

**Informal interview with subcultural outsider who has had some experience with it - 24/02/05**

**Basics**

Age: 20

Sex: Male

Do you regularly buy OR read a music magazine (yes / no): Yes, Kerrang!

**Questions**

1. *Do you remember kids who were into heavy metal at your high school / college, how did you feel about them, i.e. outsiders, rebels etc?*

Basically, there weren't any real 'alternative kids' in my year, or at least it wasn't apparent. I only knew one metal fan, and he could probably have been described as a rebel/outsider of sorts. He had weirdly long (v. messy) hair, always stank of weed and was told off by our German teacher for scrawling Swastikas all over his exercise book. The teachers didn't like him and he became more alienated from his friends as he got more into drugs and illegal 'things'. It was only a sixth form that people started wearing Deftones bags, piercing their eyebrows, hair dying – it was still pretty tame though, hardly rebellious. People didn't seem to be bothered about forging their own identities basically (most kids in my year liked r 'n' b, Coolio etc).

The year below were different however, they seemed a lot more sorted. Before they arrived @ sixth form they already had dreads, piercings, were in bands, liked Nirvana etc etc.

2. *Do you feel, looking at the heavy metal subculture from an outsider perspective, that it is rebellious / deviant?*

I've always seen it as conformity masquerading as deviance – all these kids with the same hooded tops, haircuts, and Deftones backpacks. They're conforming to/belonging to another group (albeit a smaller one). From the outsider perspective, I think metal is associated with a teenage thing; teen angst – hating yourself, hating your body, hating teachers or 'authority', smoking weed. That's the stereotype that puts a lot of 'clean-cut' people off. It can be called 'deviant' or 'rebellious', but in a really contrived way. The band t-shirts may as well have "I'm really deviant and rebellious" written on them. "...and middle class."

Metal seems to inspire to polar opposite reactions. People either take the piss or they [really, the media] are scared. People laughed at Slayer when they used to spray blood over each other onstage in the eighties, people laugh at Slipknot and Manson. Yet the same qualities that generate ridicule seem to make metal a scapegoat when a teenager Manson fan kills another teenager.

3. *Have you been to a heavy metal concert before, if so can you briefly recount the experience, what did you think of the behaviour of the crowd etc...*

There was a large mosh pit at the front, exclusively male. I was stood on the edge – but later told that this is the worst place to stand, unless you want to get elbowed in the face. At first it looked like everyone was trying to beat the shit out of each other – it was one of the most violent things I have ever seen. People seemed to get annoyed at each other, but nothing sparked off – it was ‘violent’ but everyone seemed to know that a line was drawn. Someone told me afterwards “everyone looks out for each other in the pit,” which seemed fair enough, but almost made no sense. A mosh pit seems to be an experience in itself, the music almost seemed like backing music – with dance crowds, for instance, you can see the crowd reacting to sounds or rhythms in the music. Maybe metallers don’t have a good sense of rhythm. A metal singer I spoke to recently said mosh pits are all about kids “expressing themselves” so I reckon it’s a chemical/physical thing, pure adrenalin – releasing you’re aggression in a controlled environment before everyone goes back to being cool with one another.

There is one important point though. At a metal club recently a friend of mine, a big guy, was letting loose and ‘expressing himself’ at a metal night, knocking a girl out with his fist in the process. He collapsed next to me, all sweat and adrenalin, grinning and more worried about whether he’d gotten away with it – he didn’t stick around to see if the girl was okay. He told me what had happened. ‘Shit,’ I thought, ‘If you’re going to risk breaking a girl’s nose, you could at least do it to good music.’

4. *Do you believe that substance abuse, such as alcohol and soft drugs, are rife within the heavy metal / alternative music subculture?*

Appendix C – Informal interview, participant A

I've been told that metallers do a lot of pills. Otherwise, weed is probably the main decadence of choice. I see most metallers as being about 16, still at college, smoking weed to be rebellious while watching Jackass. Otherwise, I don't think most metallers do anything heavily. For the young kids it just seems to be a way to release anger or testosterone. An alternative to wanking. So I associate metal (today) as being relatively straight-edge and metal (yesteryear) being Lemmy and Ozzy Osbourne vomiting all over each other.

5. *Do you think Heavy Metal as a subculture and subcultures associated with it, such as punk rock, are more rebellious than other music orientated subcultures? For instance, dance music.*

Metal is different to dance music because it wants to be deviant. Dance music is more 'inclusive' (though no less elitist, probably). It's been said that punk rock was about 'uglifying' yourself (punk girls adopting spiky hairdos, covering themselves with lipstick) and it's probably the same with metallers and goths. They 'uglify' themselves and that generates fear/dislike. I don't think liking heavy music in itself is rebellious in itself, metal isn't the loudest or heaviest music anymore and hasn't been for a while – at least, the stuff that most metal kids seem to listen to. And I don't think just listening to a certain type of music or dressing a certain way is that rebellious anymore, unless you wear the stuff to a job interview or in the school playground; people are too used to youth culture and will sooner ridicule or stereotype it than be 'afraid' of it. It depends what your idea of rebellious is. Old ladies were frightened of punks in the early '80s because their clothes connoted a threat of violence – punks were known for violence. Today, I think metallers are more associated with being miserable or self-harming. But then again, as I said, the media like it as scapegoat so they must be doing something right.