The Oxford Handbook of Protest Music
(In Progress)
Noriko Manabe (ed.), Eric Drott (ed.)
https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190653866.001.0001
Published: 23 January 2025 - **Online ISBN:** 9780190653897 **Print ISBN:** 9780190653866

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CHAPTER

Is Heavy Metal Protest Music?

Jeremy Wallach, Esther Clinton

https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190653866.013.0028
Published: 24 June 2025

Abstract

A genre whose very existence often sparks controversy, heavy metal has nonetheless typically been excluded from discussions of protest music. This is unsurprising, since it is often claimed that metal is "apolitical" and scholars often dismiss it as politically inert or reactionary. However, the emergence of global metal studies has led to increased awareness of the profound dedication of metal's vast worldwide fanbase and the threat that metal has represented to all manner of totalitarian regimes. Analyses of the American band Body Count, the folk metal genre, and the Indonesian metal community illustrate how heavy metal's relationship to musical protest is, in fact, complex. Furthermore, investigating whether metal should or should not be considered a protest genre reveals important insights into metal culture and musical protest, which in turn sheds light on the relationship between popular music and politics.

Keywords: protest, heavy metal, folk metal, Body Count, global metal, multisubjectivity

Subject: Applied Music, Music

Series: Oxford Handbooks

Collection: Oxford Handbooks Online

Introduction: Loud and Proud

Is heavy metal protest music? Certainly, some people will protest its inclusion in this volume. The music has selective appeal, its fans value acceptance within their community over political action, and they tend not to seek converts from outside the fanbase. Metal is a genre whose very existence tends to spark controversy in both local music scenes and the academy (Epp 2017). This is regrettable because investigating why metal should or should *not* be considered a protest genre reveals important insights about metal culture and musical protest, which is to say, about the relation between music and politics.

But first, if fans are so important in metal, who makes up its contemporary audience? The demographics of metal music fans are a subject of debate. Many published scholarly accounts of the music confidently assert

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that the performers and audience of metal music are overwhelmingly white, male, straight, and blue-collar. This generalization is usually based on data collected in Europe or the American Midwest in the 1980s or 1990s. In fact, comprehensive, up-to-date, and reliable demographic data are hard to find. There is no shortage, however, of anecdotal evidence and scholarly studies that attest to a conspicuous diversification of the metal audience in the twenty-first century. This includes greater visibility of women in scenes across the world, as well as people of color in the American East and West Coasts and the American Southwest. The most dramatic shift of the last three decades has been growth in the number of middle-class fans in Asian, Latin American, and African countries, which has considerably expanded the ranks of the MOC (metalheads of color) army, and in a less ethnocentric world, might refute the oft-repeated charge of inherent racial prejudice in metal (Clinton and Wallach 2015).

The focus on Anglo-American heavy metal, to the exclusion of metal from the rest of the world, is part of the reason heavy metal has been overlooked in discussions of protest music. This is unsurprising, since North American and Western European metal fans and musicians often describe metal as apolitical, while music scholars who do not specialize in metal frequently dismiss it as politically inert or reactionary. a view often influenced by pejorative and outdated caricatures of the genre. Fortunately, a sizable body of scholarship on heavy metal now exists, drawing on the actual cultural practices of heavy metal fans and musicians worldwide, rather than on outside observers' ungrounded interpretations.[1] This chapter draws on that literature, which has expanded enormously in the last decade. We have found that heavy metal's relationship to musical protest is complex. In the United States, the metal audience is politically diverse, including millions of working-class white fans in the American heartland (Berger 1999), Native Americans in the Southwest (Thibodeau 2014), and Latinos in the New York metropolitan area (Jocson-Singh 2016 , 69–70; Young 2017). Thus, the music is politically polysemic. In other parts of the world, particularly in Latin America and Asia, fans are largely middle-class and many hold politically progressive views. In this chapter, we discuss three brief case studies—the California band Body Count, the global rise of folk metal, and the Indonesian metal scene—to illustrate the myriad ways in which metal, politics, and protest have intertwined over the past three decades. However, we must first consider the issue of musical protest further.

What Is Protest Music?

Writing about protest music is challenging, due to the multiple ways in which it can be construed. We can perhaps claim that protest songs make, or at least try to make, important interventions in social life (Manabe 2017). When we were graduate students in the 1990s, the phrase "the personal is political" was widespread, particularly among feminists. Looking back, it seems to us that this phrase implies (among other things) that some individuals' participation in art is itself political, as it allows marginalized voices to speak. This broad definition of "political" is particularly important to women, LGBTQ+, racial minorities, and so on, whose participation in the public sphere is actively discouraged. Metal came of age in the 1970s and 1980s, during which a succession of global economic recessions, followed by intensified automation and outsourcing, marginalized working-class white men (Berger 1999). Given that metal's early performers and audiences, especially in the United States and England, were primarily working-class white males, perhaps metal music fits this broad definition of "political." In fact, Weinstein (2014a) argues that, from its inception in the grim industrial city of Birmingham, England, heavy metal's dark imagery captured the social alienation experienced by this class, thus forging an oppositional identity for its audience.

Even leaving aside the considerable ambiguity in defining the word "political," we are left with the question of how deeply and in what way protest music is *connected* to the political.[2] If to qualify as protest music, a song must express political intent in its lyrics, be understood as such by activists, and routinely appear in politically active settings—in other words, if we define protest music very narrowly—then few metal songs qualify. If,

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however, we define protest music more broadly, to include any lyrical protest against established authority, then nearly all metal songs qualify.

Metal is, after all, an oppositional music, which is part of the reason that metal fans and bands revel in transgressive sounds, symbols, clothing, and often behaviors (Kahn-Harris 2007). For example, metal frequently traffics in anti-Christian symbols, including inverted crosses, pentagrams, and images of devils and demons. Such anti-religious iconography is not limited to a Christian context. For example, the all-female Turkish group, the Pigskins, chose a moniker that was guaranteed to offend Muslim citizens (Hecker 2012). Metal also includes strong antiwar statements, such as in Black Sabbath's song "War Pigs" (1970) or Metallica's "Disposable Heroes" (1986), and excoriates political corruption, as in Metallica's "Leper Messiah" (1986) or the Indonesian band Burgerkill's "House of Greed" (2011; see Wallach 2015). It seems to us that if we define all oppositional music as protest music, most rock songs would qualify and the category would become too broad to be useful.

Scholars usually, though rarely explicitly, apply the term "protest music" to music that celebrates progressive and/or radical leftist politics, although this practice has been criticized lately (Phillipov 2006, 387; Epp 2017). The present volume tries to counter this. The majority of political heavy metal lyrics (particularly if one discounts hard rock bands such as AC/DC or Van Halen from heavy metal, as most metalheads do) conveys a progressive or liberal point of view, from the antiracism of Anthrax's "Keep It in the Family" (1990) and Sepultura's "Territory" (1993) to Napalm Death's radical leftism and Chthonic's antitotalitarianism. We do not deny the existence of reactionary and fascist metal music, as described by Hagen (2011), Hochhauser (2011), and Olson (2013). However, we maintain that scholars often exaggerate the degree of acceptance of these views among most metalheads (Clinton and Wallach 2015). The existence of right-wing extremist metal is analogous to the flirtation of punk music with far-right ideologies (Duncombe and Tremblay 2011; Phillipov 2012) but has attracted more scholarly attention. There are right-wing extremist and racist elements in folk, EDM, and even hip-hop scenes (Pieslak 2015; Thomas 2016; Teitelbaum this volume). Somehow, these elements do not render their entire respective genres suspect.

"I Abstain from This Mundane Apathy": Metal and Political Ambivalence

Since its emergence over fifty-five years ago, heavy metal has been decried by detractors convinced that it is part of a worldwide Satanic conspiracy (LeVine 2009a; LeVine 2009b; Hecker 2012; Olson 2017); derided by liberal baby boomers, convinced it is inferior to the vaunted rock music of the 1960s; and attacked by punks, convinced of its politically regressive nature. While the punk critique of metal is based on an understandable impatience with the music's concessions to the commercial marketplace and seeming lack of explicit social messaging, it does not acknowledge the many examples of social and political critique in heavy metal song texts (Epp 2017), such as Napalm Death's "I Abstain" (1992), quoted in the subtitle above.[3] Nor do such criticisms consider the political significance of community solidarity and sociality in heavy metal culture (Clinton and Wallach 2016; Varas-Díaz and Scott 2016; Elovaara and Bardine 2017) or the centrality of oppositional consciousness to metal as it has been taken up by musicians and fans from Angola to Armenia to Argentina, discussed in the second half of this chapter.

Specific features of heavy metal culture militate against heavy metal compositions becoming successful protest songs. Even the most politicized heavy metal groups, such as grindcore veterans Napalm Death (Riches 2016), tend to conclude their political rants with the admonishment to, "Think for yourself!" This may be a common refrain of protest singers, but within the metal scene, independence of thought is a primary article of faith. Putting aside the paradoxical nature of being commanded to think for oneself, this exhortation invites fans to come to their own conclusions rather than advance in lockstep, and therefore acknowledges the

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accommodation of differences of opinion within the heavy metal community; that is, political differences do not threaten solidarity, as metal's ethos of inclusiveness—"unity in disparity" (Elovaara and Bardine 2017)—ultimately carries the day. Furthermore, as will be discussed, metal's discourse of power does not lend itself easily to a one-sided narrative of struggle against an external foe (Wallach and Clinton 2017). There is one further obstacle to metal becoming an anthem for the barricades: a sonic one. Contemporary metal songs are loud, are musically complex, embrace dissonance, and generally lack singable melodies, danceable rhythms, and decipherable lyrics.

You Like *What* Kind of Music? Maligning Metal

As rock music becomes less mainstream, many, especially younger, fans and scholars have come to see punk and metal as connected genres (Waksman 2009). In many ways, this makes sense: both forms are often loud and discordant, and therefore perceived as "angry" (and masculine); both arose as working-class musics in the early 1970s; and many newer music genres (hardcore, grindcore, grunge, etc.) combine metal and punk. However, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, fans and rock critics saw the two musics as opposed, often to metal's disadvantage. Punk was seen as "authentic" and "political" while metal was seen as overly complex sonically and oppositional rather than political (unlike punk's perceived, and often real, progressive political bent).[4] Scholars and activists have accepted this rhetoric, and this acceptance continues, only occasionally questioned, in popular music studies. Punk's contempt for heavy metal music is often the result of metal's association with consumer capitalism and mass marketing. Punks see metal as having "sold out," or as music that evolved from, rather than reacted against, the arena rock of the 1970s, and thus never had integrity to begin with.

Metal also had, and continues to have, another public relations problem. The moral panic about objectionable music in the United States during the 1980s, led by the Parent Music Resource Center (PMRC), focused more on metal music than any other genre due to sex, violence, and images of the occult.[5] Later, in the early 1990s, when the second wave of black metal arose, a few of its Norwegian proponents committed serious crimes, specifically murder and the arson of traditional stave churches.[6] Varg Vikernes of Burzum and several others were imprisoned; other scene members ended up dead. The two moral panics over 1980s heavy metal and 1990s black metal have entered metalhead lore, though their significance remains contested. We would argue, however, that the music's cultural logic explains heavy metal's peculiar relationship to social protest more than metal's somewhat overstated propensity for moral degeneracy.

Structural Explanations for Metal's Political Ambiguity

The wide range of political positions held by metal fans and the unwillingness of metal artists to offend consumers is often put forward as the explanation for its nonpolitical character.[7] Some writers have instead suggested that metal possesses a "tragic" sensibility (DeAnna 2008) that discourages the endorsement of political solutions to social problems. Morris (2014, 2015) suggests that extreme metal operates much like Adorno's negative dialectic; therefore, no uplifting resolution is possible, by virtue of the functional imperative of the negating operation.

In a previous work we developed a specific account of power in heavy metal composition that seems relevant here. The theory of metal and multisubjectivity, operative across all subgenres, represents power as multifaceted (Wallach and Clinton 2017). In other words, metal looks at power and considers both its allure and its horrors when misused. The perspectives of those who wield power and those victimized by it are both presented, often within the same song.[8] We associate metal's multisubjectivity with the medial social position of many, perhaps most, metalheads;[9] such an ambivalent, nuanced relationship to the power structure works

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against unambiguous social protest. This may be one reason that metal is so rarely considered protest music, at least by a narrow definition of the term. That is, while metal music regularly engages with the political, and its messages have important implications for collective action, metal songs do not generally protest on behalf of an oppressed against an oppressor, because multiple viewpoints are represented in conventional metal narratives. Power in this view is thus not an external party to be petitioned so that it is justly exercised, but an ability to exert force possessed by all sides, inherently corrupting.[10] And herein, perhaps, lies a *kind* of "protest": *no one*, including the metal listener, is immune from power's corruption. Despite these structural logics, metal music has been politically salient, even in its places of origin, England and the United States. In those places, metal's multisubjectivity has been employed to make complex political statements and convey multiple facets of political issues.

"We're Here, We Ain't Goin' Nowhere": Body Count and Ice-T

One of the best-known metal bands to specialize in topical political songs in the United States is Body Count, an all-Black group founded in 1991 by rapper Ice-T and his high school friend, guitarist Ernie C. [11] Ice-T had heard newscasters refer to the victims in South Central Los Angeles as a "body count," so he named his metal band Body Count to point out the term's trivialization of Black lives. The media's frequent dismissal of Black lives and deaths is referenced in songs throughout their corpus, including "Wanna Be a Gangsta" (2014) from *Manslaughter*, which opens with a recording of a television newswoman saying, "Warning: What you are about to see is a bit graphic." Opening with the line "So you wanna be a gangsta," this song references Too Short's "So You Want to Be a Gangster" (1992) from the album, *Shorty the Pimp*. Other examples of Ice-T signifyin' by quoting rap lyrics in Body Count songs include "Cop Killer" (1992), which quotes N.W.A.'s "Fuck tha Police" (1988), and "Black Hoodie" (2017), which quotes KRS-One's "Sound of Da Police" (2000). These references serve as tributes to some of the most significant political hip-hop songs from the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In 1992, the band released its debut album *Cop Killer*; the title track was so controversial that it was ultimately pulled from the album (Shank 1996, 2001). The song is a revenge fantasy in retaliation for the brutal treatment of African Americans at the hands of the Los Angeles Police Department, specifically citing the 1992 Rodney King beating (Web Fig. 1). "Cop Killer" is not a rap song, although it continues to be misidentified as such, due to the band members' races and Ice-T's renown as a rapper. The song is sung, not rapped, and the accompaniment features heavily distorted guitars and riffs that lie somewhere between metal and punk.

Ice-T generally attributes his use of heavy metal to his own enthusiasm for the music and his desire to form a band with his friend, guitarist Ernie C. However, there is clearly a political intention behind this project as well —the desire to construct a coalition between metalheads and rap fans, exemplified by "Out in the Parking Lot," Ice-T's spoken introduction to the song "Cop Killer." In it, he calls out the Los Angeles Police Department and suggests that long-haired metal fans can also be the victims of police brutality (Wallach's own experience suggests they can and did). While Body Count is certainly the most famous West Coast African American metal band, it is not alone. For example, Kevin Fellezs (2014) discusses Stone Vengeance, an all-Black group from the San Francisco Bay Area that has persisted since the 1980s despite daunting obstacles and discrimination by the recording industry. Fellezs suggests that African American metal bands would have been far more common if those barriers hadn't existed.

Like many metal bands from the late twentieth century, Body Count released strong albums in the 2010s after a hiatus in the 1990s and early 2000s. *Manslaughter* (2014) features several songs addressing political issues such as race and poverty, one notable example being the song "Enter the Dark Side." After a spoken introduction in which Ice-T says that he didn't grow up with money and that he came from "the dark side," the song opens with the words, "The ghetto's not Black, the ghetto is poor." It goes on to say, addressing an imaginary, middle-class person, "you never broke a law, hungry you fucking might." The tempo and intensity of these lines

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strongly emphasizes the second part ("the ghetto is poor" and "hungry you fucking might"), offering new interpretations of established ideas such as the ghetto being Black and lawbreaking never being justified.[12]

Manslaughter was followed by the angrier and more political *Bloodlust* (2017). The song "Black Hoodie" (Web Fig. 2), an obvious reference to Trayvon Martin, directly refers to recent incidents of police brutality with lines such as "You didn't have to shoot me, so why am I dead?" Other lines in the song recall other Black victims of violence, such as Walter Scott and Philando Castile. On "No Lives Matter" (Web Fig. 3), Ice-T sings, "When it comes to the poor, No lives matter!," once again questioning the distinction between race and class that would inhibit the solidarity of a cross-racial coalition of have-nots. Like the lines quoted in the previous paragraph, this line is angrily sung to emphasize "No lives matter!" Ice-T affirms the aims of the Black Lives Matter movement with a spoken introduction to the song (the first on the album), in which he points out that Black and poor lives are the most devalued in US culture.

Ice-T is, of course, an unusual figure within metal. While he and his band are fully in command of the genre's conventions, he often exploits ambiguities inherent in his position as an established gangsta rapper in order to create characters and assume a trickster identity in his songs. He is thus able to portray violent, antisocial characters in songs such as "Pray for Death" (2014, in which he plays a sadistic torturer) and "The Ski Mask Way" (2017, in which he portrays the head of a criminal gang) and make politically polarizing statements in ways that other metal singers might find difficult. Ice-T and Body Count thus use metal to perform Black male identities in relation and opposition to hegemonic US whiteness (Fellezs 2015) and address a multiracial public.

Metal Riles the Globe

The situation outside of the United States and western Europe is different regarding metal and social protest. A review of available scholarly literature on metal music in the former Soviet bloc, Latin America, the Middle East and Turkey, and Southeast Asia leads one to conclude that metal has been one of the most politically consequential genres of music.[13] The emergence of global metal studies has led to increased awareness of both the profound dedication of the genre's worldwide followers and the threat that metal has represented to all manner of totalitarian regimes.

Popular music scholars whose frame of reference is confined to the Anglo-American mainstream might believe that moral panics about heavy metal were limited to the twentieth century, but in fact, crackdowns on heavy metal and metal fans have continued to the present day in places as disparate as China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey (LeVine 2009a, 2009b; Siamdoust 2017; Winegarner 2018). Heavy metal's invitations to behavioral nonconformity, if not outright blasphemy, apparently seem threatening to authoritarian governments, many of which also liken the music to a virulent strain of Western consumer decadence. Many crackdowns involve the torture and imprisonment of metalheads and suspected metalheads, though nowhere has metal been successfully banished by such measures (Wallach 2020).

Heavy metal's global conquest, even in countries with hostile governments, is by now well-known and continues despite the music's lack of commercial viability in the mainstream international marketplace (Wallach et al. 2011; Brown et al. 2016; Wallach 2020). Aside from mature multiethnic scenes in Botswana and South Africa, newer ones are even emerging in sub-Saharan African countries formerly described as "metal-free" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 118; Knopke 2014; Verne 2015; Banchs 2016). Metal remains wildly popular in Europe, particularly in countries once behind the Iron Curtain and previously subject to intense government suspicion and surveillance; it is also popular in Japan, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. China and India have small but rapidly growing scenes (Dunn and McFadyen 2008; Wong 2011; Zheng 2016). Nelson Varas-Díaz and his research associates have demonstrated the importance of metal communities in the Hispanic Caribbean,

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particularly Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic (2015, 2017) as well as the Latin American mainland (2018).

Ensembles that incorporate not only folk music and instruments but also the languages and cultures of national minorities and Fourth World peoples constitute one striking development in the course of heavy metal's globalization. In her article on Basque metal, Donna Weston (2011) highlights the significance of singing in the Basque language in a multi-subgenre metal scene that spans France and Spain. Brazil's folk metal pioneers Arandu Arakuaa sing in Tupí, an Indigenous language, providing Portuguese translations of their lyrics. Other bands incorporate explicitly anticolonial themes into their music, such as Puerto Rico's Dantesco, whose song "We Don't Fear Your God" (2013) celebrates pre-Christian religion and describes its adherents as "children of the sun." Dantesco's late lead singer, Erico Morales, was a practicing pagan, and folk metal music around the world is often tied to global paganism.[14]

Defenders of the Folk

Assertions of particularistic identity against a global standard are common in metal's international manifestations. While earlier accounts of heavy metal from outside North America and western Europe emphasize its foreign allure (Harris 2000; Baulch 2003; Avelar 2011) and links to cosmopolitan modernity, the twenty-first century has seen the rise of movements to indigenize metal, especially in folk metal.[15] Folk metal bands often incorporate heavily amplified local instruments (Peru's Ch'aska uses Incan panpipes, Germany's In Extremo uses medieval German bagpipes, China's Black Kirin uses an *erhu*, Mongolia's the Hu Band uses the horse-head fiddle, etc.), folk melodies, rhythms, and lyrical themes (Elovaara 2017). Such groups rarely sing "protest songs" (at least by a narrow definition), but they unmistakably affirm local identity and demonstrate the compatibility of traditional culture with metal music. Interestingly, while folk metal bands are often nationalistic, the most successful have international fan bases. Therefore, folk metal fans tend to be cosmopolitan rather than nationalist in outlook.

The Taiwanese band Chthonic is one of the world's best-known folk metal bands. They are also one of the most politically active. Chthonic has fans all over Asia and throughout the world. It has toured internationally, including the United States and Europe in 2014's Paganfest. The band was formed in 1995 in Taipei and has developed a unique form of folk metal that combines the *erhu* (Chinese spike fiddle), called *hena* in Taiwan, with death, black, and symphonic metal. Other East Asian stringed instruments such as the Japanese *koto* and the *yueqin* (Chinese moon lute), real and synthesized, are added to song textures. Although Taiwan does not have an especially large metal scene, Chthonic is well known there for its outspoken support of Taiwan's independence from mainland China. After the pro-democracy, youth-driven Sunflower Movement dramatically reversed a long trend toward assimilation into mainland China (Rowen 2015), lead singer Freddie Lim, previously chair of the local Amnesty International chapter, gained a parliamentary seat as a member of the pro-independence New Power Party in 2016. The band also uses political slogans and imagery in their t-shirts; in 2014, Chthonic brought shirts to Paganfest with the English words "Free Tibet" emblazoned across the back shoulders.

In spite of Freddy Lim's political standing, Chthonic claims that only one of its songs is political: the song "Taiwan," composed for Taiwan's failed attempt to gain national status through the United Nations in 2007 (Payne 2014, 415). However, both scholars and fans perceive Chthonic to be a political band (Payne 2014), reminding us how often metal bands and fans deny their involvement in political issues. Indeed, the band is quite candid about the political and historical inspirations of its songs, which for over twenty years have been inspired by episodes in Taiwan's colonial and postcolonial history. The song and video for "Broken Jade" (Web Fig. 4),[16] from the 2011 album *Takasago Army*, dramatizes the tragic fate of a Taiwanese Aborigine conscripted

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into the Japanese navy during World War II to become a kamikaze pilot. One of the band's most popular songs, it illuminates a little-known historical tragedy.

"To Me, Metal Is Always Protest Music": Heavy Metal in Indonesia

To most Indonesian metalheads, the idea that metal is not authentically "Indonesian" is nonsensical, especially in Javanese cities like Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta, where metal is a mundane part of everyday life for both the educated middle classes and the vast nonaffluent majority. The scene emerged in a context in which popular song was a potent voice of both dissent and grass-roots nationalist sentiment, even in the face of government denunciation and censorship. It also emerged in a climate of receptivity to Western rock music, but the urgent, unruly sounds of rock acquired cultural meanings allied with indigenous understandings of the social significance of music, which, we contend, paved the way for metal's ascendance as a force for positive change and national integration in Indonesia.

During the Indonesian War for Independence (1945–1949), popular songs played a crucial role in fueling revolutionary fervor. While middle-class Indonesians are now familiar with, and many have accepted, the Western definition of popular music as "lifestyle entertainment," the role of music in inciting action has not been forgotten, particularly by Indonesia's nonaffluent majority, the *rakyat kecil*. Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, facilitated a sense of national unity despite the archipelago's staggering cultural and geographic diversity.[17] In 1966, Sukarno was deposed, with US support, by the autocratic General Suharto, who ruled with an iron fist until he was forced to step down in 1998, when Indonesia began its slow transition to democracy. During the long Suharto period, numerous rock artists, such as Iwan Fals and Sawung Jabo, performed popular protest songs against the government and at times were persecuted for doing so, through harassment, interrogation, and even imprisonment. Massive rock concerts by both Indonesian and international groups provided some of the few occasions for voicing popular discontent. The riots following Metallica's 1993 appearance were largely seen as a response to the corruption and inequality of the Suharto regime.[18]

While Indonesian rock superstars like Iwan Fals preferred a folk-rock sound and the clear, narrative lyrics that go with it, Indonesia has arguably been a "Metal Nation" at least since the British band Deep Purple played for over a hundred thousand enthusiastic fans in December 1975. For the next fifteen years or so, Indonesian hard rock bands such as God Bless and Jamrud, promoted by commercial labels, enjoyed mass audiences; since the 1990s, a homegrown underground network of local scenes has been the main source of new, harsher-sounding bands, many choosing to stay underground, playing for audiences of university students and producing homemade cassettes rather than moving to major labels. We argue that the deep indigenization of heavy metal across class boundaries via grass-roots networks is key to the music's sociocultural and political relevance.

Wallach has written extensively about the popularity of heavy metal music, particularly thrash and death metal, among Indonesian youth at the time of Indonesia's democratic transition in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when metal helped "bring down a dictator" (2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2012).[19] The metal scene in Indonesia continues to thrive, with bands such as Seringai, Dead Squad, For Infidel, Syndrome of Brutality, Morfem, Panic Disorder, Siksa Kubur, Gugat, Koil, Jasad, Hell Skuad, and Grave Dancers, among others, prominently featuring political themes. The group Thrashline, on an album with other songs that proclaimed the need for vigilance against "mad kings" and irrational scapegoating mobs, extols the fortitude of demonstrators resembling those who helped overthrow Suharto:

> Walau terus diguyur, mereka tak hanyut
> Walau terus dibendung, mereka tak diam
> Walau terus diadu, mereka bersatu
> Walau terus dibuang, mereka kembali

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> Despite being flushed out, they do not waiver
> Despite being blocked, they will not be silent
> Despite being pitted against each other, they are as one
> Despite being cast away, they return
> Excerpt from "Demonstrasi" by Thrashline
>
> (Web Fig. 5)

In 2014, then-Governor of Jakarta Joko Widodo (usually called Jokowi) ran for president of Indonesia against General Prabowo Subianto, former son-in-law of deposed dictator Suharto and former Commander of the Special Forces. While much has been made of the fact that Jokowi is an avid heavy metal fan (Clinton and Wallach 2015, 280–81), the Indonesian metalheads who supported him were probably just as interested in preventing the autocratic Prabowo from winning, which would have been a major step backward for anyone who opposed the Suharto regime. Prabowo's campaign was disciplined, well-financed, and well-organized, and his strongman image appealed to a large segment of the population (Mietzner 2014). In the end, though the election was close, Jokowi emerged victorious.[20] Eternal Madness, Bali's most venerable metal ensemble, wrote an unofficial song for Jokowi's campaign:

> Mari kita pilih Jokowi JK
> Jadi Presiden Indonesia ...
> Jokowi JK adalah kita
>
> Come on, let's choose Jokowi-JK (Jusuf Kalla, vice presidential candidate)
> To become Indonesian president
> Jokowi-JK is us
> Excerpt from "Jokowi for President"
>
> (Web Fig. 6)

When we traveled to Indonesia in mid-2017, metal musicians and fans we encountered hesitated to take credit for Jokowi's victory. Indeed, in an article in the *Jakarta Post*, written one month before the election, interviewees in the metal scene, including our friend Arian13, asserted that the metal community was marginal and apathetic and would not be a factor in the election.[21]

Another of our metal friends, Robin Malau, who noted approvingly that it was "very metal" for Chthonic's Freddy Lim to become a Taiwanese legislator (Chthonic being well known in Indonesia), was less enthusiastic about Jokowi. (While Jokowi remained very popular during his presidency, his tenure was marred by controversies, and many contemporary middle class youth accuse him of selling out their country to foreign business interests.) Interestingly, we noted similar ambivalence among metalheads in 1999 and 2000 following Suharto's overthrow; however, seventeen years later, when the democratic transition had clearly gone well, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for any statement about the role of metal music in the transition. When Wallach gave a presentation at the American Cultural Center in Jakarta on July 6, 2017, and mentioned Suharto's overthrow, the audience, mostly young Indonesians, spontaneously cheered. Perhaps they merely disliked the ex-dictator, but it seemed like they were applauding their predecessors and their activism. In a four-hour seminar two days later, we spoke with four dozen or so members of the Indonesian metal intelligentsia on a wide range of topics, and many expressed astonishment that the Suharto government never cracked down on heavy metal bands' subversive activities, including singing lyrics critical of the government (one famous vocalist, our friend Arian13, suggested it had to do with the incomprehensible, growling style of vocals prevalent at the time) and disseminating radical ideologies through zines, which played a significant role in the cultural ferment of the time.

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Our friend Robin, mentioned previously, was the guitarist of Puppen, a legendary underground metal band (with Arian13 on vocals) from 1995 to 2002. When we told him about this project, he surprised us by exclaiming, "To me, all metal is protest music!" He explained that the music gave him the energy and motivation to make an impact on the world, which is similar to what Jokowi said about heavy metal music when asked by two Bloomberg reporters: "Rock music gives me motivation, gives me spirit about the environment, about the corruption, about justice," he explains. "The beat of the drum—boom, boom—gives me spirit."[22] Like everyone else we talked to in Indonesia, Robin thought the question of metal's political ramifications was interesting, but he was skeptical it could apply to something as concrete as an election.

Jokowi's political enemies seemed to think otherwise. In early February 2019, the Indonesian public first heard about RUU Permusikan (Draft Bill Music Law), though it had been drafted several months before. The Draft Bill, ostensibly an attempt to "professionalize" Indonesian music, proposed the bureaucratic evaluation of all Indonesian performers and the purging of "negative foreign influences." Its numerous, confusingly written provisions included a decree that banned musical performances by nonprofessionals lacking government certification, which would have dealt a fatal blow to the thriving Indonesian underground metal scene, composed almost entirely of amateurs. This bill seemed designed expressly to muzzle Jokowi's most vocal supporters during the run-up to a national election, and the politicians who introduced it appeared not to expect organized resistance—a miscalculation. After the bill was announced, figures in the Indonesian music industry, including *Rolling Stone Indonesia* senior editor and heavy metal journalist Wendi Putranto and Seringai's Arian13 (both of whom were zine publishers and student activists in the 1990s) formed the National Coalition to Reject the Music Bill (KNTL RUUP) and circulated an electronic petition that garnered over 313,000 signatures.[23] A digital-download compilation album featuring one hundred songs and Indonesian underground bands, both established and obscure, was also released to promote the cause.[24] On June 17, two months after Jokowi trounced his opponent to win reelection, the Indonesian House of Representatives permanently shelved RUU Permusikan.[25]

Conclusion: "Remember, Loud Is Political"

Certainly, heavy metal songs appear to be deficient as protest songs in multiple ways. And yet, as Weinstein (2006) points out, rock protest songs are rarely as successful as many assume. They frequently preach to the choir or are utterly misconstrued, making their social impact uncertain at best. Furthermore, political music can encourage a "post-institutional politics" (Fanke and Schiltz 2013) that traffics in a conservative distrust of official systems.

We maintain that a conception of protest music must include heavy metal. It is the music of choice for millions of people around the globe, including many activists, to voice dissent, transgress boundaries, and resist hegemonic ideologies. In the words of Deena Weinstein, "Remember, loud is political" (personal communication, July 27, 2017). Heavy metal music eschews didacticism in favor of collective exultation, and to its adherents, its power is not about persuasion or furthering agendas. Yet by speaking directly to and connecting its worldwide audience, metal has created a massive, multigenerational cultural movement, a "community-in-resistance" (Kelly 2006) that knows no boundaries. This movement's political ramifications, which have already influenced a major head of state and produced a national representative, have yet to be fully realized.

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Notes

1 See Brown 2011 and Hickam 2015 for helpful surveys of this research.

2 On protest music's connection to the political, see Attali 1985, Denisoff 1972, Lewis 1987, Kahn-Harris 2004, Maceda 2007, McKay 2003, Morris 2015, Tas 2014, and Weinstein 2006.

3 This line is from the Napalm Death song "Abstain!" from the 1992 album *Utopia Banished*.

4 Punk isn't the only genre to which metal has been unfavorably compared. Binder (1993, 763) points out that rap (as of 1993) was considered authentic and political in a way that metal usually was not.

5 Hip-hop music was also targeted. See Johnson and Cloonan 2008.

6 These incidents have been well covered. For two scholarly considerations, see Olson 2008 and Hagen 2011.

7 The website Spotify compares the number of Democratic versus Republican fans of twenty-eight genres of music and finds that metal is one of the most politically neutral genres (third of twenty-eight genres), though, interestingly, punk is calculated to be even more neutral (second). The genres with the largest percentages of Democratic fans were R&B (25 percent), blues (26 percent), soul (27 percent) and funk (28 percent), all primarily Black genres. The link, now expired, was accessed September 16, 2017, http://everynoise.com/genrepolitics/.

8 In the chapter, we analyze Iron Maiden's "Run to the Hills," in which we see violence against Native North Americans from both their perspective and that of white settlers and soldiers, and Anthrax's "Who Cares Wins," which describes, again from both perspectives, a meeting between a haughty elite and a homeless person in New York City.

9 This medial position does not just include class. A male working-class metalhead is privileged with regard to gender; a middle-class metalhead in the developing world is subaltern compared to middle-class people in the rich world but privileged in relation to most others in their country. Medial positionality, as we argue, allows a person to see power relations from both above and below.

10 This shift mirrors Foucault's, in moving from a broadly Marxian conception of power to one that emphasizes power's ubiquity as a constituent feature of all social interactions.

11 This line is from the Body Count song "There Goes the Neighborhood," on their 1992 release *Cop Killer*.

12 The album also contains the somewhat less progressive song, "Talk Shit, Get Shot," about hunting down and dispatching internet trolls (see Fellezs 2015).

13 For metal in the former Soviet bloc, see Von Faust 2016 and Zaddach 2016; in Latin America, see Avelar 2011, Varas-Díaz 2018, Varas-Díaz et al. 2017, Varas-Díaz and Mendoza 2015, Varas-Díaz and Morales 2018; in the Middle East and Turkey see

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Foster 2011, LeVine 2008, Harbert 2013, Otterbeck et al. 2018, and Hecker 2012; in Southeast Asia see Baulch 2003, Wallach 2008, 2011, and 2012.

14 For a discussion of pagan metal, see Weinstein 2014b.

15 See Granholm 2011 and Weston 2011 for discussions of the instability and overlap of heavy metal subgenres and the classification of specific songs and bands.

16 "Broken Jade," the English name, is a translation of the Chinese name, 玉碎. These Chinese characters also spell the World War II-era Japanese word for "mass suicide" or "death in glory." Chthonic's legions of international fans may be oblivious to the linguistic and poetic subtleties of its songs, but such wordplay is in keeping with the band's reputation for sophistication and nuance.

17 While Sukarno is dismissed by some in the West as nothing more than a charismatic demagogue who eventually lost control of his country, his nationalist vision of a pluralist, democratic Indonesia, while not realized in his lifetime, has sustained the country to its present political stability and relative prosperity. For a discussion of the similarities between Sukarnoist rhetoric of national self-sufficiency and the Indonesian underground's do it yourself (DIY) ethos, see Wallach (2014).

18 This fateful concert, and the riots and violent crackdown that followed, is discussed in Dunn and McFadyen 2008 in a segment featuring Indonesian metal authority Wendi Putranto. Metallica would not return to Indonesia for twenty years.

19 Dhania Sarahtika, "How Indonesia's Underground Music Scene Helps Bring Down a Dictator," *Jakarta Globe*, July 12, 2017, accessed February 9, 2020, http://jakartaglobe.id/features/indonesias-underground-music-scene-helps-bring-dictator/

20 The 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election was the largest single election day event in human history up to that point, with 70 percent voter turnout. Jokowi received 53 percent of the vote, slightly more than expected (Mietzner 2014). He won the election by 8.4 million votes. The average day-long heavy metal festival in Indonesia attracts over twenty thousand spectators.

21 "Will Metal Scene Help Jokowi on July 9?," *Jakarta Post*, June 9, 2014.

22 Chris Blake and Berni Moestafa, "Metallica Fan Leads Indonesian Campaign with Common Touch," *Bloomberg*, March 21, 2014, accessed February 10, 2020, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-03-20/metallica-fan-leads-indonesia-president-race-with-common-touch.

23 #TolakRUUPermusikan, 2019, https://www.change.org/p/saya-tolakruupermusikan-dpr-ri

24 *Bersama Bersuara*, Vol. 1, Bandcamp, March 13, 2019, https://bersamabersuara.bandcamp.com/album/bersama-bersuara-vol-1.

25 June 17 was the same day when we presented a version of this chapter in France (Wallach and Clinton 2019). Unfortunately, we did not find this out until after our panel had concluded. See Marco Ferrarese, "Indonesia's 'Dangerous' Moves on Music Strike Discord," *Nikkei Asian Review*, February 27, 2019, accessed February 10, 2020, https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Indonesia-s-dangerous-moves-on-music-strike-discord2, and "Musicians Welcome Cancelation of Draft Music Bill," *Jakarta Post*, June 19, 2019, accessed February 10, 2020, https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2019/06/19/musicians-welcome-cancelation-of-draft-music-bill.html.

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