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HEAVY METAL MUSIC: Satanic Music or Simply Misunderstood

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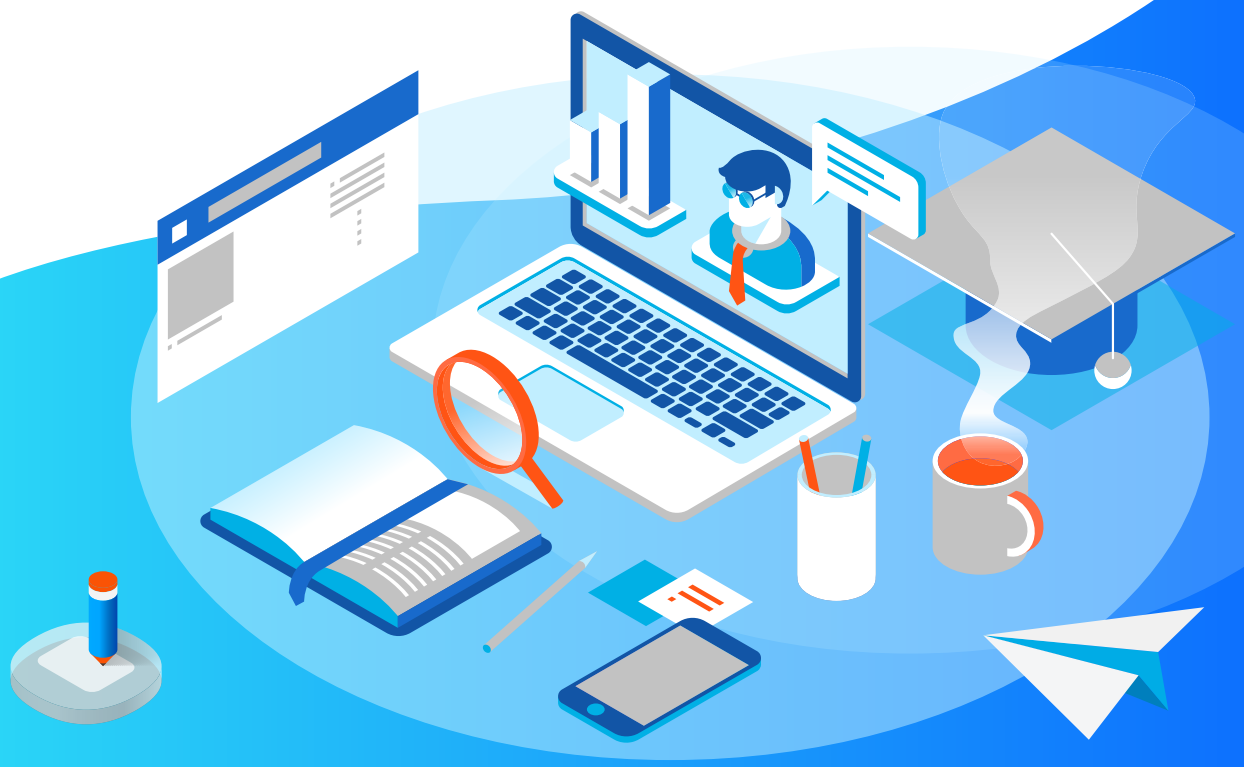

HEAVY METAL MUSIC: Satanic Music or Simply Misunderstood

Abstract

Heavy metal music is often viewed as satanic music because many heavy metal musicians sing about Satan in their songs. The purpose of this research is to explore the genre of heavy metal and clarify whether this music is truly satanic or simply misunderstood to be satanic. The method used for this research is gathering and analysis of literature on heavy metal. Results of the research show that heavy metal music refers to Satan, however is not satanic, because most musicians use the figure of Satan only to attract the audience by shocking them. Findings show that majority of heavy metal musicians are not Satanists, on the contrary, most of them are Christians or followers of other religions which are not related to Satanism. Even though, few heavy metal bands are satanic, the whole genre cannot be referred to as satanic based on few representors of the genre. In this regard, heavy metal in general should not be referred to as satanic music.

Key words: heavy metal, Satan, Satanism, music.

Introduction

Heavy metal originated from such genres as psychedelic rock and blues rock. The style of performance and lyrics of heavy metal music are often associated with masculine pride and aggression. Many bands that play heavy metal music sing about Satan in their songs. Satan is also portrayed on many covers of the heavy metal albums. As a result, heavy metal is associated with Satan, and music of this genre is often viewed as satanic. However, the bands mostly refer to Satan only to seem intriguing for the audience. Therefore, it is important to be able to differentiate between the ways how Satan is portrayed in heavy metal. Even though heavy metal music often refers to Satan, it is mainly not satanic but simply misunderstood because Satan is mostly referred to as a negative figure.

ORIGIN OF HEAVY METAL

Heavy metal started evolving in Great Britain in 1960-1970s. Musicians playing in heavy metal genre created their own unique sound, the characteristic features of which are emphatic beats and distortion amplified on the high level. Also, most songs of the heavy metal genre include a long guitar solo. The first bands who invented and developed the heavy metal music are Deep Purple, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. With the development and evolution of the heavy metal genre emerged such subgenres as speed metal,

power metal, glam metal, followed by trash metal, doom metal, death metal, black metal, and even Christian metal.

Trash metal is characterized by stronger aggressiveness along with black metal subgenre and death metal. Trash metal was introduced and developed by Slayer, Megadeth, and Metallica. In 1980 trash metal became so popular that it was even considered to be mainstream. While, black metal and death metal remained mostly appreciated by the people who belonged to the subcultures. For black metal it is typical to refer to Satan. Numerous bands of this genre got inspired by Satan and paganism. Themes related to occultism are a characteristic feature of heavy metal lyrics. For instance, the band Slayer in their song 'Hell Awaits' describe the glory of Satan. Combination of horror, occultism and Satanism can be found in the lyrics of Cradle of Filth, Venom, and numerous other heavy metal bands.

SATANIC, DARK AND DEPRESSING LYRICS

Many heavy metal bands experience accusations that they are satanic. However, musical instruments, loud sound at the concerts and screaming are not satanic in their nature. Therefore, the bands are mostly considered to be satanic based on the lyrics of their songs and satanic images they use. Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin established the style of the lyrics of heavy metal songs. The lyrics focused on depressing and dark themes. The songs often described a personal trauma of different kind.

Lyrics of the majority of heavy metal musicians concentrate on occult

themes. First album of Black Sabbath had an inverted cross in the album art. It is a known fact that an inverted cross is a sign of the devil. Also, the lyrics of the songs on the album clearly have connection to black magic. Since that time, Satan became associated with heavy metal music. Therefore, heavy metal was considered anti-Christian. However, messages of heavy metal music are often misunderstood. Even though Black Sabbat used the inverted cross for their first album, the drummer of the band, Bill Ward, claims that the band members are not Satanists.

In 1980s, Rob Halford from Judas Priest was accused of sending Satanic messages in his songs. The singer had to go through several court trials and was found not guilty. It shows that the texts of heavy metal songs often are misunderstood. Lyrics of heavy metal songs aim to provoke the listeners and attract the audience through symbolic texts. For example, in the song 'Bring Your Daughter to the Slaughter' composed by Iron Maiden, the musicians provoke the audience by the lyrics which seem to refer to ritualistic murder. Still, it is only a symbolical presentation of the idea. Actually, the song represents the idea of having a party with alcoholic drinks and behaving in a wild and crazy way. Therefore, listeners should understand that Satanism in the text is symbolic and does not encourage to kill anyone.

OCCULT AND SATANIC SYMBOLS AS A WAY TO ATTRACT THE LISTENERS

Heavy metal style is characterized by having its personal theology, behavioral patterns, and iconography which aims to attract the

audience. Satanic references in heavy metal music aim to mock Christians, by showing that while Christians sing in the church, go to Sunday school and try to hide from darkness behind religion, the heavy metal musicians and fans are not afraid of the darkness. Instead, they sing about dark and depressing issues, and have their own ritual of headbanging on the concerts instead of singing in the church.

However, heavy metal genre is not Satanic. It is only a way to attract fans by shocking them with Satanic references. Actually, heavy metal music is not about worshiping of the devil. The heavy metal music as music of other genres stands for rock and roll, drugs and sex. However, in a more powerful and heavy way compared to other genres. The main aim of heavy metal as any other musical genre is to entertain its listeners. Therefore, heavy metal musicians achieve their goal through provocation and extremity. By referring to Satan and other dark themes, heavy metal musicians entertain people, and bring something new and colorful into the lives of their fans. They give their audience a chance to enjoy the beauty of the darkness. Besides, not all heavy metal bands refer to Satan in their songs. For example, lyrics of the songs of Metallica are about different themes, such as failure, relationship, and life, but there are no lyrics about Satan.

DIFFERENCES IN REFERRING TO SATAN IN HEAVY METAL SONGS

Heavy metal bands refer to Satan in diverse ways and because of different reasons. Some of the heavy metal musicians truly are Satanists. They worship Satan in the texts of their songs. For

instance, there are such satanic bands as EHC, Morbid Angel, Marduk, Behemoth, Dark Funeral, Deicide, and Mayhem. Apart from that, members of such bands openly claim that they are Satanists, they praise Satan and practice satanic rituals. For instance, there is Gorgoroth, an openly satanic black metal band from Norway. The band is famous for having heads of dead sheep on stage at the concerts, and an inverted cross. Moreover, in 1992, several bands in Norway organized a satanic union, and burnt a couple of churches in Oslo area. Later, in 1993, a member of this union, Varg Vikernes, a bassist of the band Mayhem, killed a guitarist of the same band.

However, members of majority of heavy metal bands are not satanic and have never been satanic. They also have never killed anybody, never openly claimed that they were followers of the Satan, and never encouraged anyone to worship devil. Some bands, such as Exodus, mention Satan in their songs. However, they do this only with an intention to create intriguing and shocking songs which will bring them fame. It is so, because all or at least some of the members of the band are Christians or belong to other religions, but are not Satanists. For instance, in 2016, Tony Iommy, guitarist of Black Sabbath, indicated that he is a Catholic, while David Draiman, singer of the band Disturbed, stated that he is a deist.

Some heavy metal bands do not refer to Satan in their songs, but instead they use satanic symbols and pentagram in their album art, logo, or merchandise. Megadeth and Iron Maiden belong to such bands. For some heavy metal bands Satan is the main subject of the songs. However, their music is still not satanic. It is so, because they describe Satan in the context of the darkness, and their music is

mostly about evil forces. For instance, bands Venom and Onslaught sing about Satan but do not encourage people to become Satanists.

Also, there are bands that describe Satan as a negative figure in their songs. The claim that he should be blamed for deaths and wars and should be destroyed. For example, Megadeth, is not satanic, but they have a song about Satan, titled 'Prince of Darkness'. However, in the song the Satan is described in a negative way, and he is blamed for deaths of innocent people. Hirax and Stryper belong to such bands. The fact that bands sing about Satan often means that they are afraid of the dark side, they acknowledge that Satan is dangerous and search for the way to defeat him. Therefore, most heavy metal music is not satanic, and its message is simply misunderstood.

Conclusion

Many heavy metal bands sing about Satan in their songs, therefore, heavy metal is often perceived as satanic music. However, the main aim of any genre of music is to entertain people. Therefore, musicians use everything they can, even Satanic symbols to provoke people, and gain their attention. Even though heavy metal music often refers to Satan, it is mainly not satanic but simply misunderstood because Satan is frequently referred to as a negative figure. Moreover, some of the musicians who play heavy metal state that they are Christians, while some indicate that they are of other religious belief, which is also not related to Satanism. There are some heavy metal musicians who are truly satanic. However, heavy metal music should not be considered satanic only because several bands are satanic. There are

Satanists in every genre of music, even in pop music, but because some specific musicians worship Satan it does not mean that the whole genre is satanic.