

# BLUSTER WORLDWIDE

## 50 YEARS OF HEAVY METAL MUSIC

### FOREWORD

Let us assume that the release of all metal albums cease globally. That's it. End of story. No more new albums with extreme music will ever be available ever again. No more releases. At the same time, all band members all over the world stop playing this kind of music and find other jobs or occupations. All relevant websites on the Internet go down and all publications with relating subjects stop. Record companies are closed down and producers deal with other music genres. As a matter of fact, only albums released since 1970 until today are available.

If this book is in the hands of a fanatic opponent of this kind of music, he will certainly have a slight grin on his face right now, since he probably have also thought a similar scenario himself lots of times.

I am sorry, pal and opponent, even if such an unrealistic scenario ever came true, the cultural tradition that this music has left behind is already so great, that it cannot be easily comprehended or recorded. With such a broad tradition, as a matter of fact, if some avid fans would wanted to listen to all albums that have been released, they would realize, with regret, that even if they dedicated their whole life to such a venture, they would not manage to listen to more than 5% of all of them!

Simple math would suffice, as a matter of fact: The six biggest European countries (Russia, Germany, France, England, Italy and Spain) have about 30.000 metal bands in total. Provided that each one has produced music of a total duration of two hours (of course, there are bands with dozens of hours of recorded music, but let's keep two hours for the sake of the operation), then someone needs 60,000 hours to listen to them, or 2,500 days or 6,84 years! And all this, provided that he will never sleep and listen 24/7. If he listens for just 8 hours per day, the duration is automatically tripled and he will need almost twenty years. And this is just for listening to all bands album and not delve into one of them.

In order to avoid lapsing into dozens of mathematical operations (and as I calculated it at some point out of curiosity!), let's just say that listening to all European bands is impossible during an average lifetime, unless the life expectancy increases in the future to far above 100 years. Then, it may be a low chance, but it will not be certain, since the number of bands will have grown as well!

The funny (and bizarre) thing is that above we only referred to just one continent. And not even the biggest one! To be exact, Europe is not even in the top 3. Of course, heavy metal exists in other continents and countries as well, as we will investigate in upcoming sections of the book.

Heavy metal is a living organism with an incessant flow of ideas and information. Technological advances have obviously contributed to the intensification of this flow, but regardless, its growth is impressive, even long before the advent of the Internet in our lives. It is a music genre that has pushed all sounds detectable by humans to unprecedented levels. And once it achieved that, it pushed them even further. The absurd part is that all this happened – almost on a permanent basis – without any support by the media, and far from the public eye.

In order to grasp the “underground” character of this music genre, it is sufficient to mention a typical example: Metallica (one of the greatest bands of all times), tenaciously refused to film any video clip until their fourth album (!) because they considered it a sell-off! It is a band whose fourth album (which the video-clip “One” came from), sold 8 million copies solely in the US, while the next album has gone platinum 16 times!- and this in times when the threshold for platinum was 1.000.000 sales. Nevertheless, almost ten years would pass in their career, so that a video was created for this song. If you consider ten years is a little time, note that today video-clips are launched even before the release of the first song of a band debut album.

This book does not intend to write the history of heavy metal AGAIN. Apart from the fact that there is no good reason to reiterate stuff that has been told a hundred times – those interested may learn everything with one-two clicks on the Internet. Besides, the present book is addressed at music fans, so you most probably already know that Black Sabbath are to blame for everything, and that Iron Maiden and Metallica are the biggest metal bands of all times. If you are not aware of them, they probably gave you the wrong book at the bookstore and for the last couple of minutes, you have been trying to understand what heavy metal means. On the contrary, if you are familiar with the term you may continue reading!

But even if you aren't, little does it matter. The reason for that is that you will find stories and traits of this music genre that will spark your interest. Even if you have no relation with the field, you will find out that it is a convoluted music genre with amazing short and long stories.

The attempt of this book is the search for 50 important events and features (equal to the age of heavy metal, that is), which marked this music genre, as well as their ensuing impact on culture. They are not necessarily the most important ones, but they are definitely incidents and features of cultural value that had a great influence on heavy metal and society, and either expanded metal music, or “marked” it.

Of course, many of you will not agree with the selection (I hope not all of you and mainly not with all of them!), as this is clearly a matter of taste. Someone may regard, for example, the release of “Number of the Beast” by Iron Maiden as probably the greatest event in these 50 years, but this book is not about choosing the best heavy or black/death metal album releases of all times, but rather exploring their impact.

Besides, as mentioned above, everything regarding all subgenres of heavy music is just a click away on the Internet. You will however find in the book a suggested discography, which on a purely subjective basis is a must for whoever is interested in exploring this music genre.

The scrapbook functions basically as a guide for those who are interested in learning what this strange music genre is. You may give it as a gift to your mother (although I’m not entirely sure about that) or just read it, and you may find out some facts you might didn’t know.

One of my favorite habits is to seek underground bands from all over the world. Until today, I am still excited to find out an interesting band from Singapore or Vietnam, for example.

Nevertheless, the continuous search in order to write this book has led me to places and areas where I could not even think that metal existed. After 27 years of dealing with this musical genre, I don’t cease to be amazed at its opportunities. The millions of people constituting this community try to do their bit in order to expand it further. Its achievements during the first half century of its lifetime are unconceivable. This statement acquires even more value, considering its public perception.

Apart from the texts in the 50 sections of the book, you will also find special drawings for every section.

The technique used for the drawings is called *dot drawing* and I would not recommend it to anybody that may consider using it! It requires a great deal of patience, since the dot trace varies depending on its use: If it is used for shading, it needs thick areas with dots and gradient thinning-out. If, however, you want details (eyes, nose, mouth, hands), then utmost caution is required, since a single dot may yield a totally different result. There are thousands of dots on every page. Some pages have even more. Ok, I’ve got to admit it: It is not so normal to draw like that. Strangely enough, though, it is psychotherapeutic to see the dots forming gradually a face or the individual features of a person. However, I may not be the most ideal person to plead in favor of

the 7-8 hours required for each drawing to be completed! So many hours are required just for pencil and ink. Because after that, 5-6 more hours of digital processing are required. Sometimes even more.

Some drawings or parts of drawings pushed me to the verge of desperation. Varg Vikernes, for instance. I could not draw him by any means! I had tried many times and I had thrown away dozens of A4 pages before getting at the drawing that you will find in the respective section. The same happened with tens of circles that I drew one by one, depicting the audience that listens to the concert, in the drawing for big festivals.

The analysis of photos in individual areas with dots is also necessary before starting to draw them. I usually pick high resolution photos (unless it is about band photos of past decades), so that their characteristics are discernible, in order to be able to convert them to dot drawings.

A great artist that partly uses this technique (among all others) is John Dyer Baizley, well known for the amazing album cover art he has created from time to time, for his own band (Baroness), as well as other bands, such as Kvelertak.

Here are the sections of the book with a short description for each one.

- 1) **WHEN IT ALL STARTED (BLACK SABBATH)** – How gloomy Birmingham and the finger accident of the Black Sabbath founding member, Tony Iommi, changed music forever.
- 2) **CREATION OF MUSIC SUBGENRES** – The hundreds of heavy metal subcategories are probably the widest range of choices in music globally. The section deals with diversity of music subgenres and then proceeds with their presentation.
- 3) **CLASSIC GENRES (HEAVY, POWER, DOOM)** – Detailed analysis and impact on society, in a time when the world cannot accept the particularity of extreme music.
- 4) **EXTREME MUSIC (THRASH, DEATH, BLACK)** – The most extreme expressions of heavy metal sound and their origins.
- 5) **DRONE DOOM, GRINDCORE, MATHCORE, POST METAL** – Ground-breaking, innovative and super-extreme metal subgenres.
- 6) **BLACK METAL** – Burnt down churches, provocative photoshoots, upside-down crosses, pentagrams and probably the genre that received the greatest outcry.
- 7) **THE EFFECT OF ARTWORK** - Undoubtedly the most important chapter for the opponents of this music. Provocative, banned, profane album cover art, by artists such as R. Gigger, D. Riggs or Dan Seagrave.
- 8) **ASSASSINATIONS, SUICIDES** – Rock music has been accused many times for pushing young people to death. Heavy metal could not be ab-

sent from this category. We will consider the most famous case (Marilyn Manson).

- 9) **DEATH OF GREAT MUSICIANS** - CLIFF BURTON, CHUCK SCHULDINER, LEMMY. Reference to the deaths of great metal musicians and their impact.
- 10) **DIMEBAG DARELL** – The assassination of the guitarist of Pantera on stage and the great effect it had on concerts internationally.
- 11) **LYRICS** – An integral and highly important part of music. Great lyrics [Real eyes, realize, real lies, A.I.D.S. (Alone In Death Shadow) and others] and numerous concepts deriving from almost any domain (politics, religion, family, history, mythology etc.).
- 12) **VARG VIKERNES** – The story of Varg Vigernes, the assassination, the conviction, life in prison and the big effect on Norwegian black metal.
- 13) **SATANISM** – Heavy metal is the music genre that has been accused of almost everything, mainly of satanic practices and proselytism. Typical examples, as well as a different approach to the subject.
- 14) **NAZISM, EXTREMIST VIEWS** - N.S.B.M, W.P. and R.A.B.M.
- 15) **TRADITIONAL FORCES OF HEAVY METAL AND HEAVY METAL IN BIG COUNTRIES** – The big countries where the first metal bands started to emerge and the scenes started to take form.
- 16) **METAL IN REMOTE AREAS** – Metal does not only exist in Europe but also in the US, as well as in Australia, the Faroe islands and almost elsewhere.
- 17) **ASIA (NOT MUSLIM STATES)** – Japan, China and the rest of Asian countries.
- 18) **ARABIC (MUSLIM) STATES** – There are metal bands even in Muslim states, whatever that may ensue.
- 19) **AFRICA** – Hardcore sounds in the African continent.
- 20) **TAPE TRADING** – Probably the most important reason this music genre still exists to this day.
- 21) **PRESS, FANZINE, BOOKS** – Magazines, independent publications and books on the subject.
- 22) **VIDEO** – Small and big productions, cult videos from past decades.
- 23) **BIG FESTIVALS** – Festivals that change spatially the areas where they take place.
- 24) **SMALL FESTIVALS** – Concerts for not so popular subgenres.
- 25) **BIZARRE FESTIVALS** – Festivals that take place at the most unlikely locations.

- 26) **CONCERTS** – Different scales and the show accompanying some bands.
- 27) **RANDY BLYTHE** – The story of the vocalist of Lamb of God that changed his life in a few seconds.
- 28) **POP KAI MAINSTREAM METAL BANDS THAT INFLUENCED HEAVY METAL** – Linkin Park, Avril Lavigne and other bands with great influence on heavy metal.
- 29) **PROVOCATIVE ALBUMS, NAMES, CD COVER ART AND BANS** – Bans and heavy metal: Two interconnected terms.
- 30) **DRUGS AND ABUSE** – Some stories flirting with the realms fantasy.
- 31) **WOMEN & HEAVY METAL** – An important section, since in a field where males were predominant, the invasion of women has resulted in the shift of public perception about the field and the music genre.
- 32) **HEAVY METAL SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES** – They exist and they attract quite a lot students!
- 33) **FAR-FETCHED (AND SOMETIMES FUNNY) STORIES** – Grandmas playing grindcore music, metal for kids etc.
- 34) **INFLUENCE ON OTHER DOMAINS** – The foreign policy of Norway is totally aligned with black metal, since it is regarded the second top export product. Moreover, metal fans have been involved with politics, investing on black metal (the mayor of Sofia, the prime minister of Indonesia, members of parliaments etc.).
- 35) **STYLISTIC CHALLENGES** – Diversity in music had matching appearances as a natural consequence. Sometimes provocative, sometimes more typical, but almost always remarkable.
- 36) **DO IT YOURSELF** – Hundreds of bands release personal works exclusively at their own expense. DIY productions are a huge chapter for extreme music, since it is practically impossible for all bands to have contract with some record label. A large part of the expenses goes to rehearsals, production, album cover art, layout, CD copies and of course the necessary equipment.
- 37) **CINEMA** - There are a few movies about heavy metal. Of course, there are numerous references in many movies (e.g. Cannibal Corpse/Ace Ventura). There are also quite many biographical movies of bands, as well as documentaries.
- 38) **SPECIAL MUSIC ORIENTATIONS** – Extreme music has given rise to experimentation that led to incredible results. We shall look into some of the most notable ones.
- 39) **ARTS THAT HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED OR HAVE INFLUENCED HEAVY METAL** – Apart from music that has changed radically, there are

also many arts that have been influenced by heavy metal, such as painting.

- 40) **RECORDS AND NUMBERS** – 1 second or 11 hour songs and other records.
- 41) **THE IMPACT OF METAL ON PRE-ADOLESCENCE /ADOLESCENCE**  
– Even though as a musical movement heavy metal has caused great backlash from parents, studies have shown that listening to heavy metal at a young age helps young people mentally.
- 42) **CHRISTIAN METAL BANDS** – Everything that applies to black metal... up side down.
- 43) **COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS AND ODD OBJECTS** – The physical copy cannot be replaced by an MP3 file, so metal fans still buy discs.
- 44) **METAL LABELS**– The distribution of this music genre was carried out almost always by its fans. Soon, some of them established companies that promoted underground music all over the world.
- 45) **GREEK SCENE** – Greece –completely at odds with its size– has one of the more impressive scenes globally, and of course the biggest Greek band of all times (in all music genres), Rotting Christ.
- 46) **INCONGRUOUS COOPERATIONS** – There are bands that tried to combine heterogeneous music genres and this chapter is dedicated to such attempts.
- 47) **DEPENDENCE ON MUSIC AND ADDICTION OF COLLECTORS** – Many times, music addiction may go over the top. The continuous search for a rare disc results in spending huge amounts of money only for an EP on vinyl, or a T-shirt of a tour. We will investigate the most extreme ones.
- 48) **STRANGE SUBCATEGORIES/BIZARRE BANDS** – There are subcategories that are not widespread, even among the fans of this music.
- 49) **HEAVY METAL IN MAINSTREAM EVENTS** – Heavy metal has not been always underground. There are quite many performances of bands at music awards, as well as contests, such as Eurovision. We will refer so some of the most outstanding cases, as well as their impact.
- 50) **ROCKSTARS** – There are several widely known musicians, such as the vocalists of Metallica or Iron Maiden.