most likely to successfully address the Great Metal Question, as we noted in Part One, Guns N' Roses, although not part of the thrash metal avant-garde, are viewed as an innovative band in reference to the punk-metal aesthetic that is viewed as the other source of innovation in this period (see the discussion below).

¹² A [4 star] **** rating is defined as 'Excellent' (See Fig. 1 in Part One of this article).

¹³ The album went on to sell over 30 million copies worldwide, as well as spawning five hit singles, a number of which are ballads. See Brown (2015a) and (2016:75-78) on 'Metallica's ballad strategy'.

¹⁴ As noted in Part One, it is important to stress that *Rolling Stone* play no part in the naming of the emergent metal sub-genre because, like the other mainstream rock press titles, they focus on bands with a Billboard 100 profile. This is maybe one reason why it is the US fanzines and the British metal press, particularly *Kerrang!* and *Metal Forces*, who play a key role in this discursive naming process that eventually codifies thrash as the new sub-genre name (but see Brown 2015c and forthcoming).

¹⁵ Whose predecessor, *Pyromania*, was kept off the number One spot by Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.

¹⁶ The cover art, derived from comix book artist Robert ('Robt.') Williams' painting 'Appetite for Destruction', depicting a robot rapist about to be punished by a metal avenger, was moved to the inside of the gatefold sleeve, after a number of retailers refused to stock it.

¹⁷ A [3 star] *** rating is defined as 'Good' (See Fig. 1 in Part One of this article).

¹⁸ See the discussion of the *punkoid* rock aesthetic in Part One of this article.

¹⁹ Review of Metallica: 'The \$5.98E.P./Garage Days Re-Revisited' (Electra) (David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*, Oct 22 1987).

²⁰ It is notable that this review, penned in the late 1980s, continues to repeat the erroneous origin claims of the heavy metal genre name. See Part One in reference to this point, in particular.

²¹ It can be argued that the 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal' (NWOBHM), a term coined by *Sounds* journalist, Geoff Barton in May 1979 (Waksman 2009:173), to describe the formation of an 'underground' *new wave* of UK metal bands in the wake of punk, was a volatile mix of revivalist or traditionalist and *avant-garde* bands (see Brown 2015b: 460-461).

²² The influence of the NWOBHM bands on Metallica and Lars Ulrich, in particular, is well documented (see also the sleeve notes to 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal: '79 Revisited' Vertigo (1990).

²³ The song in question is the (in)famous, 'God Save the Queen' (1976)

²⁴ The producer in question is Bob Rock, who had previously worked with Aerosmith and Mötley Crüe (Brown 2016: 76).

²⁵ See also Pillsbury's very similar reading of this ballad style (2006: 55).