



**Brown, A.R. (2015) 'Explaining the naming of heavy metal from rock's "Back Pages": a dialogue with Deena Weinstein'. *Metal Music Studies*, 1 (2): 233-261.**

Online at: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/mms.1.2.233\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1386/mms.1.2.233_1)

## ResearchSPAce

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

This 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.

**Author's note: This is the final draft version of the article accepted for publication by *Metal Music Studies* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014. The final copy-edited article is due to be published as:**

Brown, A.R. (2015) 'Explaining the Naming of Heavy Metal from Rock's "Back Pages": A dialogue with Deena Weinstein', *Metal Music Studies*, I (2): 233-261 (April).

### **Explaining the Naming of Heavy Metal From Rock's "Back Pages": A Dialogue with Deena Weinstein**

The origins of the term heavy metal or *when the genre was first named* is a perennial topic of debate and conjecture among fans, popular music historians, academic-fans and fan-academics. Such debates and refutations can also be found across the web, on metal-blogs, net-cyclopedias, discographies and fan forums. A notable example of this popular interest is the many anonymous contributions made to the 'Etymology' section of the Wikipedia page on Heavy Metal (Wikipedia. Org), which not only draws on published texts but also offers some primary research into the music press, which appears to have paralleled if not preceded some of the academic debates on this issue. Perhaps the most notable contributor to academic debates on this subject, certainly the most long standing and arguably, the most consistent, is Deena Weinstein, who has addressed the problem of the origins of the term heavy metal and its designation of an emergent musical genre, on at least four previous occasions (1991; 2000: 18-20; 2009:20 n.7; 2011: 37, 57 n.2), and, most recently in the inaugural issue of the journal *Rock Music Studies* (2013), each time revising the origin further backwards.

One of the reasons for this revision backwards is the methodological approach that Weinstein employs, seeking to verify the various claims about the origins of the term found in popular music histories and in rock journalism, by tracking down print-copies held in libraries, as well as seeking clarification from the writers identified with the original usage of the term in print. Weinstein's recent 'Just So Stories: How Heavy Metal Got Its Name—A Cautionary Tale' (2013), is an entertaining account of this investigative process, which began as far back as 1999, and like a good detective story there are many red-herrings and blind-alleys along the way; a key one being the unreliable memories of some of the 'participants in the naming' (p.1), as well as the logistics of tracking down magazine stacks in accessible library locations and photocopying the 'evidence'. Yet, by the end of the story, back copies of *Rolling Stone* are available (to subscribers) on-line, and correspondence with authors can be conducted by e-mail (as for example, Mike Saunders' fascinating rationalization for how he came up with the Gonzo-style phrase, 'heavy metal-leadен shit-rock' (pp.6-7).

But Weinstein's 'etymological inquiry' also raises theoretical issues beyond 'who first applied the term "heavy metal" to describe a style of music' which coalesce around the question of 'how and why the name came to be used' (p.1), rather than other ones? This is because for Weinstein (quoting Foucault), the naming process is achieved when it is able to serve 'a classificatory function'. That is, the 'name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others' (p.1). This distinction leads Weinstein to reject some of the earliest uses of 'metal', 'heavy' and 'heavy metal rock' that occur before her choice of the album reviews of Saunders (November, 1970) and Bangs (February, 1970), because they employ "'metal" as an adjective to describe a sound, not a style that transcends this album or this band—that is, not as a genre' (p. 8). Or as Scott Woods puts it: 'What's interesting, probably, about all these early examples is that the writers all seem to be using the word "metal" (and its derivatives) as an actual

adjective, to get at how the music sounds [...] before it was codified into a genre' (cited in Weinstein, p.8). However, some of the issues that this solution is unable to resolve are: why there are a number of competing adjectives circulating in the rock press prior to the genre codification of heavy metal and why the definitive or fully emergent usage of the term, in both cases, is a negative comparison?

In his review of the Guess Who's Canned Wheat in the 7 February 1970 issue of Rolling Stone, Bangs wrote, "With a fine hit single, 'Undun,' behind them, they're quite refreshing in the wake of all the heavy metal robots of the year past" ("Canned"). Here the term heavy metal is used as an adjectival phrase describing a cluster of bands. Describing these bands as robots is no praise—it demeans their work as mechanical rather than creative, generic rather than authentic. Nonetheless, it counts as the name for a genre (p.9).

The term 'heavy metal robots' is not dissimilar to Saunders' phrase '27th-rate heavy metal crap' to be found in the Humble Pie review. This can be contrasted with the phrase found in Weinstein's original choice of the first definitive usage, in the context of a positive review in *Creem* of Sir Lord Baltimore's album, 'Kingdom Come' (1971), where Saunders observes that the band "seems to have down pat all the best heavy metal tricks in the book" (Quoted in Weinstein 2000: 20). Looking at other reviews by Saunders (and other writers) in this formative period that employ the adjective 'heavy metal', in both positive and negative ways, suggests that a greater comparative sample is needed to resolve this issue; a sample that not only charts the frequency of the usage of 'heavy metal' in rock writing over-time but also in relation to other competing adjectives, such as 'white blues', 'metallic', 'heavy metal rock', 'hard rock', and even 'cock rock'. Such a comparative sample would allow a quantitative picture to be drawn of the relative frequency of usage, over time, but also allow an interpretive analysis of the sample in terms of the question of the *mode of deployment* of 'heavy metal' as a negative adjective (and also as a positive one); and why, in particular, the negative usage appears to outweigh the positive.

A wider comparison of such usage in rock criticism in this formative period (and beyond)<sup>1</sup> would also allow us to explore the extent to which the deployment of negative adjectives – such as 'heavy metal robots', '27th-rate heavy metal crap', 'heavy metal-leaden shit-rock' or 'unoriginal examples of heavy-metal riff-raff' – as opposed to positive ones, such as: 'the synthesis of white blues and heavy metal rock', 'fine heavy-metal rock' or 'a superb heavy-metal album' – might suggest a consistent usage, one that can be reconciled with an interpretive understanding of the *discursive practice* of rock criticism in this period. Or as Bourdieu put it, it is a matter of comprehending how such manifest conflicts of value – in this case over how to aesthetically evaluate the popularity of heavy metal – 'dissimulate the *consensus* within the *dissensus*' (Quoted in Jones and Featherly 2002: 21).

If we recall one of the reasons why Weinstein rejects the validity of the adjectival phrase 'heavy metal rock' employed in the Mike Bloomfield/Electric Flag review by Barry Gifford, is because it doesn't define the genre but refers to bands and styles of music that will not subsequently be identified with the codified genre. One of these is, of course, "white blues". The problem with this argument is that this type of adjectival comparison (as we shall see) not only continues after the period of genre codification but actually increases in frequency in the years afterwards. Elsewhere Weinstein makes the important observation about 'the constant references to heavy metal [in the mainstream music press] even though there were few reviews of albums by metal bands' (2004:296). Her explanation for this adjectival 'pattern' was that it

indicated the extent to which music critics, ‘really disliked it. They’d had their knives out for metal since its inception’ (ibid). This observation, that most of the adjectives employed to refer to heavy metal are negative ones, surely needs to form part of the explanation for its emergence? In this respect, it is somewhat ironic that Weinstein rejects the early example of a positive use of a heavy metal adjective in favor of a negative one, in making her choice about the point of origin of the term or when its meaning becomes clear? It is also relevant that not only was Lester Bangs ‘not a fan of heavy metal’, whereas “Metal Mike” Saunders was such a fan, yet many of his early and formative reviews consistently employ negative adjectives to distinguish “good” from “bad” heavy metal. For example,

As much as I hate heavy music – cock rock, macho rock, or whatever the current name for it is – I have to admit to having every Blue Cheer album ever made, and then to having a peculiar liking for *Led Zeppelin II* because of its undeniable stupid-rock punch. So just as I was once forced to ponder good bubblegum vs. bad bubblegum because of my irrepressible fondness for ‘Indian Giver’, I’d be the first to admit that there’s good Heavy and bad Heavy (Saunders, *Creem*, May 1971).

For these reasons it seems to me that the search for the first recorded usage of the term or the first example of codification, although it certainly is a lot of fun for metal fans and academics alike, is not adequate as an explanation *in and of itself* but also in terms of what subsequently follows this ‘naming’. There is another reason, also. The first known usage of the term by Gifford seems to refer to something -“heavy metal rock”- that is already in existence! This idea, that heavy metal already precedes its naming, is also to be found in the ‘wake of all the heavy metal robots of the year past’ in Bangs’ definitive naming review. But also, more tellingly, it is to be found in Mike Saunders’ description ‘Third Generation heavy-metal groups’ (*Rolling Stone*, 27 April 1972) and ‘competent Third Generation rock’ or ‘touted Third generation bands’ (*Circular*, 29 May 1972), or the ‘third generation crowd’ at heavy metal concerts (Mick Houghton, *Circus Raves*, October 1975), and the ‘sense of guitar mania that used to be equated with such third-generation bands as Grand Funk and Bloodrock’ (Joe Fernbacher, *Rolling Stone*, Nov 3 1977).

In other words, a more adequate theorization of the naming of heavy metal needs to be able to critically address the following issues: 1. Why rock critics in the naming period employ the adjective ‘heavy metal’ to describe something that is not new but a version of something that already exists? 2. Why is there a greater proliferation of the usage of heavy metal as an adjective after the period of its naming and over time? 3. Why is the usage of the heavy metal adjective over all periods predominantly (but not exclusively) negative? 4. Finally, what does this tell us about the social and cultural characteristics of rock critics and the character of rock criticism in the formative moment of naming and at various points afterwards?

Fortunately, unlike the early period of Weinstein’s investigation, on-line archives of the rock press (although they sit behind pay-walls), including *Rock’s Back Pages* and *Rolling Stone*, now exist and are fully searchable. This article, in the spirit of academic dialogue and debate over the issue of the naming of the heavy metal genre, reports some of the initial findings from an archive research project on the *discursive construction* of heavy metal in the rock press in the period from 1967-2007.<sup>ii</sup> Although this project was interested in tracing the earliest usage of the term it was more concerned with coming up with an answer as to why the coining and usage of this adjective was ‘consistently a negative one’ (Straw 1984: 113) and what this might

tell us about the practice of *rock music criticism* at this juncture (and at key later moments) in relation to the heavy metal genre. That is, the negative or conflicted treatment of heavy metal speaks of a “field dispute” (to coin a *Bourdieuian* term) within the maturing cultural field of rock music criticism emerging from the 1960s, which is provoked by the unprecedented popularity of the genre – with a new generation of “kids” but also some ‘rebels and incipient groovies’ (Christgau 2014) – which poses a challenge to ‘the ascension of critical discourse on rock music to respectability and the importance to it of a rock populist reading’ (Straw 1990: 109). Or as Gendron (2002) puts it, the ‘remarkable overlap between what the critics liked and what sold on the market’ (p. 324) was now seemingly under challenge from within rock culture itself.

### **Theorizing ‘heavy metal’ as an adjective and as a noun**

The theorization of the term heavy metal as an adjective appears to commence with Bashe’s argument, that the ‘rock press began using *heavy metal* as a descriptive adjective in the late Sixties, and by the early Seventies it was being used as a noun [...] Today heavy metal is used to describe not only a particular type of music, but the music’s philosophy and values’ (1985: 4-5). This argument is reproduced more-or-less-word-for-word by Walser, when he observes, ‘The term “heavy metal” has been applied to popular music since the late 1960s, when it began to appear in the rock press as an adjective; in the early 1970s it became a noun and thus a genre’ (Walser 1993: 7). However, for Walser the spectacular increase in the popularity of heavy metal in the 1980s ‘prompted many critics and scholars of popular music [...] to construct a history of the genre’ (ibid). Such histories ‘begin with a problem most writers regard as essential: the question of the origin of the term “heavy metal”’ (p. 8).

This leads Walser to offer a review of the various errors in the search for an origin for the term that is strikingly similar to Weinstein’s account (although Weinstein is not mentioned). The value of Walser’s intervention is in the connection he makes to the role of rock writing in perpetuating the various errors, which springs from a ‘fascination with authenticity’ and the desire to mythologize origins, so that ‘This story of the origins of “heavy metal” appears in nearly every recounting of metal’s history’ (ibid). Against this, Walser offers an alternative theorization, derived from Foucault (quoting Nietzsche), to the effect that: ‘The lofty origin is no more than “a metaphorical extension which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth”’ (Cited in Walser 1993: 182.n.24). This leads him to advocate Foucault’s genealogical method ‘to look for beginnings rather than origins, shifts in discursive formation rather than generic birthdays’ (ibid.).

Exploring Foucault’s thought further here reveals the prior observation that, ‘What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity’ (1984:79). Or as Rabinow, his translator, further notes, ‘A wide range of key terms, found in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, are related to this theme of “disparity”: the concepts of series, discontinuity, division and difference. If the *same* is found in the realm and movement of the dialectics, the *disparate* presents itself as an “event” in the world of chance’ (op cit, p. 98). Dissension is, of course, a noun, meaning: ‘disagreement that causes trouble within a group’ or ‘or disagreement that leads to discord’. All of which suggests that employing Foucault’s method of genealogy across the time period of the sample and in relation to the many instances of the usage of the term heavy metal in reviews, would allow me to identify the instances of discontinuity, division and difference and therefore the nature and degree of *dissensus* within the relatively

small-circle of rock journalists reviewing heavy metal music over this period; a dissensus provoked by the problem of how to aesthetically evaluate the popularity of heavy metal in the United States at various critical junctures, from the early to mid 1970s to the mid-1980s. Or as Bourdieu, speaking of the constitution of the market for symbolic goods, puts it: ‘Manifest conflicts dissimulate the *consensus* within the *dissensus* which defines the field of cultural battle [by] inculcating an uncontested hierarchy of themes and problems worthy of discussion’ (Quoted in Jones and Featherly 2002: 21). Further, it is the manner of the symbolic use of such ‘implicit references’ that allows the construction of an:

intellectual space defined by a system of common references appearing so natural, so incontestable that they are never the object of conscious position-takings at all. However, it is in relation to this referential space that all the standpoints of the different categories of producers are differentially defined (Bourdieu 1985: 41).

But I wish to pose this as a hypothesis, in suggesting that its applicability to the treatment of heavy metal, over time but especially at key moments signified by the sheer density of usage of the heavy metal adjective, either confirms the hypothesis or suggests an alternative: that the dissensus (within the consensus) is a precursor of a crisis of the legitimacy of the rock cultural field which inevitably leads to its reconfiguration or demise. Relevant here is Laurin’s (2013) argument that rock critics were not wholly negative in their early treatment of heavy metal and that, over time, the genre has gained critical legitimacy as an authentic, long-lived and even artistically-adventurous music genre. A central reason for this is that the sheer longevity of the genre has led to a noticeable change in the evaluation of critics; or as Gendron puts it, ‘Longevity in economic accreditation pays dividends in aesthetic accreditation’ (quoted in Laurin, p.58). However, Laurin also identifies amongst rock critics early ‘champions of metal, Lester Bangs, Dave Marsh and Mike Saunders’, who were the first to note that the “best” heavy metal bands shared a similar musical aesthetic to early punk or 60s garage rock, that of ‘crude unrefined street clatter’ (Saunders quoted in Laurin, p. 60). This echoes Straw’s argument that it was writers at *Creem* magazine who were able ‘for a limited time, to construct a relatively coherent discourse which allowed for a qualifiedly positive response to certain types of Heavy Metal, primarily by placing these within a genealogy of bad-boy or punk-ish current within rock history’ (1984: 114). But it was the impact of the punk rock of the late 1970s which led to a profound shift in the aesthetic sensibilities of some critics, leading to a greater plurality and less hierarchy about what constituted the art of ‘noise’. Once clear consequence of this was that metal, ‘first described as stupid, inept, and non-artistic, gradually metamorphosed as serious, sophisticated and artful music’ (ibid.). However Laurin’s analysis, although it is based on sampling reviews from on-line rock-writing sites, is qualitative and purposive, concentrating on a limited number of reviews and interviews with bands (Black Sabbath, Metallica, Motley Crue, Marilyn Manson and Slipknot)<sup>iii</sup> who ‘are well-known enough [...] to be treated as the topic of features and reviews’ (p. 51).

### **Reading into the Rock Press: sampling rock writing as data**

First we need to define the object of analysis: critical rock journalism or rock criticism. Lindberg et al (2005) reserve ‘the term *criticism* for texts displaying interpretive and argumentative ambitions’ (p. 8). Therefore, “rock criticism” refers to

journalism ‘with argumentative and interpretive ambitions’ which is found in ‘reviews, in–depth interviews, overviews, debate articles, and essays (or think pieces, as rock critics like to call them)’ (Gudmundsson et al 2002: 61). Frith (1978) defines the “think piece” as ‘historical and retrospective pieces’ involving ‘arguments and opinions not necessarily hung on any star or record’ (p.149).

The database employed in the research was *Rock’s Back Pages* (RBP) which is described as the ‘world’s leading collection of vintage music journalism’ (Guardian 2014). Covering five decades, its ‘17,000 articles, interviews, and reviews’, claims to be the largest on-line collection of rock magazine writing, sourced from titles such as *Rolling Stone*, *Creem*, *Phonograph Record*, *Spin*, *Circular*, *NME*, *Let It Rock*, *Stereo Review*, *Melody Maker* and classic fanzines, like *Punk*, *Trouser Press* and *Bomp*. Showcasing some of the best rock writers, such as Barney Hoskyns, Sylvie Simmons, Mike Saunders, Charles Shaar Murray, Phil Sutcliffe, John Tobler, Max Bell, Robot A. Hull, Sandy Robertson, Cynthia Rose, Harry Doherty and Nick Kent, it ‘represents the gold standard of rock writing’ and ‘rock journalism’s renegade spirit’ (rocksbackpages.com).

This primary database was supplemented by *Rolling Stone* (1967-2007),<sup>iv</sup> to act as a comparison source but also to allow a finer search of the 1967-1970 period, given the claims about a formative or prior usage of the term ‘heavy metal’ in advance of the emergence of the bands that would come to define it, such as Black Sabbath. Combining these sources allowed me to track the emergence of the term ‘heavy metal’ by frequency of occurrence (number of reviews where the term was present), by month, by year, by writer, by magazine, fanzine or music paper, and importantly in relation to which bands or musicians. The search terms that were employed were: ‘heavy metal’ and ‘heavy-metal’, and as a check, ‘heavy metal rock’ and ‘heavy metal music’. In addition, I also searched for the pattern of frequency of the terms, ‘white blues’, ‘metallic’, ‘hard rock’, ‘heavy music’, ‘heavy rock’, and ‘cock rock’, in order to establish the extent to which these terms were alternative, competing or complimentary ones.

In the case of RBP, the search term “heavy metal” (1967-2007) brought up 1281 hits; whereas “heavy metal rock” only produced 26 hits, the first entry being Mike Saunders’ review of *Live Cream Volume II* (*Rolling Stone*, April, 1972). Notably absent was Bang’s review of The Guess Who’s *Canned Wheat*, which Weinstein identifies as the review that codified heavy metal as a genre. Also missing from the data-base was Barry Gifford’s 1968 review of the Electric Flag’s *A Long Time Comin’*. The same search in *Rolling Stone* also excluded this review but did include the *The Guess Who* one, which ranked first in the 227 hits triggered by the term “heavy metal”. However, the search term “heavy metal rock” turned up 24 results,<sup>v</sup> of which the first two entries were Gifford’s reviews of the aforementioned Electric Flag album (May 11, 1968) and the follow-up, *An American Music Band* (Feb 15, 1969).

How are we to account for these anomalies? Partly they are due to the differing coding practices of the archive owners. “Heavy metal rock”, in the case of *Rolling Stone*, clearly indicates a separate category entry, which largely excludes bands identified as “heavy metal”<sup>vi</sup> (which is consistent with Weinstein’s categorization). This is not the case for RBP’s twenty-six entries, which include Cream, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Grand Funk Railroad, Black Sabbath, AC/DC, David Lee Roth, The Dictators and Bad Company; seven of which are penned by Saunders, including a ‘think-piece’. What distinguishes the occurrence of “heavy metal rock” in the RBP sample is the way in which the term is being used, especially but not exclusively by Saunders, as a way of commenting on the issue of how to situate heavy metal within the rock music market and wider “rock culture”.

Rolling Stone also offers a ‘think piece’ by Jim Miller, which seeks to do a similar thing. This piece, like a number of other reviews by Saunders, Lester Bangs and Gordon Fletcher, published in the early to mid-1970s, and by notable contributors to the magazine in later periods, such as J. D. Considine, David Fricke and Deborah Frost, is *missing* from the RBP archive. This notable lack of inclusion of *Rolling Stone* pieces and writers on heavy metal, greatly justified the sample comparison of that magazine. The other issue with both samples was the extent to which the search terms excluded some pieces on bands, such as Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and Black Sabbath, because these items did not include the term “heavy metal”! This was justified in terms of the aims of the research: to identify *how* heavy metal was being defined, including in relation to which bands, rather than assume this in advance. One of the advantages of this non-prescriptive approach is that it is able to turn up bands that would not now be defined as heavy metal, which provokes the question of why they were categorized as such, getting us closer to explaining the naming process – the common criteria being mobilized. The disadvantages, that many stick-on candidates are not so described; yet it is these bands that are often said to be the ones’ that were the target of the greatest critical disapproval. An obvious example of this is the “Dean of US Rock Critics”, Robert Christgau’s “Consumer Guide” reviews of Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath:

**Led Zeppelin II** [1969] The best of the wah-wah mannerist groups, so dirty they drool on demand. It's true that all the songs sound alike, but do we hold that against Little Richard? On the other hand, Robert Plant isn't Little Richard. **B**

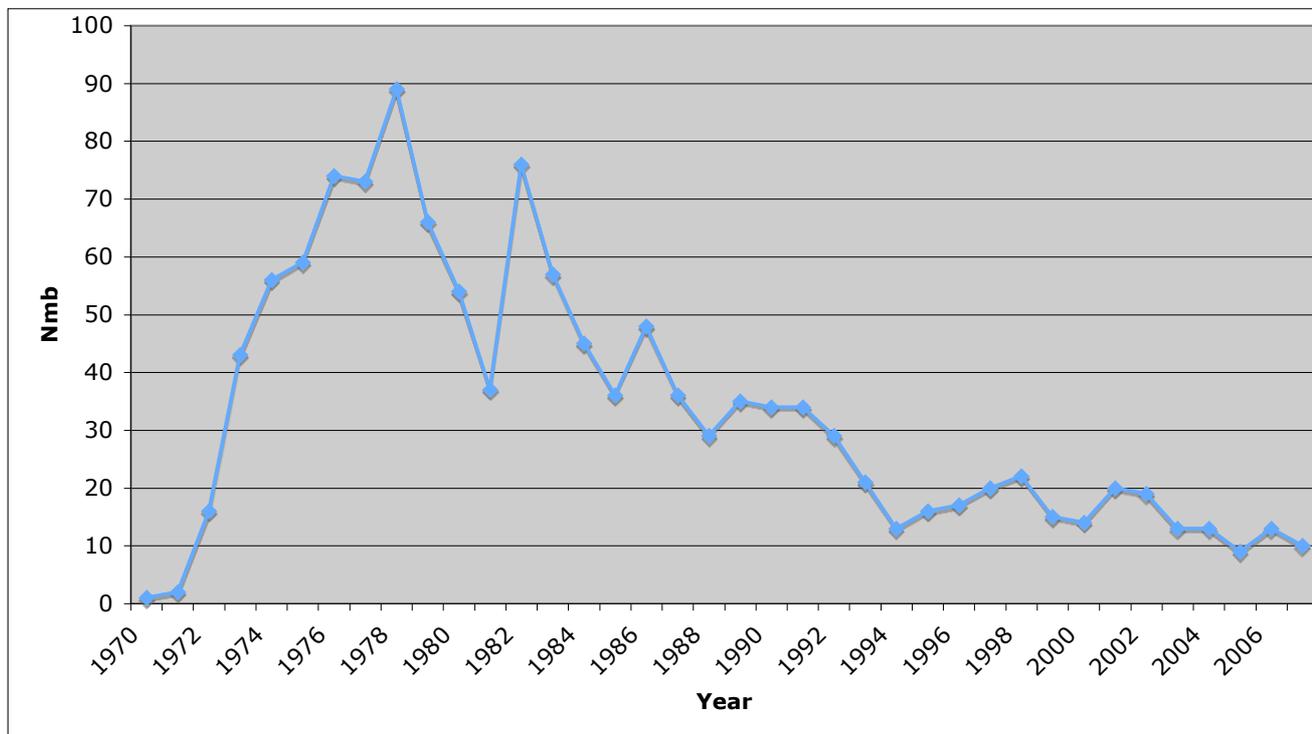
**Black Sabbath** [1970] The worst of the counterculture on a plastic platter--bullshit necromancy, drug-impaired reaction time, long solos, everything [...] I've been worried something like this was going to happen since the first time I saw a numerology column in an underground newspaper. **C-**

**Paranoid** [1970] They do take heavy to undreamt-of extremes, and I suppose I could enjoy them as camp, like a horror movie--the title cut is definitely screamworthy. **C-**

**Master of Reality** [1971] Grand Funk is like an American white blues band of three years ago--dull. Black Sabbath is English--dull and decadent. I don't care [...] if the band members believe in their own Christian/satanist/liberal murk. This is a dim-witted, amoral exploitation. **C-** (robertchristgau.com 2014).

The first thing to note is that the term “heavy metal” is not present in these reviews (or via the site “RC Search” engine). However, as we shall see, the reviews share many things in common with the usage to be found in the *Rolling Stone* and RBP archives, notably the reference to “wah-wah”, rock n roll and Little Richard, white-blues, long guitar solos, English rock decadence, and music which is dull, repetitive and exploitative.

So, what does the data reveal? First, as fig.1 dramatically indicates, the frequency of occurrence of the term heavy metal jumps from nineteen pieces in the period 1970-72 (sixteen of which occur in 1972) to forty-three in 1973; fifty-six in 1974; fifty-nine in 1975; seventy-four in 1976; peaking at eighty-nine in 1978. After this point the numbers are still high, rising up to seventy-six in 1982 and then sustaining numbers in the mid-30s to mid-40s until 1992, when it drops to 29. Thereafter there is a slow



decline, although the lowest frequency is nine in 2005. Most of these numbers relate to album reviews, although there are also a number of live reviews (including major outdoor-festival reports, such as California Jam and Castle Donnington), band-features/interviews (Black Sabbath, Van Halen, Saxon, Iron Maiden, Motley Crue, Scorpions) and some notable think-pieces, such as ‘A Brief Survey Of The State Of

**Fig. 1.** Heavy Metal from RBP, 1970-2007.

Metal Music Today’ by Mike Saunders (*Phonograph Record*, April 1973), ‘White Noise: How Heavy Metal Rules’ by Deborah Frost (*Village Voice*, 18 June 1985), about the LA glam metal scene, and ‘The Ten Worst New Acts Of The ‘80s’ by John Mendelsohn (*Creem*, 1985), which is somewhat self-explanatory, as they are all heavy metal bands!

Ten of the sixteen reviews that comprise the 1972 period are by Mike Saunders, writing for *Rolling Stone*, *Phonograph Record*, *Circular*, *New Haven Rock Press* and *Fusion*, including reviews of Cream, Deep Purple (2), Fanny, Slade, Uriah Heep, Black Sabbath, Grand Funk Railroad, an interview with Sabbath and a retrospective piece on Deep Purple vs. UFO. For Saunders, Fanny, Slade and UFO are not heavy metal but hard rock or in the case of Slade a “boogie” band who lack ‘the technocratic aptitude to be a heavy metal group’ (*Phonograph Record*, 1 October 1972). Those bands that do possess this aptitude, are the ‘Heavy Metal Wunderkind (Black Sabbath, Grand Funk, Led Zep, Alice Cooper, Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Dust, Blue Oyster Cult) (*Phonograph Record*, August 1972). The other reviews are an interview with Bob Seger by Dave Marsh; a live review of Them which refers to Bang’s as the ‘Detroit heavy-metal man’; a retrospective piece on David Bowie which argues he was ‘happy to be steam-rolled by heavy metal music on M.W.S.T.W’, and a live Blue Oyster Cult review.

If we wanted to redeploy Weinstein’s criteria for the genre categorization of heavy metal, then this group of largely positive reviews penned by Saunders over the course of 1972-3 meets its requirements in not only giving us a class of bands (the majority of which will retrospectively be canonized as “classic heavy metal”) but also in describing the musical characteristics they share that can be contrasted, within the class and against other bands, that do not meet this criteria. Thus, Deep Purple’s *In Rock* ‘was blistering hard rock [...] a landmark of the early heavy metal offense along with Led Zep II’ (*New Haven Rock Press*, 1972). But *Machine Head* is ‘loud heavy

metal rock [...] a splendid 20-minute drone of the energetic street-clatter heavy metal fans have come to love so much' (Circular, 29 May 1972); that is, the sound 'is much more metallic than their other records, and it's Grade-A unsubtle English punkoid rock' (New Haven Rock Press, 1972). Grand Funk's album has 'a snarling riff that is self-explanatory as to where the term heavy metal came from'; whereas the bass and drum work is 'sheer modern rock and roll technology, carrying the song along like a belching steel mill'. Purple's "Space Truckin'" 'features an absolute destructo heavy metal riff' (Phonograph Record, May 1972). Black Sabbath, '– a group from the factory job rat-race world of fists and street-fights known as Birmingham, England' are described as the 'reigning kings of Heavy Metal rock' (Circular, 25 September 1972), 'who happen to make music that [...] is louder than anything ever created, and which [...] sends our older brothers off into shrieks of anguish and condescension concerning that viperous noise we've got on the record player' (ibid). Even when they are 'going through the motions' (as they are on *Vol.4*), their sound 'still shuts down 99% of today's rock'; although 'there's one group it won't beat: Led Zeppelin' (Phonograph Record, November 1972).

It is relevant to mention here that Led Zeppelin feature as a comparison *within* heavy metal ('classic slug-you-in-the-gut knockout-your-brains-out efforts like Led Zeppelin II' (Creem, May 1971) in five of these reviews, despite the fact that they don't have an album out (although Saunders eagerly awaits its release). However, when *Houses of the Holy* is released it's a major disappointment, especially coming on the back of Blue Oyster Cult's *Tyranny and Mutation* ('not once on this entire LP does a fuzz chord ring out with the sort of brashness that almost defines hard rock or metal music' (*Phonograph Record*, April 1973), which leads Saunders to exclaim:

How it hurts to think back to 1971, the banner year of heavy metal rock: *Paranoid*, *Master of Reality*, *Love It To Death*, *Killer*, *Led Zep IV*, *Look At Yourself*, *Man Who Sold The World*, *Dust*, *UFO1*, *Fireball* and *E Pluribus Funk* were but a few of the metallic stompers that graced that year's release sheet. War pigs, black dogs, and loose geese running amok through the land...those were the days (*Phonograph Record*, May 1973).

But, I would argue, Saunders is doing more in this period than defining the genre of '70s heavy metal' and proselytizing on behalf of the bands that comprise it. He also seeks to locate this generation of bands and their sound, 'whatever you may think of such music, it's thoroughly valid in every aspect of R&R theory' (Fusion, December 1972), as key to the times ('a major transitional force') because:

Heavy Metal has been an evolution of heavy rock – you know, the stuff that emerged back in 1967 [...] Heavily revved-up bass, long guitar solos, deluges of fuzzbox and wah-wah. From Cream to Blue Cheer; Jimi Hendrix to the Hook; Jeff Beck to Ten Years After...' (Phonograph Record, April 1973).

In another review he claims heavy metal is 'the most important evolution in hard rock since 1965'. This hard-rock-genealogy is brought out clearly in Saunders *negative* review of *Live Cream Volume II*.

IN THEIR GLORY DAYS of 1967-8, Cream single-handedly spawned the whole genre of aloof heavy rock egomania, not to mention a whole school of insufferably self-centered lead rock guitarists. In recent years, Third Generation heavy-metal groups have gotten down to business and produced

some fine heavy - metal rock. Cream were in large part an antecedent (sound-wise, at least) of the whole style, but it all seems so far in the past now – strange as it may seem, Black Sabbath's concise efficiency makes the whole Cream era look as self-indulgent and ludicrous as it indeed was (Rolling Stone, 27 April 1972).

Saunders phrase “Third Generation heavy-metal groups”, which he repeats in at least four of these reviews (for example, Deep Purple are ‘far superior to a number of touted Third generation bands’) and which is also echoed by other writers, is the answer to the conundrum I posed earlier, of why the usage of the term heavy metal seems to refer to something already in existence. The key to this is the role of Cream as a second-generation British-invasion band (the first generation being the British beat groups, but especially the Kinks and the Who). This is what Saunders means when he states, ‘the story of heavy metal rock has been the tale of Led Zeppelin’ in that they are an evolution from the Cream template, which is then refined by subsequent bands, like Sabbath, Purple, Heep, along with similarly heavy American groups, such as Grand Funk and Blue Oyster Cult.

This is brought out clearly in Saunders review of Sabbath’s *Master of Reality*:

There’s absolutely nothing superfluous about Black Sabbath’s music, as distinctly opposed to the school of Cream/Jeff Beck/Ten Years After egomania and interchangeable ten-minute jerk-off guitar solos. Black Sabbath grind out riff after riff after unrelenting riff; even the guitar leads are riffs, and there isn’t one excessive uncalled-for guitar lead on their whole new album (*The Rag*, 20 September 1971).

But this evolution in hard rock is not recognized by rock critics (‘Led Zeppelin were absolutely slagged by the press’) because ‘it seems like the Wall Street Stone just didn’t much like those English groups’. This recognition of the weight of critical disapproval (Saunders is clearly aware of the views of Christgau and colleagues at *Rolling Stone* magazine) against this trend, probably accounts for Saunders’ proselytizing tone in this period, addressing readers confidentially: ‘there is definitely something going on here worth listening to’ (ibid). Such an act of listening constitutes a generational defiance in the face of ‘unending putdowns, condescension, and scorn from rock and roll writers and mouldy English Invasion purists’ (ibid). And this leads Saunders to the clear judgment that:

For the first time, a risible chasm had opened in the previously monolithic rock audience (a chasm that was to continue to deepen with Grand Funk, Black Sabbath, and to a lesser extent, Alice Cooper); a gap between, if you will, what was Good Music and what the kids were actually listening to (*Phonograph Record*, April 1973).

### **The closest thing to heavy metal: HM as a comparative adjective**

Despite Saunders’ sustained period of advocacy, from 1973 onwards the term heavy metal is regularly employed by rock critics, seemingly across the board in a wide range of reviews, as a *comparative adjective* to describe and define the music and style of rock (and funk, soul and R&B) musicians and bands who are *not* heavy metal (see Fig.2). The sheer range and scope, not to mention absurdity of these comparisons, which perhaps underlines their ubiquity as part of the music critics’

comparative vocabulary, can be gleaned from some of the more striking examples. Thus Ron Riegel describes The Beatles' 'Long and Winding Road' as 'searing, heavy-metal' (Phonograph Record, July 1973); Nazareth's 'Broken Down Angel' is described by Greg Shaw, as 'remarkable heavy-metal C&W' (*Rolling Stone*, 9 May 1974); Robot A. Hull describes the sound of Roogalator as 'heavy-metal boogie' (*Creem*, August 1975) but also Steppenwolf as a band that 'finally gained the reputation of becoming the first heavy-metal Grateful Dead' (*Creem*, December 1974); while Jefferson Starship's Papa John Creach is described, by Jim Esposito, as 'the world's only fifty-eight year old heavy metal violinist' (*Zoo World*, 19 December 1974). But it is perhaps Charles Shaar Murray who is responsible for penning some of the most satirical and cutting comparisons. First, concerning his beloved Jimi Hendrix: 'It was because he played hard-ass white guitar rock and roll – the music that people were soon to start calling "heavy metal"' (*NME*, 20 September 1975); or 10cc who are described as 'slipping effortlessly into another musical style – Intelligent Heavy Metal' (*NME*, 1 March 1975); while his review of ELO is pure gonzo: 'A curious blend of pastoral whimsy and controlled heavy metal plus a vocal sound reminiscent of an English Beach Boys crammed into a 'phone booth and transmitting the vocal tracks from Norway, in fact' (*NME*, 14 December 1974). Although Mick Gold seems to be entirely serious when he asserts, in a review of The Band, 'When Dylan recorded *John Wesley Harding* he pulled the plug out of the heavy metal rock scene' (*Let It Rock*, April 1974); whereas, Loudon Wainwright 'Of late [...] has aimed some of his satire towards heavy metal rock' (Chris Charlesworth, *Melody Maker*, 14 September 1974).

The R&B and Funk comparisons are often ones to do with taste and quality. For example, Michael Gross on Sly Stone: 'In an age when many "heavy metal" albums sound like many other heavy metal albums, and identical guitar riffs fill identical droning songs, Sly's infectious soulful rock is a breath of clean air' (*Circus*, September 1974); or Robin Katz on Sister Sledge: 'You can keep the well played, plugged in, heavy metal. Last night, brought me back to the music that lights up the human spirit' (*Sounds*, 26 April 1975); Chris Welch on the Climax Blues band: 'It has more feeling and emotion packed into three minutes than one might expect to find in a boxed set of heavy metal guff' (*Melody Maker*, 13 November 1976); while, for Barbara Charone, 'the AWB are [...] trying to add a little funk or a touch of soul to normally heavy metal appetites' (*Sounds*, 29 May 1976).

But not all soul and R&B bands are immune to the lure of the genre-formula. For example, John Mendelsohn describes Chicago's track, 'Hideaway', as 'their appalling tribute to semi-heavy metal, for which the composers of 'China Grove', 'Fire and Water' and 'Strangers in the Night' may or may not receive royalties' (*Phonograph Record*, May 1975); whereas the Elvin Bishop Band's 'Yes Sir', is described by John Morthland, as a 'sort of swing blues into which Elvin inserts a sort of heavy metal guitar solo' (*Creem*, March 1977). Or Michael Gross on the all-woman rock group, Fanny: 'The ladies are as funky as any Motown girl group of the sixties, more musical than three-quarters of this era's heavy-metal kids, and a hell of a lot prettier than Black Sabbath' (*Gallery*, 1975).

This wide-ranging comparative characterization clearly suggests that not only is heavy metal *by-this-point* a recognizable musical style but also part of an established commercial (and formulaic) mainstream. Take for example, Cliff White's entreaty concerning Louis Jordan: 'SUFFERING FROM HEAVY metal fatigue? Bunions on your disco feet? Are you too pooped to pop, too puked with punk rock, rasta'd rigid by reggae or simply sick of soul sounds?' (*NME*, 1 May 1976). Or Phil Sutcliffe's review of Robin Trower's *Long Misty Days* as a 'rare move towards mainstream

British heavy metal' (*Sounds*, 9 October 1976). However, such comparison also allow more subtle distinctions, such as John Tobler's description of Horslips as a 'seemingly irresistible [...] combination of superior heavy metal and traditional folk' (*NME*, 27 March 1976); Kris Needs' description of the music of the Runaways, as 'basic heavy metal, crossed with Suzi Quatro and a smattering of Stooges!' (*ZigZag*, September 1976); Andy Childs' description of Peter Frampton, 'tasteful, but with distinct heavy-metal inclinations' (*ZigZag*, April 1976) or Chas de Whalley's verdict on Eddie and the Hot Rods: 'To a youthful audience bored with the jump-suited Karamel Kommerciality of the Rollers and alienated by the heavy metal meanderings of Status Quo or Hawkwind, the Rods offer something to identify with' (*NME*, 6 March 1976). Clearly, by 1976, UK rock critics are aiming such comparisons at pub rock ('The whole pub rock scene grew out of a discontentment with the Heavy Metal Pop and Disco trends making chart action in 1973 and 1974' (Chas de Whalley, *Sounds*, 16 July 1977), and the emerging UK punk rock scene. But also musical oddities, like John Ottaway: 'He closes the act by wheeling onstage another home-made instrument – a monster slide guitar on a Meccano tea trolley – which feedback violently every time he puts his hands anywhere near it, and which he attempts to destroy in a heavy metal finale' (Miles, *NME*, 27 November 1976).

Poco, Silverhead, The Wackers, Patto, David Bowie, Mott the Hoople, Flash, Badger, Troggs, Humble Pie, Bread, Pipeline, Lou Reed, Kilburn and the High Roads, Jethro Tull, Status Quo, Sutherland Bros & Quiver, Chuck Berry, Ellie Greenwich, Mick Ronson, Marc Bolan, Electric Light Orchestra, Johnny Winter, Amon Duul, Billy Preston, Suzi Quatro, Gryphon, John Mayall, Frank Zappa, Good Rats, Laura Nyro, The Edgar Winter Group, Santana, The Dudes, Jack Bruce, Ben E. King, The Jimmy Castor Bunch, The Spinners, Kraftwerk, Steve Gibbons, Dr. John, Brownsville Station, Flash Cadillac, Kursal Flyers, The Pretty Things, Fats Domino, Peter Frampton, Ducks Deluxe, Average White Band, Pilot, Flamin' Groovies, Robin Trower, Patti Smith, Steve Hillage, Lynard Skynard, Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band, After the Fire, Man, Tangerine Dream, Asleep at the Wheel, Nils Lofgren, Willie Alexander and the Boom Boom Band, Rory Gallagher, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, David Gilmour, Muddy Waters, The Godz, REO Speedwagon, Spirit, Big Star, The Shadows, Nick Lowe, Squeeze, Steely Dan, Talking Heads, Parliament, Funkadelic and The Eagles.

**Fig. 2.** Bands and Artists compared to heavy metal, 1973-76 (RBP)

Amongst this apparent *free-for-all* we have the song "Heavy Metal Kid" by Todd Rundgrun, which 'plays upon the chaotic, unrequited emotional energies of our favorite teenagers' ("I know I could make this place so peaceful, and calm! If I could only get my hands on a hydrogen bomb."), because "Inside everyone is a heavy metal kid"(ref). And then there are the Heavy Metal Kids *themselves*: 'JUST HOW heavy are the Heavy Metal Kids?' (Chris Welch, *Melody Maker*, 6 July 1974). 'In the original Burroughs they were the unpleasant sidekicks of the sinister Doctor Benway. In this current reality they are a British rock and roll band' (Mick Farren, *NME*, 22 June 1974).

Such comparisons are also regularly employed by both interviewers and interviewees in profile pieces. For example, Sutherland Bros & Quiver 'was formed a few years ago on the premise of "getting away from all that heavy metal stuff"' (Alan Betrock, *Phonograph Record*, November 1973). Whereas, Sandy Pearlman, wants to claim it: "Hey, I invented the term "Heavy metal' – did you know that? I was the first writer to use it [...] I first used the phrase in a Byrds review in '67. That was before the 'Heavy metal thunder' line in 'Born to Be Wild', even" ( Nick Kent, *NME*, 2 March 1974). Eric Clapton wants to disown it, especially when he is asked about the

"Cream vacuum": "if I walk into a record shop I know I always go for the blues rack or the soul rack, you know, not the heavy metal rack at all" (Steve Turner, *Rolling Stone*, 18 July 1974). Jimmy Page consistently, in interviews in this period, challenges the category: "Well what do you class as heavy metal then?" (Jonh Ingham, *Sounds*, 13 March 1976); Ritchie Blackmore is more equivocal, "I can relate to heavy metal, but heavy metal has been abused by a lot of bands. But I do like to play it, because it is valid, after playing guitar for 21 years I can still turn round and say it's very valid." (Peter Makowski, *Sounds*, 25 June 1977).

One writer who consistently invokes the heavy metal comparison is Charles Shaar Murray, almost always as a negative one. In an interview piece with Speedy Keen, writers of the rock anthem "Something in the Air", the band comment:

"To me, the greatest value of the whole thing was that it came at a point where everybody was going on stage with 600,000 watts. We'd go on and there'd be the Hummelflugs before us with six fahsand watts and then there'd be the Heavy Fuckin' Whatsits wiv eight fahsand million watts and then we'd come on wiv a piano and... a seven foot saxophone... and about twenty watts at the most" (*NME*, 2 August 1975).

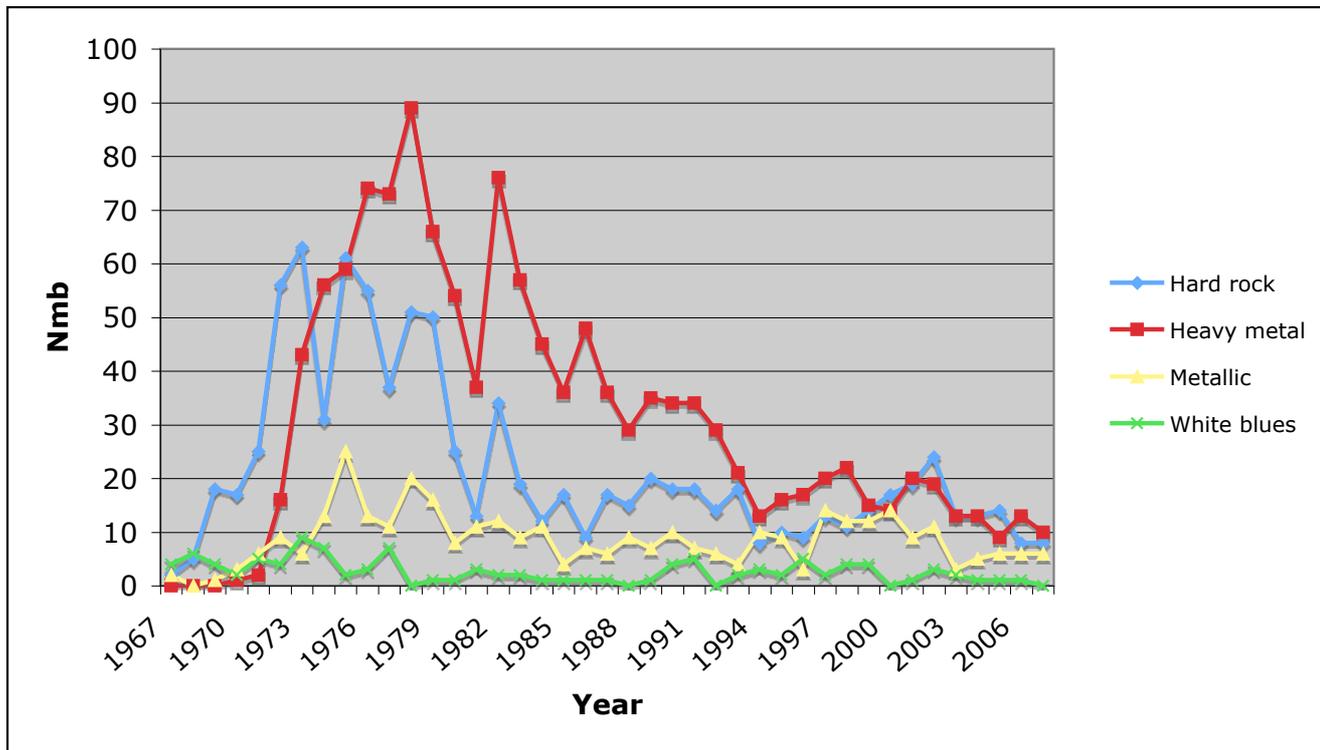
In another Murray interview, with fave-band Little Feat, the musicians are encouraged to pass judgment on the whole Led Zep "power" thing: "Heavy Metal has had its day both in terms of the music and those individuals who deal in that kind of lifestyle" (6 December 1975). However, for Brian Eno, heavy metal is one end-point in a divided musical terrain: "I thought contemporary experimental music was too intellectual and ignored the possibilities of appealing to the senses – whereas rock seemed to be off in the opposite direction, there being a strong heavy metal revival on at around this time" (Ian MacDonald, *NME*, 26 November 1977).

In summary then, we can clearly see in this period, the adjective heavy metal is employed as a comparison, to distinguish a musical sound, a way of playing, performance or attitude. Sometimes these usages are humorous, ironic and/or irreverent; sometimes they are critical, and/or dismissive or derogatory, either as a comparison or as a judgment of musical authenticity or value. Very rarely though do we get (à la Saunders) a contextual or definitional treatment or genealogy (or if we do it is somewhat of a caricature, underlining the sense in which the phrase itself has become a taken-for-granted one: 'The by-now banal words "heavy metal"' as Bangs puts it (*Stereo Review*, July 1973).

In other words, what distinguishes this period (from 1973 onwards) from that of the formative naming period identified by Weinstein, is the sheer volume of adjectives circulating around the noun they qualify, further describe or signify. Within this usage we can further distinguish between attributive and predicative adjectives, such as 'crypto-heavy metal', 'painfully mediocre heavy metal rock', 'heavy metal klanking' and 'heavy-metal flights of fancy'. It remains a mute point whether the sheer proliferation of such adjectival phrases means that heavy metal is now firmly a noun (and thus a genre); since it seems to function as both. Perhaps the problem manifest here is the naïve assumption that once the adjectival description heavy metal becomes a noun its meaning will be clearly defined. But this is far from the case, mainly because of the sheer ratio of comparative adjectives to contextual or definitional ones occurring in rock journalism in this period.

To be fair to both Bashe (1985: 4-5) and Walser (1993: 7), there is a suggestion that this definitional solidity is not really achieved until the mid-1980s. There are a number of reasons why this might be the case – the re-claiming of the term by the

New Wave of British Heavy Metal groups; their attempts to define themselves in relation to the term in interviews; a shift in the attitudes of music critics, from aesthetic to economic accreditation - but a crucial marker of this would be a *reduction in the frequency of comparative adjectives*. What is empirically significant in this respect is that although the terms ‘hard rock’, ‘metallic’ and ‘white blues’ continue to be employed (even by Saunders), from 1973 onwards the frequency of the occurrence of ‘hard rock’ as the preferred term declines in favor of ‘heavy metal’ (there is clear point of transition when the terms cross-over), whose frequency then rapidly increases, from 1974 to a peak in 1978; then to a lesser extent in 1982-3; thereafter consistently maintaining this preference differential, at lower levels, until 1999(see fig.3).



**Fig. 3:** Frequency of the terms hard rock, heavy metal, metallic and white blues, RBP 1967 - 2007

Whatever is the case, these disparate uses suggest that heavy metal is now clearly recognized as a dominant style and a commercial trend in rock music in the 1974-78 period. Indeed much of this usage points to the idea that heavy metal is a *de facto* mainstream within rock, a commercial strategy based on appealing to the lowest common musical denominator, excessive volume and guitar, bass and drums group-formula, guaranteed to appeal to “the kids”. So not only is there a consistent emphasis on heavy metal’s sound and theatrical performance but also its commercial success: ‘pounding chords and heavy-metal blaze’, ‘thicker-than-thick heavy metal’, ‘the ultimate in heavy metal power’, ‘main-stream heavy metal’, ‘heavy metal music of the heaviest variety is still a very saleable commodity’, ‘unwavering heavy metal formula’, ‘heavy-metal/theatrical area’ or ‘the US heavy metal circuit’, etc. This sense is probably most clearly conveyed in Chris Charlesworth’s judgment on Kiss: ‘A combination of hard work, unrelenting heavy metal riff music, sado-masochistic suggestions and every conceivable theatrical cliché of their genre has turned them into

the biggest success story of the past year' (*Melody Maker*, 15 May 1976). Along with this we also find an abundance of references to the heavy metal audience: 'heavy metal legions', 'heavy metal fanatics', 'heavy metal aficionados', 'heavy metal fans', 'hordes of rampant heavy metal kids', 'heavy metal devotees', 'heavy metal sickos', 'heavy metal addicts', 'heavy metal mob' and the ubiquitous phrase, 'heavy metal kids'. This idea of heavy metal as a de facto mainstream that appeals to a new audience of teens, is brought out very clearly in this description from Mick Farren:

Admittedly these guys – the fans – were a bit older than the average Roller. They came from that fifteen-to-eighteen age group that regrettably seems to turn instantly cretinous in the face of Heavy Metal. They were the same kind of fans who can normally be found at a Sabbath [...] concert, smashing their heads on the steel poles of a crush barrier... *and keeping perfect time* (*NME*, 2 October 1976).

However, over this period, there are a small group of largely American critics, Lester Bangs, Greg Shaw, Gary Sperrazza!, Robot A. Hull, Mark Shipper and Nick Kent who offer an account of heavy metal that is more consistent, tracing it back to the U.S. garage-punk bands of 67-8, who were 'heavy metal before such a thing existed'. This strand of dissensus is one that is implicit in some of Saunders' descriptions of "good" heavy metal but which is reinvented by the release of Iggy and the Stooges "Raw Power" album in 1973. Saunderson's, in his think-piece on the 'State Of Metal Music Today', describes the release as a 'stunning comeback [...] more than I'd dared even dream of' (*Phonograph Record*, April 1973), while Bangs asserts: 'The by-now banal words "heavy metal" were invented for this group, because that's all they've got, and they're brutal with it [...] Whether you laugh at them or accept their chaotic rumble on its own terms, they're fascinating and authentic, the apotheosis of every parental nightmare' (*Stereo Review*, July 1973). Shaw, in a live review of the Blue Oyster Cult and the New York Dolls, argues:

Detroit almost broke through in 1969 with the MC5, Bob Seger, the Stooges and Grand Funk. The failure of the first three remains inexplicable, when they were offering not only the refined sound and spirit of Detroit and the midwest, but also the best of the heavy metal style that was accepted so readily from British groups (*Phonograph Record*, October 1973).

Whereas Shipper, in a review of The Sonics, argues that in their hey-day they were 'the closest thing to heavy metal until the advent of the Zep and MC5 four years later (and that's not me talking, those are the words of no less an authority than one Michael Saunders)' (*Phonograph Record*, June 1973). Nick Kent, in a review of Lou Reed, argues that The Velvet Underground offered: 'an innovative definition of heavy-metal music and precursor: to Iggy and the Stooges' *Raw Power* dynamics' (*NME*, 9 June 1973). While Hull, reviewing the Flamin' Groovies: *Shake Some Action* on Bomp! Records, exclaims:

FOR THOSE OF YOU wondering where rock & roll has been all your lives (grew up on Jimi Hendrix and heavy-metal, didn't ya, bosco-brain?), well, kid, HERE TIS! With-out being imitative, *Shake Some Action* takes death-defying leaps in-to the days of '68, proving that the Flamin' Groovies can rock with the best of them (meaning the Stones, the Byrds, the Beatles, the Kinks, etc.). Finally, some magic is in the music (*Creem*, September 1976).

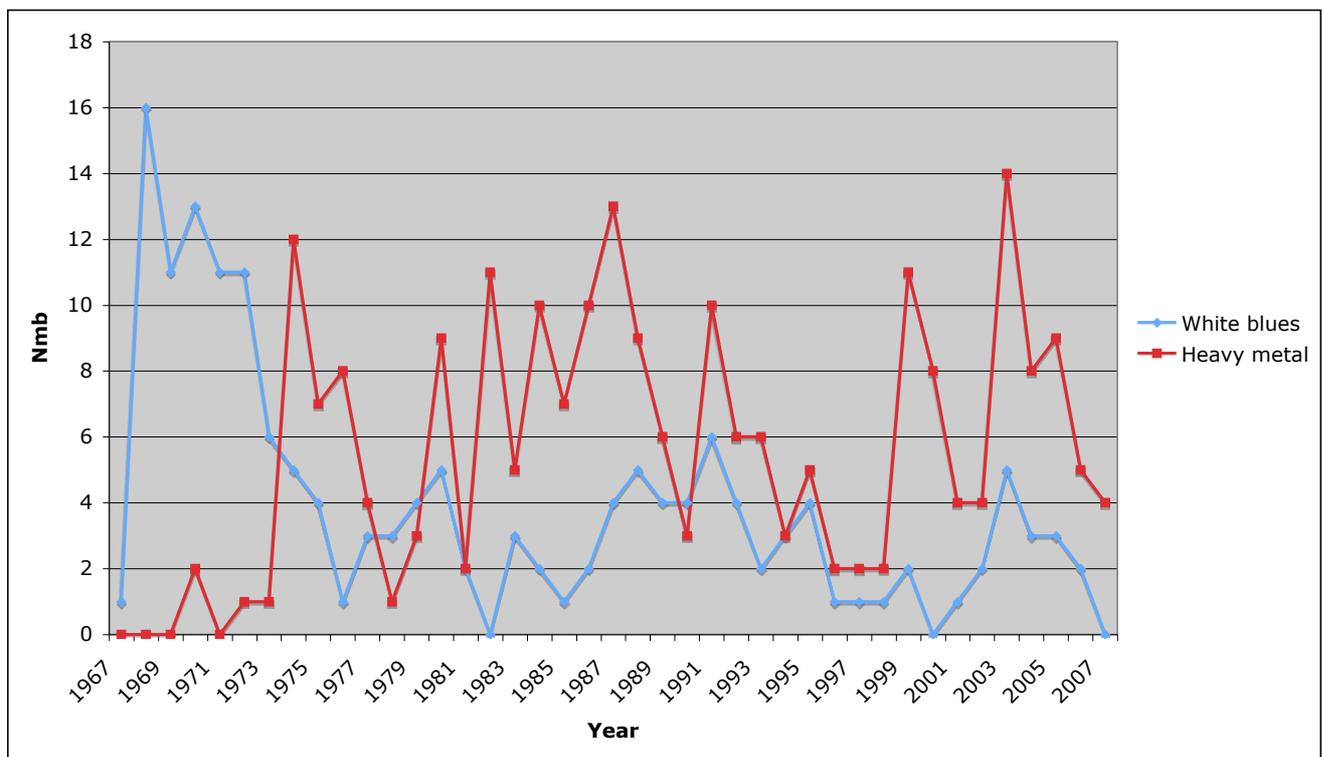
Max Bell, in a live review of The Dictators, notes they have already been called "the nation's number one punk rock group" and "best heavy metal punk rock band in the world", by *Creem* magazine [...] while the adjectives are mostly in the right order this particular Bronx battering ram isn't strictly for the punks' (*NME*, 16 October 1976). While Lisa Jane Persky, quotes Tommy Ramone: "We are very different from most of the N.Y. bands in that we are a really heavy metal hard rock group that is original" (*New York Rocker*, September 1976).

Saunders's contribution to this retrospective analysis is to offer a hypothetical speculation on the short career of Blue Cheer and their failure to develop a more heavy metal sound and a set of albums that could sit alongside those of Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple:

Dickie's heart sank even deeper as he heard new albums come out utilizing the same ideas Blue Cheer could have pulled off with ease had they stayed together — *Master Of Reality*, *Fireball*, *Grand Funk Live At The Beach House* — and he realized that he, and not Leigh, had been right all along: the blues was where it was at. In August, 1971, Blue Cheer finally disbanded (Mike Saunders, *Punk*, Fall 1973).

The thematic that links these reviews, providing them with a degree of consistency that is lacking in the majority of reviews or deployment of the heavy metal adjective in this period, is the view that although metal is an evolution of hard rock it is also in other ways — particularly in its musical language — "punkoid" or unsophisticated noise rock: what Saunders describes as 'crude unrefined street clatter', which is attributed to origins of rock'n' roll itself (from Little Richard to the Stones to the Stooges). It is this celebration of a lack of musical sophistication which allows reviewers, like Kent, to describe Hawkwind's *Space Ritual* as 'a masterpiece of British heavy-metal music, cutting the likes of Black Sabbath down to a frazzle' (*NME*, 19 May 1973). For Gary Sperrazza!, the band are the 'ultimate heavy metal-urgists' and make 'most heavy metal bands like Black Sabbath sound like classical composers' (*ibid*). This view that Hawkwind are a linking musical development between psychedelia and the avant-garde and crude guitar 'noise' is echoed by US critics, particularly those identified with *Creem*: 'it seemed most appropriate to be seeing them in Detroit' opines Greg Shaw, 'the ancestral home of heavy metal and the final resting place of the counter-cultural revolution' (*Phonograph Record*, January 1974). For Sperrazza!, *Space Ritual* 'is doomed to become a lost masterpiece' confirming the perception that 'the definitive heavy metal masters of the '70s' will be left out 'because of no exposure' (*ibid*).

However, the other consistent dimension to this treatment is how it allows an appreciation and also a defence of successful heavy metal bands, like Black Sabbath, Deep Purple and Grand Funk. The thread that connects here is the "sound" of heavy metal groups, a central reason for both their notoriety and lack of acceptance by other rock critics. As Saunders argued about *Grand Funk Railroad*, they were controversial because they 'played in a style that was later to be dubbed heavy metal rock'. One writer likening them to: "...a crazed steam press belching along like a manic bulldozer flattening everything in its way." Hmm, sounds a lot like irate parental descriptions of early Little Richard records, but not quite' quips Saunders. But the band were also controversial 'for not having asked before becoming superstars' and for this they were 'viciously attacked in the rock press the same way Led Zeppelin had been a year earlier' (Mike Saunders, *Bio For Capitol Records*, 1973). Even Black Sabbath, argues



**Fig.4** White blues and heavy metal from *Rolling Stone*.

Jon Tiven in a comparative piece (“Who Really Are The Kings Of Heavy Metal?”), perhaps the most vilified of all, finally had their day:

ONE HALF-DECADE ago, Black Sabbath couldn't get a favorable review if they begged for it – and beg they didn't. Sabbath ignored the press and simply played for their heavy metal legions, the hard core fans that would show up for every gig without fail and who made The Sabs one of the world's most popular metal kings. But suddenly in 1974 the tide turned for Black Sabbath, and the critics began to deliver raves galore for what was once the band the rock elite loved to hate (*Circus Raves*, November 1974).

**From whites blues to heavy metal: the critical reception of heavy metal rock in *Rolling Stone***

Deena Weinstein is probably justified in rejecting the first-known usage of the term “heavy metal”, appearing as it does in a 1968 *Rolling Stone* review by Barry Gifford of the first Mike Bloomfield/Electric Flag album. Weinstein rejects the validity of the adjectival phrase ‘heavy metal rock’ found in the review because such a ‘usage can be interpreted as a description of [the] album’s sound’ (p.8), rather than a new ‘genre coinage’ (ibid), and because it refers to styles of music that will not subsequently be identified with the codified genre. One of these is, of course, “white blues”. In fact, Gifford uses the “heavy metal rock” term twice, both times in relation to reviews of the white blues’ guitarist. But it is in the second review (*Rolling Stone*, Feb 15 1969)

that this usage becomes clear: ‘In an enthusiastic review of that first album I used the words “the New Soul Music, the synthesis of White Blues and Heavy Metal Rock.” I really believed it. I hoped they had stumbled upon the direction we had all been looking for’ (p.28). The significance of this usage is that it hoped to describe a new “authentic” hard rock style that could be seen to be creatively derived from American roots music traditions. But it was not to be, on the evidence of the second album they had failed to deliver on this promised synthesis.

The importance of this review then, I would argue, is not that it defines the genre of heavy metal but rather that it refers to a wider rock critic’s consensus concerned with the future direction of American rock music as a legitimate heir and authentic interpreter of its rhythm and/or blues and folk roots. Central to this critical consensus are the genres of hard rock and white blues. As we saw in the discussion of the RBP sample (see Fig.3) there is a point in the mid-1970s when the frequency of the usage of the term heavy metal outgrows that of hard rock; however the term hard rock continues to shadow heavy metal throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s. This is not true of white blues, which in the RBP data set, bumps along the bottom throughout these decades. However, in the RS data, the frequency of reference to white blues is the highest of all the sampled terms, including hard rock, metallic and heavy metal; indeed from 1967 to 1974 it is the *dominant term* in reviews and coverage. But, in the early to mid 1970s (see Fig.4) a specific point is reached in which the frequency of interest in white blues declines in favor of the coverage of heavy metal; not only this but the terms cross-over and shortly after this white blues goes into rapid decline (although there are some later periods of revival of interest).

Examining this early period of the RS sample (1967-74) in more detail not only provides us with a clearer idea of how the Gifford reviews fit within a wider critical consensus but how the rise to prominence and popularity of heavy metal in North America, is the key to understanding the *dissensus* within the critical rock writing field in this period. For example, the most frequently mentioned artist in this period is Mike Bloomfield, particularly in 1968 (forty-seven hits). These refer to album and live music reviews, interviews and pieces on blues rock and rock blues, African-American blues, soul and r&b artists, including BB King, Blood, Sweat and Tears, Jimi Hendrix, Buddy Miles, Booker T and the MGs; the Newport Folk Festival, as well as Al Kooper, Eric Clapton and so on. Barry Gifford, for example, pens sixteen reviews in the 1968-9 period, including country and blues artists, two piece on Buddy Guy (“The Blues are the Truth’, RS Sept 28<sup>th</sup> 1968), Howlin’ Wolf, Magic Sam, Jack Elliott as well as: Creedence Clearwater Revival, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Buffalo Springfield and Fleetwood Mac, culminating in the review of the Mike Bloomfield, Electric Flag album.

A central theme of the coverage of white blues is the idea of the progressive white blues artist, such as Johnny Winter, Al Kooper, Paul Butterfield and Mike Bloomfield and how musical authenticity can be achieved through a personal “artistic” vision, respecting American roots music traditions (such as blues and country) but no longer simply emulating them, coupled with the development of the sonic capabilities and meaningful songwriting of the guitar-led hard rock band. Or as Jerrold Greenberg puts it in a review of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, ‘It is the dream of a new music, rooted equally in the blues [...] in the technical virtuosity of jazz and in the amplified immediacy of rock’ (RS Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1968: 20); which not coincidentally echoes Gifford’s formulation. So does Al Kooper’s description of The Band’s *Music From Big Pink*, as “White Soul.”: ‘Not so much a white cat imitating a spade. But something else that reaches you on a non-negro level like church music or country music’ (RS August 10<sup>th</sup> 1968: 29).<sup>vii</sup> Or Mike Saunders’ review of John Mayall’s

Bluesbreakers, *A Hard Road* 'as one of the several great white blues albums [...] whether you happen to prefer blues played by whites, blacks, or homosexual Chinese emigrants to the Arabian Desert' (RS Dec 7<sup>th</sup>: 28).

In one obvious sense the coining of the term heavy metal comes out of the "metallic" direction some of the English hard rock bands, who are no longer simply trying to emulate their electric blues heroes, are moving. Jim Miller's description is apt here: 'Jimi Hendrix sounds like a junk heap (Ben Calder crushed monolithic mobiles bulldozed), very heavy and metallic loud [...] *Axis: Bold As Love* is the refinement of white noise, and (like Cream) it is not a timid happening' (RS April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1968: 21). However, there is also a clear sense, in the formative period of critical reception of heavy metal, of framing the "sound" of it within a discourse that is concerned with the issue of white blues and the English invasion theme identified by Saunders. All of these elements are present in the coverage of Cream's stateside success, where laudatory and critical reviews sit side-by-side in the very first issues of *Rolling Stone*, including album and concert reviews. Indeed, John Landau in a full-page "think-piece" ("Soul '67" RS February 24, 1968) on the continuity of ("Negro") black music, 'which accounts for the overall pattern of development taking place in '67' (p.18), also points to:

the important developments in white rock emanating from England [particularly] the arrival of the Cream, Jimi Hendrix, the Who, and Procul Harum [...] While the two front-runners were treated with tremendous respect by American audiences [...] dissension has been heard recently, particularly in the East where some were disillusioned by the latest albums of each group. Meanwhile, the Cream are proving that they are more flash than content (ibid).

And this *dissensus* increases in the critical response to Led Zeppelin, as for example, John Mendelsohn's opening remarks on their first album:

The popular formula in England in this, the aftermath era of such successful British bluesmen as Cream and John Mayall, seems to be: add, to an excellent guitarist who, since leaving the Yardbirds and /or Mayall, has become a minor musical deity, a competent rhythm section and pretty soul-belter who can do a good spade imitation. The latest of the British blues groups so conceived offers little that its twin, the Jeff Beck Group, didn't say as well or better three months ago, and the excesses of the Beck group's *Truth* album (most notably its self-indulgence and restrictedness), are fully in evidence on Led Zeppelin's debut album (RS, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1969: 28).

Although Mendelsohn's review of their second ("II") is more like a Bang's review than Bangs himself, describing it as a 'fucking heavyweight of the album!' that you need to listen to at least 'eight hundred times' to really get, preferably 'on some very heavy Vietnamese weed' (RS Dec 13<sup>th</sup>, 1969: 48). But the author admits, 'I also listened to it on mescaline, some old Romilar, Novocain, and ground up *Fusion*, and it was just as boggling as before. I must admit I haven't listened to it straight yet – I don't think a group this heavy is best enjoyed that way' (ibid). So it is not clear how much of the review is a spoof of the Bang's style. What is clear is that this satire also extends to the "white blues" framework of re-working and overkill, via guitar virtuosity and volume:

Who can deny that Jimmy Page is the absolute number-one heaviest white blues guitarist between 5'4" and 5'8" in the world? Shit, man, on this album he further demonstrates that he could absolutely fucking shut-down any whitebluesman alive, and with one fucking hand tied behind his back, too (ibid).

This satire also extends to Plant's vocal heaviness, where he sings notes 'that only dogs can hear', especially on "The Lemon Song", which is itself 'a cleverly-disguised phallic metaphor' proving that the singer is able to stick 'all this eroticism in between the lines just like his blues-beltin' ancestors!' And the album ends: 'with a far-out blues number called "Bring It On Home," during which Rob contributes some very convincing moaning and harp-playing, and sings "Wadge da train roll down da track." Who said that white men couldn't sing blues" I mean, like, *who?* (ibid). While it was Bang's himself who reviewed their third ("III"), damning all their albums as unable to 'challenge anybody's intelligence or sensibilities, relying instead on a pat visceral impact that will insure absolute stardom for many moons to come. Their albums refine the crude public tools of all dull white blues bands into something awesome in its very insensitive grossness, like a Cecil B. DeMille epic' (RS Nov 26<sup>th</sup> 1970: 34).

Lenny Kaye's review of their fourth ("IV") is largely positive, describing it as their 'most consistently good' because of its 'pumping adrenaline drive', especially on the tracks "Rock and Roll" 'a slightly-late attempt at tribute to the mother of us all' and the 'dazzler' "When The Levee Breaks": 'strangely credited to all the members of the band plus Memphis Minnie', which is based around 'one honey of a chord progression, the group constructs an air of tunnel-length depth, full of stunning resolves and a majesty that sets up as a perfect climax' to the record. He concludes: 'Not bad for a bunch of Limey lemon squeezers' (RS Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> 1971: 63).

However, it is only by their fifth album ("House of the Holy") that the adjective "heavy metal" is applied to them, in a negative review by Gordon Fletcher:

Led Zeppelin began as the epitome of everything good about rock: solid guitar work, forceful vocals and rhythmic backing, devotion to primal blues forms, and most of all, thunderous excitement on stage and vinyl. But as superstardom came to them, so too came the gradual evaporation of those qualities from their sound. In the same way that the Rolling Stones evolved into a senior, "safe" bizarre-perversion band, Led Zeppelin has become a senior, "safe" heavy-metal band. But by its very nature safety cannot co-exist with heavy-metal fire and *macho* intensity (RS June 7<sup>th</sup> 1973: 54).

In other words, what has happened to Zeppelin is that they have lost sight of their forte, which was always about 'rockin' the blues':

When you really get down to it Led Zeppelin hasn't come up with a consistent crop of heavy-metal spuds since their second album. While they've been busy denying their blues-rock roots, Robert Plant's vocals have lost their power and the band's instrumental work has lost its traces of spontaneity (ibid).

Gordon Fletcher's output from 1973-75 (113 reviews, interviews and articles) is significant as a proportion of the overall coverage of the *Rolling Stone* writers in this formative period of naming and defining heavy metal and, in particular, differentiating it from white blues and hard rock. In fact, Fletcher's description of a Blue Oyster Cult concert, where 'the walls reverberated with heavy-metal thunder' as

the band ‘created a Cream-like crescendo of guitar mania’ (RS Jan 31 1974: 62), appears to be the source of the adjectival phrase that forms the title of Bashe’s book (1985). Also, unlike many of the writers in the RBP sample, Fletcher does have a sense of the distinctive sound and sensibility of heavy metal as a genre style in its own right, in some of his reviews in this period. For example, although he is dismissive (unlike Saunders) of Uriah Heep: ‘Lord knows how they ever got a reputation as a heavy metal band – anyone listening carefully will notice that they are little more than a Top-40-based outfit in drag’ (RS Nov 8th 1973: 76) and Blood Rock who seem, ‘intent on following Grand Funk Railroad’s lead by ditching heavy-metal in favour of a more mainstream, *American* rock & roll approach’ (April 11 1974: 68); while Nazareth, ‘in bridging the gap between folk and heavy metal, could easily become the Turtles of the Seventies’ (RS May 9 1974: 64), he has nothing but praise for Stray Dog: ‘This is a superb heavy-metal album – the debut disc of an incredibly talented and promising power trio’ (April 11 1974: 64) and ex-Edgar Winter guitarist Ronnie Montrose’s ‘new power trio (plus singer)’ which is described as ‘a potentially scorching outfit’. Indeed, with ‘Stray Dog and the fiery new Kiss, they prove there’s no lack of rookie talent in this year’s heavy-metal sweepstakes’ (ibid).

He also offers a summation of the significance of the stateside success of Black Sabbath, in a sympathetic interview/think-piece (“The Sabbath Search for Peace”), that appears to bridge the gap between the white blues framing of such music and its changed significance for a new generation of fans:

Though they are best known as the planet’s premier heavy metal band, Black Sabbath’s major contribution has been to successfully capture the gist of specifically Seventies culture through their music. They relate to this impersonal, mechanical decade much as Delta bluesmen and their Chicago spin-offs related to their eras – by synthesizing collective feelings and giving their contemporaries hope by revealing the dissatisfaction that unites all of them. In that remote but real sense, Black Sabbath might well be considered true Seventies bluesmen (RS Feb 14th 1974: 55).

However, Fletcher’s description of Three Man Army in terms of its overwhelming sonic assault on the listener: ‘Like all good heavy-metal bands, TMA seeks to depict that fleeting moment between the detonation of an atomic bomb and its subsequent obliteration of the listener’ (RS August 29th 1974: 60), suggests that the genre, although clearly recognizable by 1974, is one understood in terms of the capacity to push at the extremes of rock dynamics, via guitar and amplification technologies, in particular.

This idea is brought out very clearly by Jim Miller, in the two-page ‘think-piece’ ‘Up Against the Wah-Wah’ (see Fig.5), when he observes: ‘Like early rock ‘n’ roll, [heavy metal] music hardly seems respectable enough to write about’ (RS July 4 1974: 72). The overriding reason for this is because of the perception of its sound, ‘a droning glop of distorted guitar oozing from countless amplifiers [...] metal employs a piledriver approach more expressive of an assembly line gone berserk than traditional musical felicities’ (ibid). While the dynamics of the early rock ‘n’ roll of Little Richard and Bo Diddley was loud, heavy metal is ‘deafening’ due to ‘towering stacks of speakers’ and ‘piggy-back amps’ and the use of ‘tricky devices’ such as: echo, reverb, fuzz-tone, the wah-wah pedal and tremolo, as part of an ‘expanding arsenal of effects’ (ibid).

It was largely left for the British to capitalize musically on fuzz-tone, controlled feedback and associated special effects [...] Perhaps because they hoped to approximate the unintentional distortion of early electric blues recordings, British blues/rock guitarists began experimenting with fuzz-tone, creating snaking, sustained notes, evocative of earlier bottleneck styles but wed to rock conventions. The leaders in this field, and the founders of heavy metal, were Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck (ibid).

Miller's piece is very much a survey, conducted *on-behalf* of the "rock critic's establishment" (in Christgau's (1976) knowing phrase), but one that acknowledges the popularity and impact of heavy metal, 'despite its lack of conventional aesthetic virtues (virtually a principle of the genre) [it] has transformed the musical vocabulary and technical armature of pop' (ibid). Like Saunders, Miller traces the formation of the genre via Cream and the Yardbirds but also the 'rave-up wall-of-sound perfected on the Kinks' early singles' that achieved a volume and texture not unlike 'the hammering triplets and repeated horn riffs of early R&B' (pp. 72-3); an approach that was also explored by 'metal forerunners' the Who and mid-period Rolling Stones, the resulting 'amplified pandemonium took rock places articulate lyrics simply couldn't go' and when conjoined with 'the weighty sonics of fuzz-toned guitar' created 'a wall of distorted sound' that could 'flatten its audience without even trying' (p.72-3).

Into this British invasion 'guitar gimmickry' narrative Miller inserts the 'black American expatriate' Jimi Hendrix, who is able to 'forge a personal poetry out of such

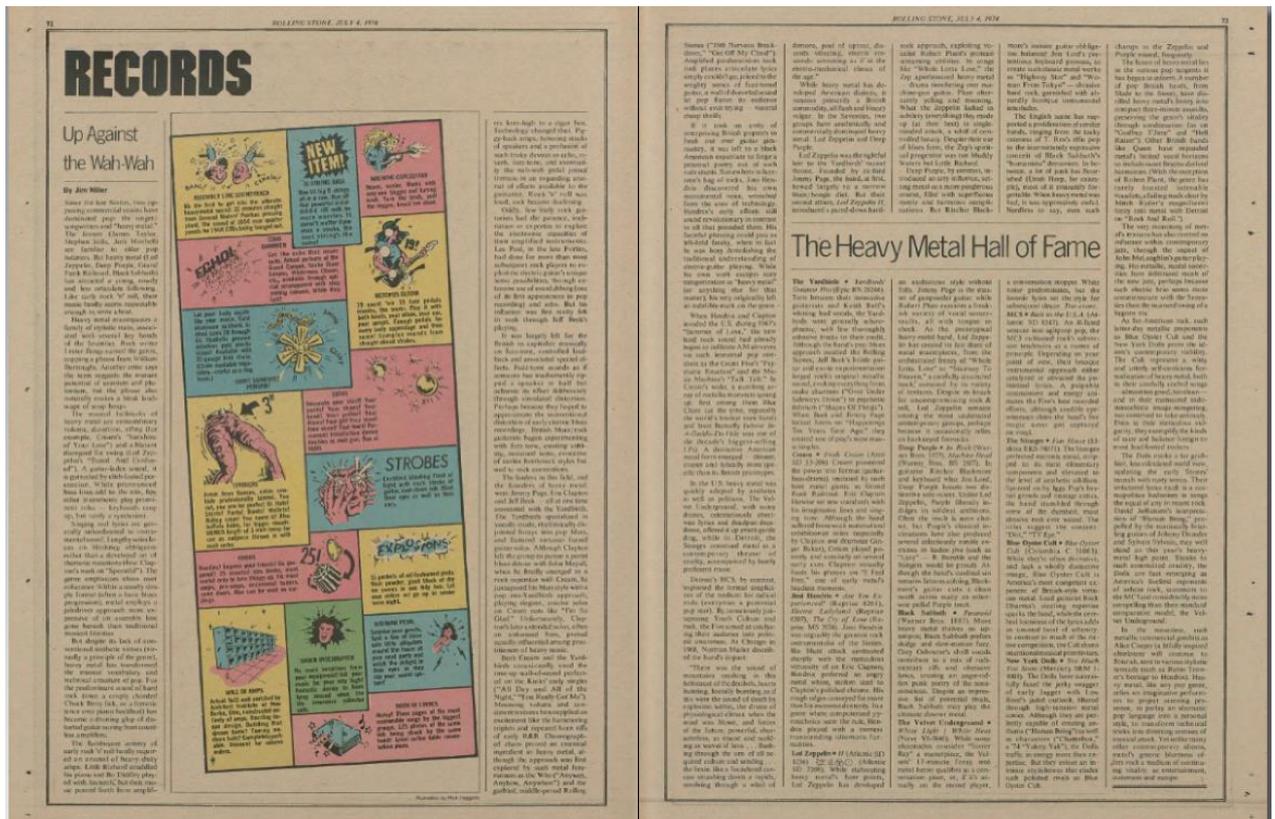


Fig. 5. Jim Miller's "think-piece", Up Against the Wah-Wah (including The Heavy Hall of Fame) (RS July 4<sup>th</sup> 1974: 72-73).

rude stunts' and from 'fuzz-tone's bag of tricks [offer] an instrumental voice, wrenched from the craw of technology' (p.73). While Hendrix's work 'escapes easy categorization as "heavy metal" [...] his very originality left an indelible mark on the genre' (ibid). It was this new hard rock sound of Hendrix and Clapton that 'invaded' the U.S. during 1967's "Summer of Love," while such a sound was already infiltrating the AM airwaves through the 'pop one-shots' beloved of Bang's (the Count Five's "Psychotic Reaction" and the Music Machine's "Talk Talk"). In the wake of Cream a 'numbing array of metallic monsters sprang up', including Blue Cheer and Iron Butterfly, indicating that a 'distinctive American metal form [had] emerged – thinner, crazier and lyrically more specific than its British prototypes' (p.73). This style was quickly 'adapted by aesthetes' (such as the Velvet Underground) 'as well as politicians' (like the MC5). The Velvets, 'with noisy drones, ostentatiously street-wise lyrics and deadpan decadence, offered it up in avant-garde drag, while in Detroit, the Stooges, construed metal as a contemporary theatre of cruelty, accompanied by barely proficient music' (p.73).

But while heavy metal has developed 'American dialects, it remains primarily a British commodity, all flash and bloozy vulgar' (ibid). Proof of this is the ways in which two British groups have 'aesthetically and commercially dominated' the genre in the 1970s: Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple' (ibid). Indeed, on songs like "Whole Lotta Love", 'the Zep apotheosized heavy metal – drums ricocheting over machine-gun guitar. Plant alternately yelling and moaning', whereas Deep Purple offered an 'abrasive hard rock, garnished with absurdly baroque musical interludes' (ibid), supplied by guitar and keyboard virtuosos, Ritchie Blackmore and Jon Lord. Miller concludes by suggesting the future of the genre lies in its pop variants, such as Sweet and Slade, who have 'distilled heavy metal's frenzy into compact three-minute assaults, preserving the genre's vitality through condensation'; whereas 'Queen have expanded metal's limited vocal horizons to include sweet Beatles-derived harmonies' (p.73). Through the 'metallic, modal sonorities' of John McLaughlin's guitar playing the style has also 'infiltrated much of the new jazz', while in the States, 'such latter-day metallic proponents as Blue Oyster Cult and the New York Dolls prove the idiom's contemporary viability' (p.73).

Miller's extended "think-piece" is very much a summary of the pre-existing positions on the critical reception of heavy metal that manages to reconcile them within an over-arching *Rolling Stone* perspective. First, heavy metal like early rock n roll, has to be comprehended through its sound and by the young, largely inarticulate audiences it attracts. It is a sound that is driven by developments in amplification technology and 'effects' pioneered by flashy British lead guitarists whose devotion to studying the distortion-techniques of their beloved African-American blues idols has resulted in a mutant metallic monster wall-of-sound that, like an 'assembly line gone berserk', pulverizes audiences into ecstatic-submission. Stateside, the impact of this guitar-driven invasion of British heavy bands, has been the development of American equivalents, largely based around the Cream power-trio template, but also the adoption of the aesthetics of metallic over-kill and noise-experiments by a wave of politico/avant-garde "punk"<sup>viii</sup> bands, like the MC5, The Stooges and the Velvet Underground (whose influences can be traced back to the late 1960s garage band phenomenon). The inclusion of these bands, along with the New York Dolls, in the 'Heavy Metal Hall of Fame' (p.73) and the prediction that the pop-metal British bands, Sweet and Slade, will be the future suggests that the genre categorization of heavy metal in this period is very much a formative assessment, still one reacting to musical developments while seeking referents in musical antecedents.<sup>ix</sup>

## Conclusion

What I have argued is that the term heavy metal and its application to mainly British (or “English” as they are often described) heavy metal bands, as well as North American proponents of this style, in the formative period of the mid-to-late 1970s, reflects a profound lack of critical consensus in rock criticism at this time, over the future development of American popular music *to the extent that* the emergence of the musical phenomenon of heavy metal negatively reflects upon the mature development of the counter cultural youth movement and progressive or authentic rock styles, particularly ‘white blues’ and ‘hard rock’. It is this interpretive framework, I contend, that is most able to make sense of the earliest usage of the term heavy metal by Barry Gifford, that Weinstein and others reject.

Indeed, the characterization of heavy metal that emerges from the accumulation of mainly (but not wholly) negative adjectives, penned largely (but not exclusively) by North American music critics working for U.S. magazines, in the early to mid-1970s, is that it is a derivative ‘third generation’ British-invasion genre, cynically recycling ‘boogie blues’ and ‘2nd-rate’ Cream riffs to a new teen audience that are largely unaware of the originals. Indeed, for many, what characterizes this third-generation of British heavy metal groups is how they distil the worst aspects of Cream – *technology-driven-guitar-centred-distortion, formulaic-soloing, leaden-riffing, club-footed drumming and plodding bass-lines* – into a commercially successful formula that is able to significantly impact the Billboard charts and fill big stadiums, largely at the expense of American artists.

The other usage, which I would argue is the dominant usage of the adjective, views heavy metal as a crude extension of rock ‘n’ roll styles (indeed, in many respect, the styles is seen as a *return* to rock ‘n’ roll and a teen audience: a ‘back to basics’ type of music that has few redeeming qualities. Certainly little in its repertoire that could be called rock ‘songs’) beyond a propensity to push at the sonic limits of guitar-distortion via excessive amplification and the exaggeration of rock dynamics that this level of volume allows. But a minority of critics (Bangs, Saunders, Marsh, Fletcher, Kent) actually combine these two arguments together in interesting ways, in order to defend certain types of heavy metal bands or bands that deserve the name heavy metal, while rejecting others.

Exploring this *dissensus* within the wider critical consensus reveals that the problem of heavy metal – exemplified by the proliferation of adjectives describing it – is partly provoked by the problem of how to explain the role of British musicians in the mature development of rock as a popular avant-garde/ art-form but one that has its roots deep in American culture, particularly African-American music and country ‘roots’ styles. The other issue is the growing sense of misalignment of authentic rock-artists and performers – those advocated by fan-critics formally in-tune with their counter-cultural audience – and what was increasingly popular with audiences in the 70s and beyond.

## Bibliography

- Bashe, P., (1985), *Heavy Metal Thunder*, London: Omnibus Press.
- Bennett, A. (2007) ‘The Forgotten Decade: Rethinking the Popular Music of the 1970s’, *Popular Music History*, 2 (1): 5-24.
- Bennett, A. (2009) ‘“Heritage Rock”’: Rock Music, Representation and Heritage Discourse’, *Poetics*, 37: 474-489.

- Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Brown, A.R. (2011) 'Heavy Genealogy: Mapping the Currents, Contraflows and Conflicts of the Emergent Field of Metal Studies', *Journal for Cultural Research* 15 (3): 213–242.
- Brown, A.R. (2012) 'The Speeding Bullet, the Smoking Gun: Tracing Metal Trajectories, from Sabbath to Satyricon', in A. R. Brown & K. Fellezs (Eds.) *Heavy Metal Generations* (pp. 3–13) Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Brown, A.R. & Fellezs, K. (2012) *Heavy Metal Generations* Oxford: Inter Disciplinary Press.
- Brown, A. R., (2014) "Everything louder than everyone else": the origins and persistence of heavy metal and its global cultural impact', in Bennett, A. and Wacksman, S. (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Popular Music Genres*, London: Sage, pp.
- Christgau, R. (1973) *Any Old Way You Choose It: Rock and Other Pop Music, 1967-1973*, London: Penguin.
- Christgau, R. (1982) *Christgau's Guide: Rock Albums of the 70s*, London: Vermillion
- Christgau, R. (2003) *Robert Christgau: Dean of American Rock Critics*: [http://www.robertchristgau.com/get\\_artist.php?name=black+Sabbath](http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_artist.php?name=black+Sabbath) (accessed June 2013).
- DeRogatis, J. (2000) *Let it Blurt: The Life and Times of Lester Bangs*, London; Bloomsbury.
- Fox, A. F., (2004) 'White trash alchemies of the abject sublime:country as bad music', in Washburne, C. and Derno, M. (eds), *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate*, 39–61, New York: Routledge.
- Frith, S., (1978), *The Sociology of Rock*, London: Constable.
- Frith, S., (1983), *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*, London: Constable.
- Gendron, B. (2002) *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club: Popular Music and the Avant-Garde*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Gudmundsson, G., Lindberg, U., Michelsen, M. and Weisethaunet, H., (2002), 'Brit crit: turning points in British rock criticism, 1960–1990', in Jones, S. (ed.), *Pop Music and the Press*, 41–64, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Jones, S. and Featherly, K. (2002) 'Re-Viewing Rock Writing: Narratives of Popular Music Criticism' in S. Jones (ed) *Pop Music and the Press*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 19-40.
- Laurin, H. (2013) 'Triumph of the Maggots? Valorization of Metal in the Rock Press', T. Hjelm, K. Kahn-Harris and M. LeVine (eds) *Heavy Metal: Controversies and Countercultures*, Sheffield: Equinox, pp. 50-65.
- Lindberg, U., Gudmundsson, G., Michelsen, M. and Weisethaunet, H., (2005), *Rock Criticism from the Beginning: Amusers, Bruisers and Cool-headed Cruisers*, New York: Peter Lang.
- Marsh, D. (1985) *Fortunate Son: The Best of Dave Marsh, Criticism and Journalism by America's Best-Known Rock Writer*, New York: Random House.
- Murray, C-S., (1992), 'What have they done to my blues, Ma?' in Heylin, C. (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Rock and Roll Writing*, 604–611, London: Viking.
- Sociology, 39 (5): 965–982.
- Murray, C-S. (1992). 'What Have They Done to My Blues, Ma?'. In C. Heylin (Ed.) *The Penguin Book of Rock and Roll Writing*. London: Viking.
- Rabinow, P. (ed) (1984) *The Foucault Reader*, London: Penguin Books.

- 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*, 97–110, London: Routledge.
- Tagg, P. (1994). 'Subjectivity and Soundscape, Motorbikes and Music'. In H. Järviluoma (Ed.) *Soundscape. Essays on Vroom and Moo* (pp. 48-66). Department of Folk Tradition: Tampere: <http://tagg.org/articles/xpdfs/virrat.pdf>
- Tucker, K., (1986) 'Hard rock on the rise', in Ward, E., Stokes, G. and Tucker, K. (eds), *Rock of Ages: The Rolling Stone History of Rock and Roll*, 480–486, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Waksman, S. (2009) *This Ain't the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk*, Berkley: University of California Press.
- Walser, R. (1993) *Running With the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music*, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.
- Weinstein, D. (1991) *Heavy metal: a cultural sociology*, New York: Maxwell Macmillan International.
- Weinstein, D. (2000) *Heavy Metal: The Music and its Culture*, New York: De Capo Press.
- Weinstein, D. (2004) 'Rock Critics Need Bad Music'. In C. Washbourne & M. Demo (Eds.) *Bad Music: The Music We Love to Hate* (pp. 294-310). New York: Routledge.
- Weinstein, D. (2009) 'The Empowering Masculinity of British Heavy Metal' in G. Bayer, G. (ed) *Heavy Metal Music in Great Britain*, Surrey: Ashgate, pp. 17-32.
- Weinstein, D. (2011) 'The Globalization of Metal'. In J. Wallach, H. Berger & P. D. Greene (Eds.) *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Music Around the World* (pp. 34–59). Texas: Duke University.
- Weinstein, D. (2013) 'Just So Stories: How Heavy Metal Got Its Name—A Cautionary Tale', *Rock Music Studies*, I(1): 1-16.
- Wikipedia. Org (2013) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heavy\\_metal\\_music#Etymology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heavy_metal_music#Etymology) (Accessed June 2013).

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> The other period of significance, the early to mid 1980s, identifies the term heavy metal with the 'new wave' of young British bands, such as Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, Motorhead and a resurgent Judas Priest, as well as bands such as AC/DC and the Scorpions. A second part of the research reported here deals with this period and also the much more positive accreditation of bands emerging from the thrash or speed metal scene to chart success, particularly Metallica but also Megadeth.

<sup>ii</sup> This project, commencing in 2008-9, has been long in the making due to a lack of consistent funding. However I would like to thank Fiona Montgomery, former head of school of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Bath Spa University, for allocating some small monies to get me started and more recently, Terry Rodgers and Joe Bennett for supporting the subscription to the Rock's Back Pages archive as a joint Media Communications and Music department initiative.

<sup>iii</sup> Indeed, the fact that only one of these bands (Sabbath) is from the 1970s, means the sample is weighted towards the 1980s and 90s.

<sup>iv</sup> The database that was employed in the research was a four-disc CD-Rom, which *Rolling Stone* marketed to celebrate 40 years of existence. It is described as a 'searchable digital archive, 1967 to May 2007' with 'over 98, 000 pages' (Bondi digital publishers). The advantages of this pre-internet launch of the archive is that it contains searchable scans of the paper issues, including page layout, ads and review placing, which allows a much more "contextual analysis" and accurate page number referencing. The disadvantage is that it requires a large amount of PC memory, which back in 2007 slowed my computer down to a snails-pace!

<sup>v</sup> Whereas the search term "metallic" in RBP (1967-2007) gave 356 hits, including pieces on Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Iggy Pop, David Bowie and Emerson, Lake and Palmer; "hard

---

rock” in RBP (1967-2007) gave 901 hits, including Alice Cooper, Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie and Deep Purple.

<sup>vi</sup> The exception is a review, by Saunders, of Uriah Heep’s *Demons and Wizards* (Nov. 23, 1972).

<sup>vii</sup> The frequent and indeed interchangeable use of the terms negro, spade and black is a characteristic of writing about ‘white blues’ and ‘hard rock’ in this period.

<sup>viii</sup> The origins of the term punk and when it was first employed in music journalism is itself an issue of etymology (Marsh 1985: 235-261; DeRogatis (2000), as well as the historical and musicological antagonism and interrelationship between the music genres over time (Waksman 2009).

<sup>ix</sup> It will not be until the early to mid-1980s that the categorization of heavy metal will finally achieve clarity as a genre-in-itself. The reasons for this are the subject of the next phase of the research project.