

VOLUME!

Volume !

La revue des musiques populaires

9 : 2 | 2012

Contre-cultures n°2

Colin A. MCKINNON, Niall SCOTT & Kristen SOLLEE
(eds.), *Can I Play with Madness? Metal, dissonance,
madness and alienation*

Claudia Azevedo



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/volume/3320>

ISSN: 1950-568X

Publisher

Association Mélanie Seteun

Printed version

Date of publication: 15 December 2012

Number of pages: 213-215

ISBN: 978-2-913169-33-3

ISSN: 1634-5495

Electronic reference

Claudia Azevedo, « Colin A. MCKINNON, Niall SCOTT & Kristen SOLLEE (eds.), *Can I Play with Madness? Metal, dissonance, madness and alienation* », *Volume !* [Online], 9 : 2 | 2012, Online since 15 May 2015, connection on 13 November 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/volume/3320>

L'auteur & les Éd. Mélanie Seteun

Théorie

tions for thinking further about already acknowledged topics in (black) metal studies and discusses quite a lot of underground bands. In addition, it is an appealing artistic collection in a new form of engaging with the subject of metal studies.

Références

- MASCIANDARO, N. (2009) 'Hideous Gnosis: Schedule and Flyers.' *Blackmetalththeory.blogspot.com* <http://blackmetalththeory.blogspot.com/> [accessed 09 May 2012].
- FORSHAW, J. (2011) 'Metal in Three Modes of Enmity: Political, Musical, Cosmic.' *Current Musicology*. 91 pp. 140-62.
- MASCIANDARO, N. (ed.) (2010), *Hideous Gnosis. Black Metal Theory Symposium I*. Charleston: Create Space.

Imke VON HELDEN

Colin A. McKinnon, Niall SCOTT & Kristen SOLLEE (eds.) *Can I play with madness? Metal, dissonance, madness and alienation*. Critical Issues Series. Oxford: Inter-disciplinary Press, 2011, 192 p.

Available at: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/publishing/id-press/ebooks/can-i-play-with-madness/>, [viewed: 15.oct.2012]

THE WORD "METAL" is like an umbrella: it encompasses a set of musical sub-genres that are known as *heavy metal* by the common sense. Although grouped under the same term, these sub-genres differ in aspects of ideology, to a greater or lesser extent, resulting therefore in different rules of sound, aesthetics and socialization among fans. One's lack of emic experience may be denounced by details and filigrees. Definitely, it is not a task for beginners.

Not too long ago, in the early 2000's, researchers of all areas who wished to devote themselves to metal would not find much academic material on the subject, even in an international context. However, from the second half of the decade onwards, one has witnessed a significant development in metal studies

under different approaches,¹ as though researchers were only waiting for an opportunity to come out of hiding. Nine (if not ten) out of ten of them are fans of at least one metal sub-genre. Metal fans "metallise their lives".² The affective investment is great.

One can speculate that a new generation of supervisors has been accepting post-graduate academic proj-

1. Case studies of Brazil, Canada and USA show that especially from 2006 onwards, scholarly production on metal doubled. The same does not apply to the UK. (Azevedo, Hickam & Spracklen, 2011).

2. *Métalliser sa vie*: I borrow this expression from Hein (2003: 249) who, by his turn, borrowed it from Rocco (2002: 218).

ects whose object is related to sub-genres of metal. Furthermore, the internet has actually been acting as a catalyst in the process of circulating information among researchers, fostering a feedback loop. From this interest, the International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS) is in the process of formalization and the state of the art is impressive.¹

Since 2008, there have been more than ten international academic meetings - conferences, symposia and seminars - devoted to metal, especially in Europe and the U.S., gathering scholars from different areas of expertise. *Can I play with madness? Metal, dissonance, madness and alienation* is the outcome of the homonymous conference held in Prague in November 2010. Its organizer, Inter-Disciplinary.Net, defines itself as a non-commercial organization "committed to inter-, multi- and trans-disciplinary pursuits aiming at bringing people together from differing contexts, disciplines, professions and vocations". The intention is to treat conference delegates and authors equally "with no distinction or 'status' divisions".² This may justify the heterogeneity of the volume in terms of authors' level of training, age, area of knowledge and preference of metal sub-genre, thus expressing those philosophical principles. Some of the chapters show conclusions of completed research work, others are still being developed, while others are essays. The nature of the theme - dissonance, madness and alienation - attracted approaches mainly from Psychology, Philosophy, Sociology and Anthropology, from participants

from Europe (England, Ireland, Germany, Portugal, Denmark, Bielorussia), Puerto Rico, Australia and the USA. According to the determinations of the organization, all nineteen texts in the book should be as faithful as possible to their 20-minute presentation in Prague, although more elaborate, having benefited from the discussions held at the conference.

All this has pros and cons. On one hand, the book serves as a record of the conference, provides an overview of the researchers' projects, completed or in progress, with due bibliography and references. As an e-book downloadable free of charge, it has the merit of democratically facilitating the flow of information and ideas. And as in a conference, anyone interested in any of the approached topics has the opportunity to contact the researcher. The Inter-Disciplinary.Net site keeps track of the event and provides authors' e-mails.³ This *is* good use of internet.

On the other hand, texts - seven pages in average - do not allow proper breath for large developments and explanations. This may limit the understanding of readers from different areas of knowledge without familiarity with the literature concerning main concepts such as social representation, social stigma, micro and macro levels, gender bending, civilizing process, organizational behavior theory, expectancy theory, empirical and qualitative research, to name a few. The last part of the volume is dedicated to aspects of madness in black metal alone.

The book can be considered a valid attempt towards the goal of interdisciplinarity. However, despite the competence of authors in their areas, in practice, this

1. ISMMS archives: <http://www.ucmo.edu/metalstudies/>. Viewed: 15.oct.2012

2. Inter-Disciplinary.Net - A Global Network for Research and Publishing. Institutional texts at <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/about-us/> and <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/about-us/philosophy/>. Viewed: 15.oct.2012.

3. Check for session details on the left side of the page at: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/ethos/music-metal-politics/project-archives/3rd/>. Viewed: 15.oct.2012.

Théorie

crossing of boundaries and association of disciplines still seems to be an ideal that demands a certain effort to be achieved, such as in most domains of academic practice.

Last but not least, this volume could also be useful for those who wish to study metal fandom. There seems to be some feeling of alterity, some constant tension between the idea that metal is stigmatized, misunderstood and unappreciated by common sense, while fans regard it to be critical, transgressor and libertarian.¹ Madness, then, plays a role in the construction of a self-image of non-conformity and is thus valued positively. Non-conformity, after all, means strength which is at the core of the metal ethos.

References

AZEVEDO, Cláudia, HICKAM, Brian, SPRACKLEN, Karl (2011). *Tools of the trade - Scholarly apparatus and the future of metal studies*. Panel: Heavy Metal and Place - International

1. Roccor (2000: 89) claimed that “the negative evaluation by outsiders” is one of the reasons that “maintain the spirit of heavy metal over and above all stylistic boundaries”.

Conference Home of Metal. University of Wolverhampton & The Lighthouse, September 2011.

"Heavy Fundametalisms – Music, Metal and Politics" (2010) *Can I play with madness? Metal, dissonance, madness and alienation*. 3rd Global Conference page: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/ethos/music-metal-politics/project-archives/3rd/>. Viewed: 15.oct.2012.

HEIN, Fabien (2003). *Hard rock, heavy metal, metal. Histoire, culture et pratiquants*. Nantes/Paris, Mélanie Sèteun/Irma. *Inter-Disciplinary.Net – A Global Network for Research and Publishing*.

Institutional texts: <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/about-us/>

<http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/about-us/philosophy/>. [Viewed: 15.oct.2012]

ROCCOR, Bettina (2000). “Heavy Metal: Forces of unification and fragmentation within a musical subculture”, *The World of Music*, vol. 42, n°1, p. 83-94.

ROCCOR, Bettina (2002). *Heavy metal. Kunst, Kommerz, Ketzerei*, Berlin, I.P. Verlag Jesker/Mader GbR. 1st edition: 1998.

Cláudia AZEVEDO